

## Renowned architect Herb Greene returns to home he designed in Oklahoma City in 1962

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Joy Baresel and architect Herb Greene stand in the backyard patio of the home known as the Cunningham Residence, which Greene designed and executed in 1962. Greene visited the new owners, Joy and Paul Baresel to talk about remodeling ideas for the home at 3309 Quail Creek Road. [PHOTO BY DOUG HOKE, THE OKLAHOMAN]

Pondering a sheet in a roll of house plans he hadn't seen in 55 years, architect Herb Greene traced a finger along lines he drew, by hand, back when John F. Kennedy was president.

“That's the balcony back here, spanning across to the front here,” he explained, tapping a blue-inked drawing of the home's elevation. He traced his finger to a different spot, elaborating on the design as he went. He spoke softly, and a group crowded around the table leaned in to hear him.

“So these were all hand-drawn?” an onlooker asked.

“Yes,” said Greene, who is 88. “That was before the age of computers.”

The home on paper is the one at 3309 Quail Creek Road, where unseasonably cool August weather lent to a festive atmosphere for Greene's visit. Jazz played from somewhere in the house. Family and colleagues mingled as he paced the house, distinctive red beret making him easy to spot in the crowd.

He paused occasionally for pictures and patiently answered questions. He even found time to work up a handful of quick sketches, offering suggestions on how to incorporate a carport and address the undersized kitchen.

Paul Baresel, who moved in with his wife, Joy, and their three children in early August, made it clear that they all were pleased with their new home, even the unconventional aspects such as the sliding walls that close off the bedrooms upstairs. No doors to slam here, one onlooker joked.

“I like that I can hear my family around the home,” Baresel said. “I know where everybody is, and it keeps us connected.”

This midcentury modern wonder of space and light has drawn its share of attention over the decades. Publications across the country have written it up at one time or another. Oklahoma Modernism Weekend's home tour made a stop here earlier this year.

Former residents have reported finding enthusiasts of Greene's work standing on the doorstep politely asking for a look around.

Greene himself has written about it, noting in a 1976 essay that he designed it for Oklahoma City orthodontist Earl Cunningham and his wife, Martha, who both “requested a fine house, one that would be comfortable but not cozy.” No matter who lives here, it's known as the Cunningham Residence.

What Greene created holds its own even as it embraces the landscape around it. Rounded walls flow into a curving, cedar-faced ceiling, the whole space following the natural slope from the street down to the back, offering a spectacular view of Quail Creek Golf Course.

“We never dreamed such a beautiful place could be lived in and not be a museum,” Joy Baresel said. “We feel like we live in a museum.” The Baresels reached out to Greene's office in Berkeley, California, even before closing on their purchase, looking for any guidance he could offer them as homeowners and stewards of his legacy.

Greene did one better, offering to stop in while nearby with friend Bonnie Cediell for the Architects of the American School Symposium at the University of Oklahoma's College of Architecture.

“I wanted to see it again,” Greene said. “And I wanted to show the house to Bonnie.”

Paul Baresel said they had sold their previous home and were holed up in a three-story rental in “a historic area of town” when they came across a listing for the Cunningham Residence.

Joy Baresel, a real estate agent with Verbode Group, 415 N Broadway No. 101, had dealt with her share of homes, but neither that nor the instincts she has developed as an artist prepared her for her first glimpse of the place.

“I was so struck emotionally by the feeling as we walked in the house,” she said. “It was very simple when we walked in, and then it just exploded to nature. All this green, and the light from the golf course filled in this space.”

Her husband, who works in IT at Paycom, said the reaction was immediate and visceral.

“I came inside, and I just lost it,” he said. “Joy is a good negotiator, but I started saying stuff that you shouldn't say when you want to buy a house. In my head, I'm thinking, 'OK, how am I going to make this work?' It blew me away.”

Greene studied architecture at OU under Bruce Goff, one of the few American architects Frank Lloyd Wright considered creative, if a 1951 Life Magazine article is to be believed. Goff taught at OU from 1942 to 1955, serving as the architecture school chairman from 1943 on.

Greene was an assistant professor at OU from 1957 to 1963 before moving on to the University of Kentucky. He retired to Berkeley in 1982 but remained professionally active.

He is an artist, as well as a designer, and artistic sensibilities are infused throughout the house.

“Every single room has its own feeling and its own personality,” Joy Baresel said. “We still don't know the house. It would take us 100 years to know this house.”

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