

MY LAST ROOF

By JACKSON SELLERS

Lake Forest, California

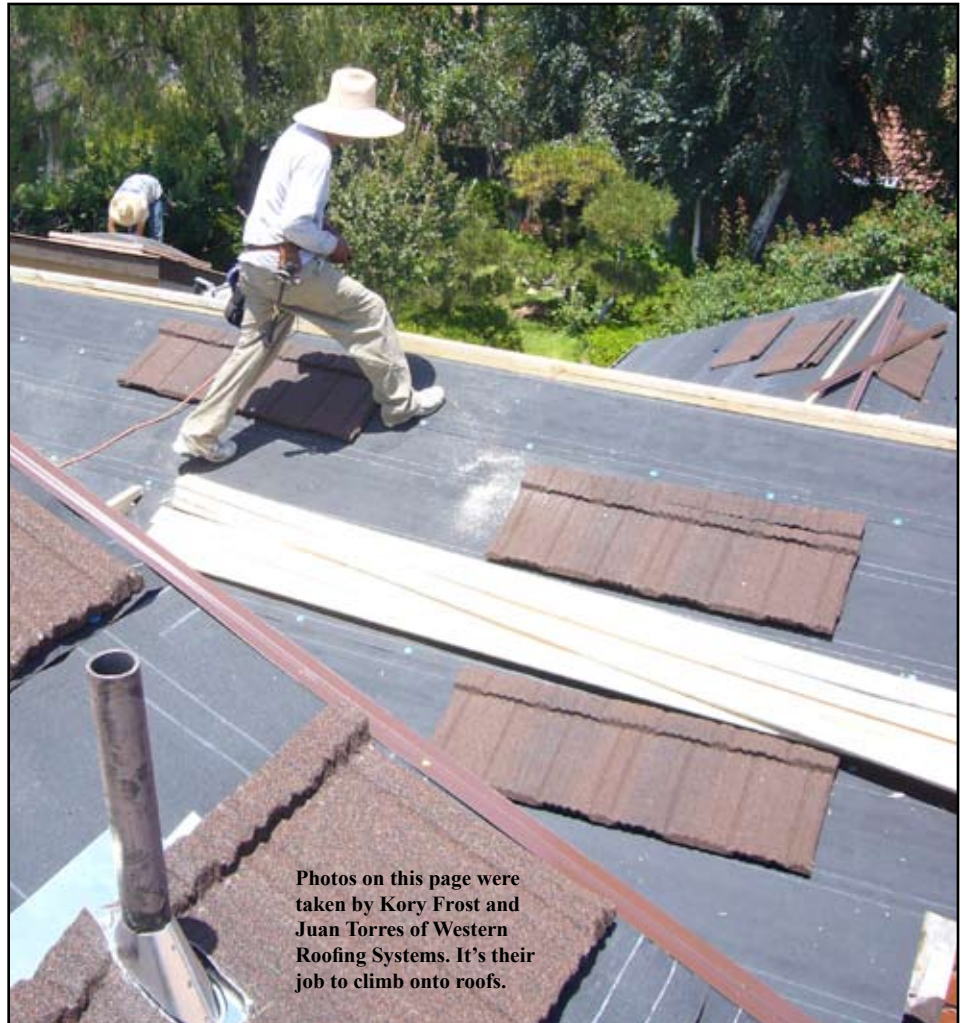
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Demolition was the worst part. Wooden shingles – applied in 1968 when the house was built, with a second layer added in 1988 – were dried-out and dust-saturated. The shingles were removed and hauled away in a large truck filled to the top. It was dirty work done by nice guys from Western Roofing Systems who, speaking in Spanish, joked and laughed their way through it. They were probably well-paid, but I gave them lunch money anyway. Roofers, I had heard, consume 4,000 calories per day. After watching them at work, I could believe it. At top right, a roofer works on the skip-sheathing to which the shingles had been nailed. Surprisingly, the sheathing boards were still in good shape. Not so the shiplap constituting the eaves, nor the fascia boards running around the perimeter of the house. Termite-damaged wood was replaced at a cost of \$3,000. This came on top of the \$18,714 cost of the roof itself, a stone-coated steel roof guaranteed to last 50 years. The tree rising from the courtyard at left in the top photo is a so-called *miniature* Japanese maple. Poor Yoshi, who planted it maybe 30 years ago, expected a cute *bonsai*-like tree, just like those in Japan. Well, anything planted in decent soil in Southern California, if it gets sufficient water, will grow huge in the sunshine, and this miniature maple was no exception. Our backyard Australian willow towers even higher, much higher, in the photo at bottom right. Here the roofers are rolling tar paper over the reinforced sheathing. Nails with oversized heads hold the paper in place. All the fascia boards

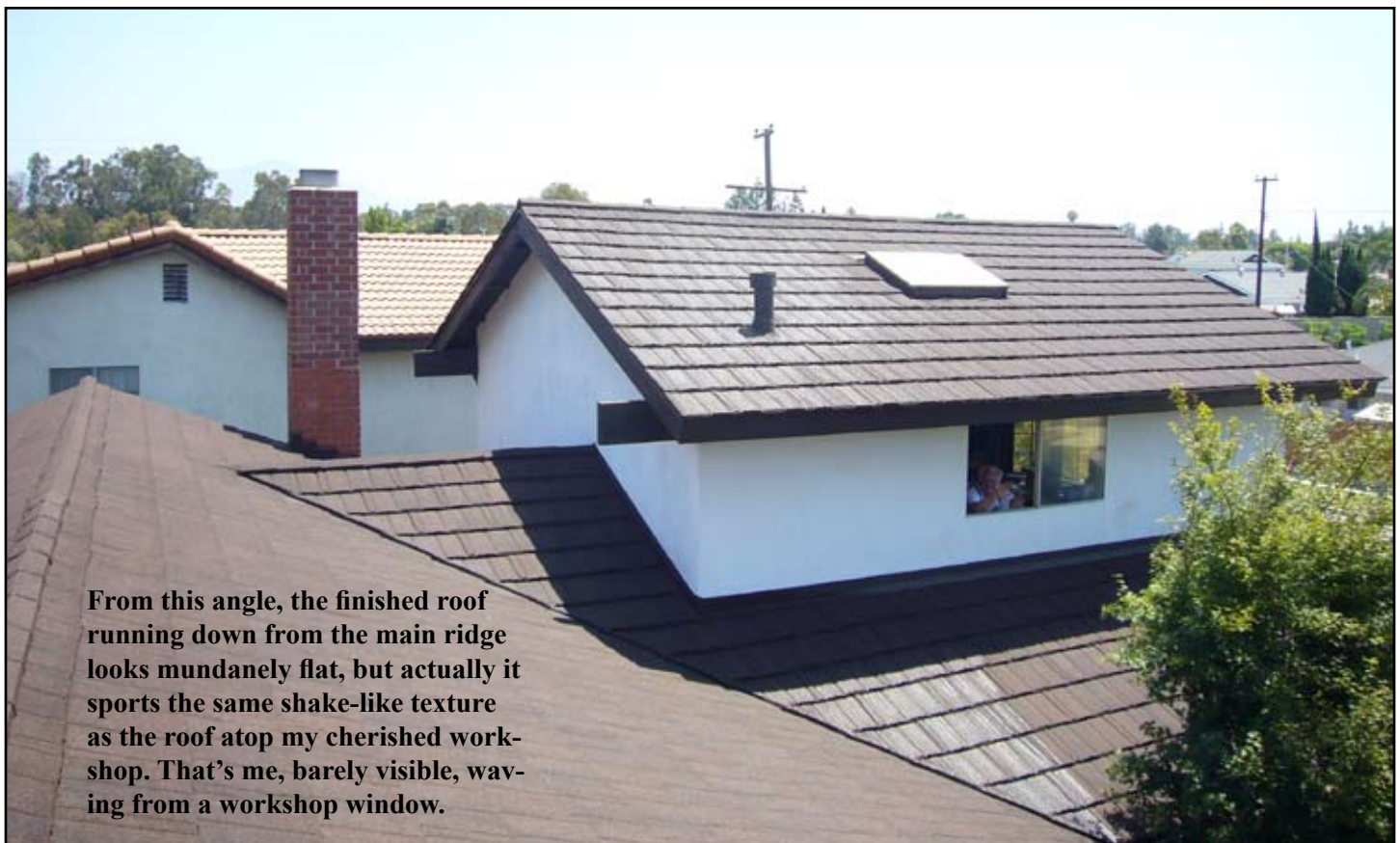


Photos on this page were taken by Jackson Sellers from his workshop window. He doesn't climb onto roofs anymore.

at the back of the house had to be replaced, and I was worried about my gutters. I shouldn't have been. The roofers rescued them, re-hung them and repainted them. Next came the sculpted steel panels themselves, looking sort of like shakes. The annoying dust and debris were well behind us in this weeklong project. Now there were rhythmic noises – hammers pounding and a compressor kicking on and off as pneumatic nail guns fastened the roofing panels. When all was done, as can be seen below, I called my insurance company to report this major improvement to my home. Naively, I expected a discount on my insurance premium, since a steel roof, replacing combustible wooden shingles, significantly reduced the fire threat. It was run through their computers. *No, Mr. Sellers*, they said. *Your home is worth more now and will be more expensive to replace. Your premium will go up a bit.* Shucks. But I'm glad the house is more valuable.



Photos on this page were taken by Kory Frost and Juan Torres of Western Roofing Systems. It's their job to climb onto roofs.



From this angle, the finished roof running down from the main ridge looks mundanely flat, but actually it sports the same shake-like texture as the roof atop my cherished workshop. That's me, barely visible, waving from a workshop window.