



An heirloom reborn



Special to the Times/Kevin Squires

MODERN TECHNOLOGY and artistic talent helped re-create this painting from one lost in the Oakland hills fire. Orinda artist Mehrdad Samimi used the black-and-white snapshots he's holding, computer enhancement and painstaking work to redo a 1906 painting for Judith Woods, whose home and belongings were destroyed in the blaze. The original oil-on-canvas portrait of Woods' mother, Margaret Chase, was painted in Cape Cod by Aldro T. Hibbard.

MEHRDAD'S MIRACLE: Orinda artist Mehrdad Samimi, working with only a 1906 faded photograph of a room with a painting in the background, a daughter's memories, a computer and a great deal of talent and training, has accomplished it. Judy and Sterrett Woods lost everything in the Oakland hills firestorm—including a lovely oil portrait of Judy's mother at 17, wearing a lilac voile tea dress, holding a parasol to shade her book.

Now the Woods have rebuilt their home, and last Saturday invited friends for the un-veiling of the portrait of Judy's mother, re-created by Mehrdad. So remarkable is his feat that Channel Four News featured his accomplishment twice last week, which CBS caught and called Mehrdad's wife Ellie, director of the Samimi Gallery in Orinda, to arrange a network show in September. Meanwhile the Woods are delighted—now they didn't lose *everything* in the fire. And so is Judy's niece, Margaret Chase, who often looked at the portrait hanging over the mantel during her childhood spent there during World War II, and who one day will inherit her ancestor's likeness to hang over *her* mantel.



SUNBEAMS

By Harriet Ainsworth