

## Scripps Ranch home rises from ashes



**LEFT:** The design of the Odelson rebuilt home was influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright's "prairie style."

**BELOW:** The original home was completely destroyed by the Cedar Fire in 2003.



**By Louis Shook**  
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The Cedar Fire of October 2003 was the largest fire in California's history. It burned more than 280,000 acres and destroyed 2,232 homes. Robert Odelson and his wife Susan lived at 12474 Thornbush Court in Scripps Ranch when the fire raged through their neighborhood. Driven by hot Santa Ana winds, the fire destroyed their home as well as the six other homes on their cul-de-sac. While they lost many of their possessions, they have rebuilt on their property and now live in a beautiful, craftsman-style home.

One of the first things the Odelsons did after the fire was hire Sam Chereskin, of Chereskin Architecture to design their new house. The design process took about three months.

"Robert was from Chicago and had an affinity for homes in the prairie style of Frank Lloyd Wright," said Chereskin. True to this style, the new home has low, horizontal lines that blend with the landscape. There is a central chimney dividing the living and dining rooms. This created broad open spaces instead of strictly defined rooms.

Once the design was agreed upon, Robert Odelson hired a contractor to start building. "Things started off badly and I had to fire the first contractor,"

he said. He quickly found another contractor to take over the job -- Guitaud Construction Design and Development Corp. They were doing work on other houses in the neighborhood and Odelson was impressed with the quality of their work. Construction went smoothly from there. In February of 2006 they moved into their new home.

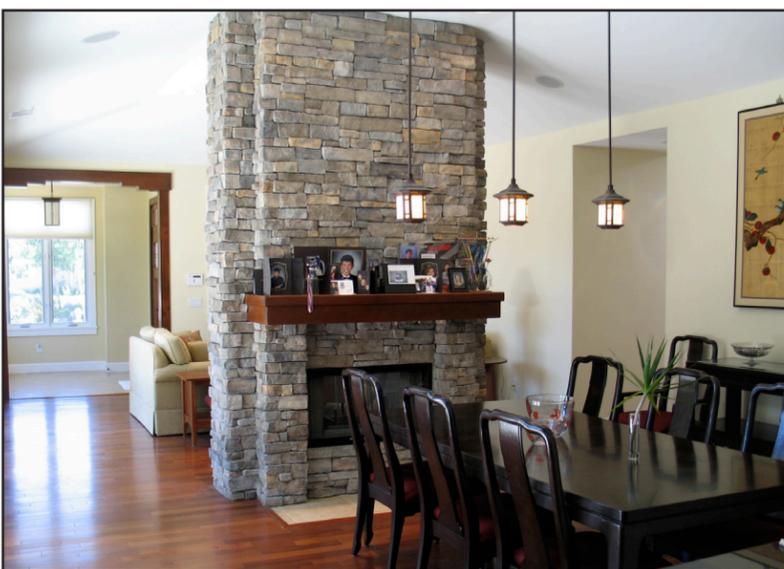
It took over two years to re-build. During this time they rented homes in the Mira Mesa area. Robert Odelson is a project manager for Kaiser Permanente. Karen also works in the healthcare industry as a bone density technician. They live with their son, Jeff, who was 12 years old at the time of the Cedar Fire.

The original house that was destroyed was a two-story model of approximately 1,700 square feet. The new house is larger at approximately 2,500 square feet and has four bedrooms and 3.5 baths.

The single-story layout has an open floor plan and large windows. In the main hallway there are two strategically placed solar tubes. The hallway is land locked, but always bright during the day without the use of electric lighting. Beautiful hardwood flooring covers the living and dining room areas. The kitchen has Travertine tile, a gourmet island and French doors that open to a patio in the backyard.

The house sits on a flat lot that is approximately 8,000 square feet. Landscape designer, Jill Wood designed landscaping to complement the craftsman-style house. The front yard has a variety of low-profile plants and brick walkways that lead to entrance of the house. There are slate-blue window frames that add to simple elegance of the exterior. The result is a much more distinctive home than the original.

"There's still some work to be done on the backyard, but we're very pleased with how the house has turned out," said Robert Odelson. The challenges of rebuilding are being replaced by enjoyment of living in a home of their own design. All the homes on Thornbush Court have been rebuilt and the neighborhood looks better now than it did before the Cedar Fire of 2003.



**A distinctive chimney divides the open space between the living room and dining room.**  
Photos courtesy of Chereskin Architecture and Robert Odelson.

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