

EQ 989-S.L.Val

## The Quake of '89: The Mountains

Tracey Banks, in front, and his brother, Phil, carry a mattress from the wreckage of their Boulder Creek home, which fell off its support beams on Blue Ridge Drive and slid down a hill until stopped by a large tree. One person was inside, but was not hurt.

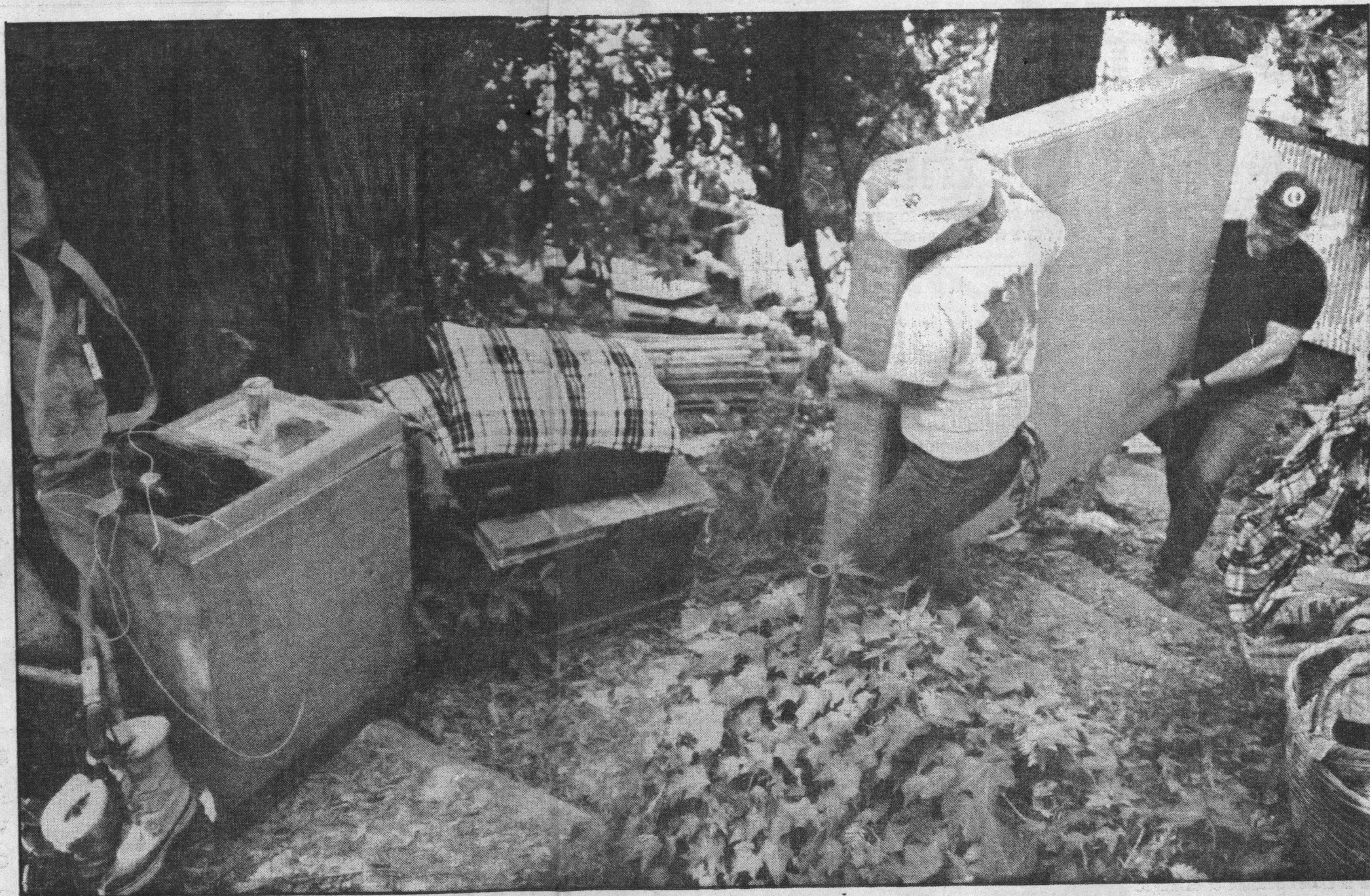
Jason M. Grow — Mercury News

# 'Mountain spirit' thrives in disaster

## Live in the city? Never, say victims

By Brad Kava and Paul Rogers  
Mercury News Staff Writers

Susan and Bruce Vandraiss  
clung to a steel water pipe mount-





back while they watched the rest of their two-bedroom Santa Cruz mountain home tumble down a 100-foot ravine.

Moments before, they had been standing in a front room getting ready to pick up their 12-year-old son from a Los Gatos after-school center.

"If we had been anywhere else in the house, if we had been in a back room, we would have been buried," said Susan Vandraiss, 38. "The miracle is we were late picking up our son. If he had been here, he would have been back there under it all."

No house escaped damage in the 380-home mountain community of Redwood Estates, near the epicenter of Tuesday's earthquake. Many of the hand-built houses with native rock chimneys were destroyed, tumbling every which way down hillsides.

At least seven homes in the mountains burned to the ground when leaking propane ignited. Twenty people from around Summit Road were airlifted out with broken limbs but, miraculously, no one died.

At a meeting at the Redwood Estates Community Center on Wednesday, residents were told they would be without electricity for at least three days and without water for at least three weeks because of broken pipes.

More than 200 of them clustered together and turned the field outside the center into an outdoor campsite, with tents, barbecues, portable toilets, jugs of water and piles of food.

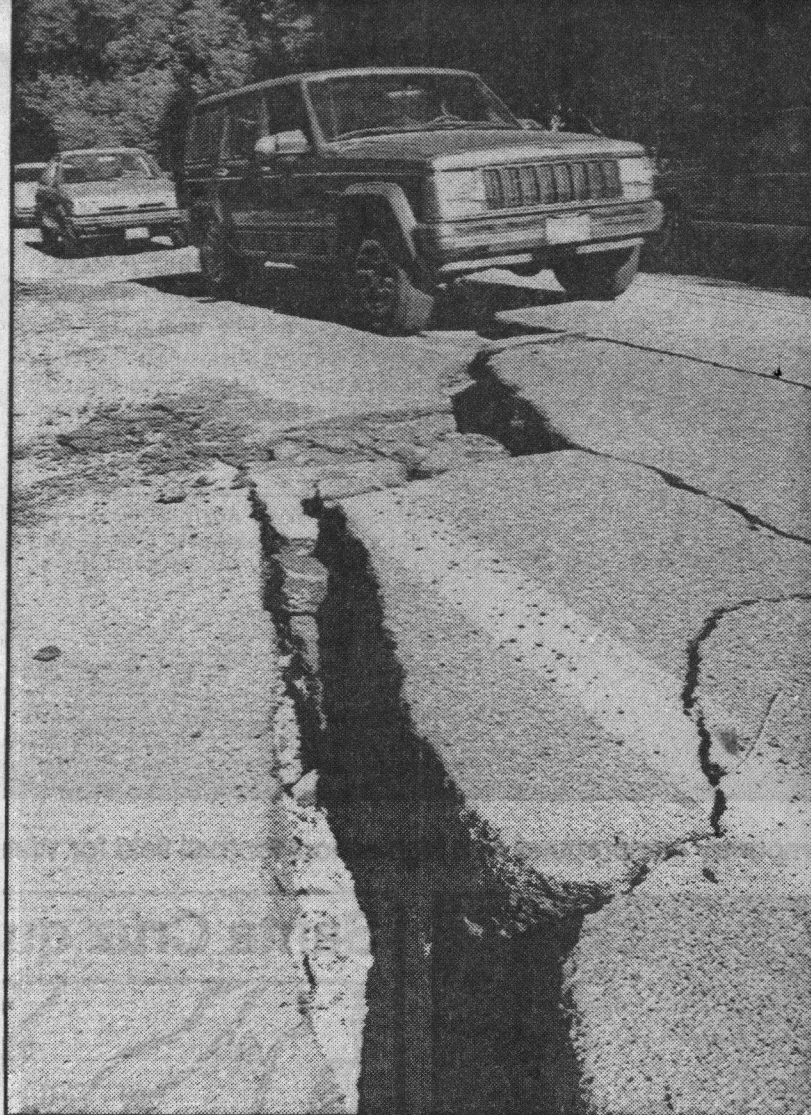
"We are expected to take care of ourselves," said Tom Summer, who is on the board of directors for the Redwood Mutual Water Co. "We can't depend on other communities for help."

This morning's strong aftershocks didn't create much of a stir at the outdoor encampment. Resident Win Parker, who was sleeping inside her new van in the parking lot, described the new shakers as "gentle, but almost continuous — they kind of lulled me to sleep."

By the time Tuesday's big quake stopped, the Vandraiss home looked more like a pile of trash strewn along a hillside, with only a few items recognizable: a Nintendo game, an overstuffed chair, two oil paintings.

"It looks like someone took tin foil and crumpled it all up and threw it out here," said Bruce Vandraiss, who was wearing clothes he had set aside on the deck to donate to Goodwill.

Once again, the Santa Cruz Mountains faced the worst blow nature has to offer. In four years, the hillside residents have faced floods, fires and three earthquakes,



Associated Press

Drivers negotiate buckled and cracked roads in the hills

and once again, the community has banded together to overcome no water, no electricity and unlivable homes with what they say is "mountain spirit."

Before they began cleaning up their own homes, residents cooked steaks and hamburgers and made peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches for others. Others trucked water from the only large reservoir in the area that didn't burst during the quake.

"You won't find this kind of camaraderie in the valley," said Gary LaRault, a San Jose police patrol sergeant whose mountain home was covered with three feet of glass and debris. "There it's all dog-eat-dog. Here, you might think the people are a little flaky, or a little different, but when something like this happens, they really come out to help each other."

Mountain dwellers say they have never felt a greater sense of community, that fending for themselves in the face of floods, mudslides and general isolation has made them more self-reliant than

the flatlanders in the valley below.

"It's the nature of people up here," said Jim Buffere, who has lived for 16 years on Laurel Road off Highway 17, and whose house was devastated. "We don't have the resources they have down in the valley, so we have to support each other a lot more."

Janine Ramonda, 35, and her family also have survived disasters, including damage from two previous earthquakes. Their chimney toppled last year and it fell again Tuesday.

"It beats living in the city," she said. "It's beautiful and you have peace and quiet here. I wouldn't want to live in the city."

On Summit Road, directly over the San Andreas Fault, fissures tore the road like paper, leaving open cracks as wide as seven feet. Mud and rocks blocked lanes all through the hills, including on the mountains' artery, Highway 17.

At the California Forestry Department command center at C.T. English Middle School, fire crews from as far away as Humboldt



Michael Rondou — Mercury News

Several hundred gallons of bottled water is delivered to the shelter in Redwood Estates

County worked to assess the damage.

Battalion Chief Russell Borelli said the 200 people who evacuated homes to spend the night at the school remained in good spirits.

"Everybody's helping everybody," he said. "I'd say overall the folks are real tough."

Tough was the only word for Darrell Osborn's cleanup job. The owner of Summit Store, he stood by as five employees shoveled three-foot-high piles of broken glass and cracked cans from his darkened aisles.

Customers walked through flour, puddles of wine and rotting vegetables to buy food.

"Lines were 20 deep this morning. It's been a lot busier than normal," Osborn said, smiling. "We're rounding everything up to the nearest dollar. We'll worry about taxes later."

In some areas, when fires started after the earthquake and water pressure was a trickle, mountain people began bucket brigades.

"It was a valiant effort, it really was," said Charley Clancy, whose house outside Boulder Creek burned despite attempts by neighbors to stop it. The neighbors held a dinner for Clancy last night.

Clancy has lived there for five years and said he will rebuild there because his garden was saved.

LaRault, the San Jose police officer, said he was helping people in the valley until 2 a.m., and only then could get to the hills to see his house. He said it was easier helping others than facing his own tragedy.

"It was like you put everything I had in a washing machine and spun it around and then dumped it in my house," he said.

"Here, you might think the people are a little flaky, or a little different, but when something like this happens, they really come out to help each other."