

Builder

Safe Haven

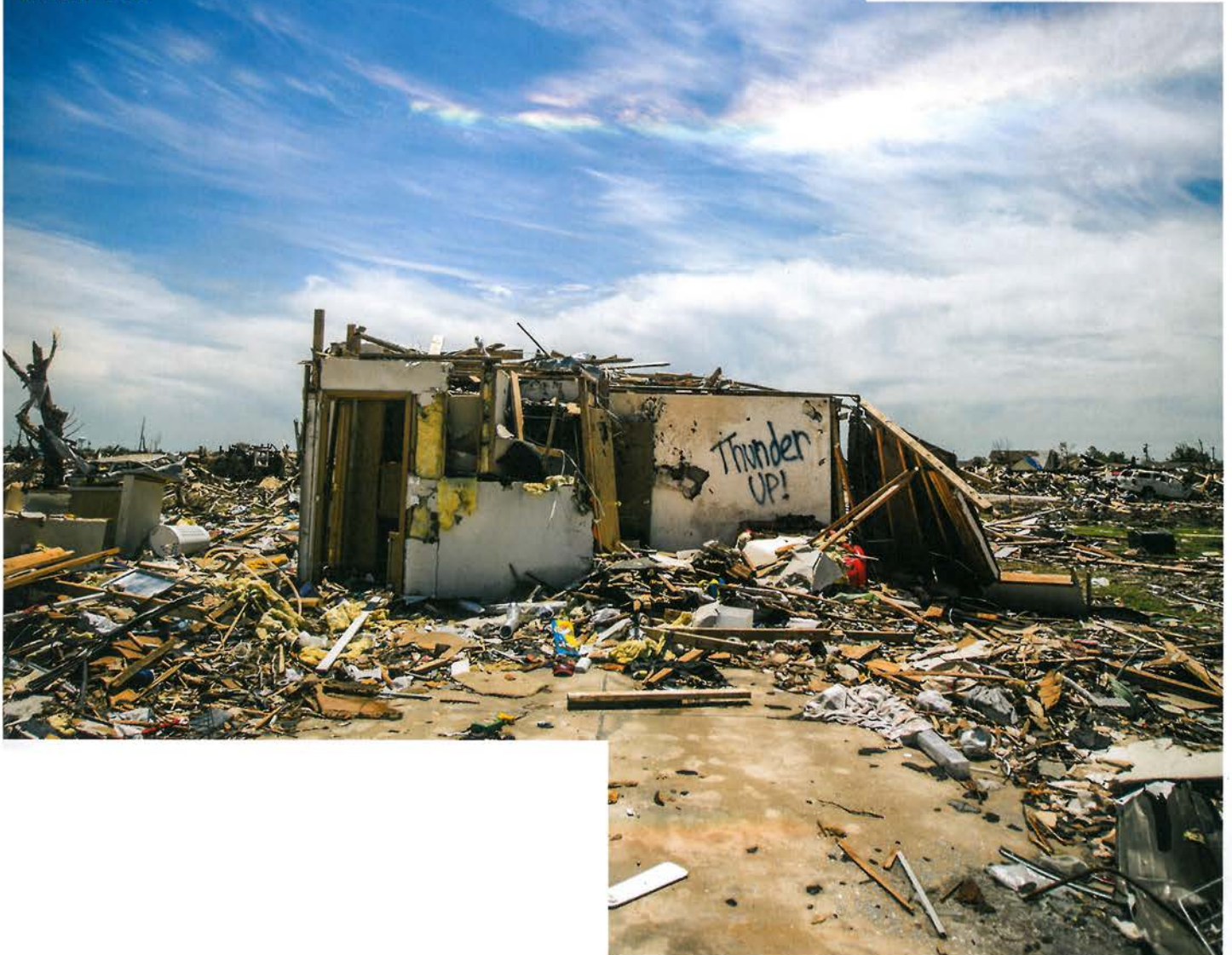
Construction methods that protect houses and their owners in violent storms

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DETAILS

Rock On

An industrial material is put to work in residential applications.

Indoor-outdoor flow often means a wide entrance to a tame backyard that in turn serves as an outside living room. But a seamless indoor-outdoor connection also can mean pulling natural elements inside. One way the 2013 New American Home—co-sponsored by BUILDER and the NAHB—does this is with gabion walls.

You might know gabion as the civil engineering material used for retaining walls. Here, it's reinvented as a bedroom wall, integrating a fireplace with a flue exiting diagonally to the exterior wall.

Architect Michael Gardner of Las Vegas-based Blue Heron spec'd a cage that uses 3-inch-by-3-inch wire mesh filled with 4-inch to 6-inch rocks over a concrete foundation—a scaled-down version of industrial-grade gabion that's more suited to residential design.

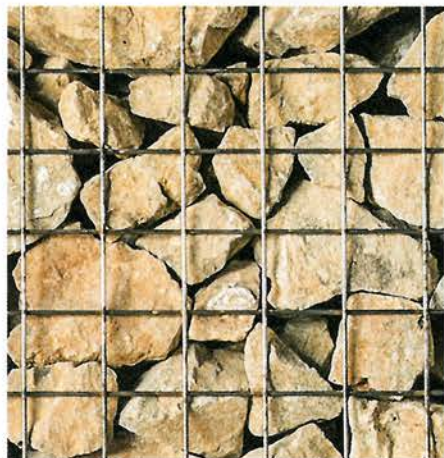
"We wanted to see the rock," Gardner recalls, "but by thinning out the cage we introduced structural challenges." To keep the cage sides from bowing, additional $\frac{3}{16}$ -inch support rods were welded in at every 12 inches. With a welder on site, each layer of rock was laid before the next bar was added. It was part science and part art, Gardner says. "In the final days the team was pointing and asking, 'Where does this rock go?' like puzzle pieces."

The wall extends from the master bedroom to a back porch; gabion also is used as a dividing wall in the backyard. Gardner uses the versatile material in his designs as few products can accommodate the desert's temperature swings, he says. "It was a way to bring nature into the design and create a cladding that wasn't just stucco." — SANDRA MALM



Project The New American Home, Henderson, Nev.

Builder/Architect/Interior Designer Blue Heron, Las Vegas



Trent Bell



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