

Now Its Lack Of Water Which Plagues Love Creek Victims

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A giant landslide during the January storm in Santa Cruz County not only killed residents and destroyed homes in the mountain community of Love Creek, but shattered the dreams and futures of many whose lives and homes were spared.

Ron and Carolyn Heine narrowly escaped the path of destruction. The landslide missed their two-story home at Love Creek by only 50 feet.

They had designed and built it themselves on three acres bought five years ago for \$20,000. While building the home, they lived in a trailer on the property with their two small children — one of whom has a severe genetic disease.

But the Heines cannot go home. Their home sits in a potential slide area and is one of 28 houses which have been condemned as unsafe. It must be torn down.

The Heines are in the process of tearing it down and rebuilding a home, and their lives on land that has been given to

them just two miles away from Love Creek.

They plan to salvage what they can from their Love Creek residence — lumber, cabinets, sinks, tile, carpeting, and even the gingerbread decoration that made their house special to them.

In the meantime, delays in receiving government aid and county approval for their new house, not to mention the stress of living in temporary housing, has put them on an emotional roller coaster.

And as if they did not have enough problems, the site of their new home is situated in a double moratorium area for water service.

At a meeting of the San Lorenzo Valley Water District directors last week, the Heines were left wondering when a water connection could be made to the parcel so that construction can begin.

Water district directors were sympathetic to their plight, but could not immediately grant their request for a water hookup until improvements are

made in the storm-damaged water system. They did vote to give the Heines "hardship exemption" status, however.

Securing the water hookup is the last hurdle before building the new house, said Mrs. Heine.

The further delay last week dampened her spirits.

"If this doesn't work out, we will probably leave. There is nothing left for us here. It's too bad. I love it so much here," she said.

The Heine family has lived in the Ben Lomond area for 10 years.

With aid from the Federal Emergency Management Agency, a relief program for victims of disaster, they have rented a house in Live Oak

They have also received a \$50,000 loan with 8 percent interest from the Small Business Association.

"We come with hat in hand and we want to be humble," Heine told water district directors, "but it is up to us to rebuild our lives in total for \$50,000. That

is very inadequate in this county at this time."

It has been a bittersweet time for the Heine family.

"I've been surprised and grateful by the generosity of people," said Mrs. Heine.

They recently learned that a church will sponsor them for the next seven months for \$300 a month.

More generosity has come from Ben Lomond resident Phyllis Newman, who has given to the Heines the lot on which to build their new home.

After the flood Newman, a child psychologist, had decided to give away the lot to a Love Creek family under the most hardship. She had received seven letters from families describing their situations.

She narrowed down the cases to two, then gave the parcel to the Heines after the other victim — like other Love Creek residents — decided to never again live on property with a steep slope.

Reflecting on Newman's generosity,

Mrs. Heine said, "I didn't know people like that still existed."

This was the second property which the Heines had pursued since the January disaster as a place to rebuild their home. They initially had planned to build on another Ben Lomond lot, which they could have purchased at no money down and favorable terms.

Plans fell through, however, when that lot was found to be too small to build on under government regulations.

Heine, 32 is a building contractor and plans to do most of the work on the new home himself. He is usually self-employed, but due to the lagging economy, has taken construction work with a company. The work is scheduled to end in a few weeks.

Mrs. Heine, 31, is a former telephone employee would like to return to a position at the phone company.

"We need the money so bad. I want to work," she commented.

But much of her time is spent with her daughter Taundra, who has cystic fibrosis, a fatal disease which attacks the lungs and intestines.

Cystic fibrosis usually claims the lives of children by the time they reach 18, depending on the severity of the case.

Taundra's case is severe, said Mrs. Heine.

After birth, Taundra remained in intensive care at Stanford Medical Center for two long months.

In her short life, Taundra, almost 3, has been hospitalized six times for pneumonia and intestinal blockages.

A child with cystic fibrosis needs four times the calories of others in order to survive. Taundra takes daily doses of enzymes and antibiotics, said Mrs. Heine.

Mrs. Heine also must give Taundra "discussion therapy" in which the mother

pounds on her daughter in 14 different positions to loosen the mucous in the child's system.

"She doesn't like therapy very much. She doesn't want to do it," Mrs. Heine commented.

But Mrs. Heine does it — two or three times a day in 45 minute sessions.

The Heines have another daughter, Kara, aged 5, who is perfectly healthy.

Children from the Quail Hollow School in Ben Lomond got together and gave the Heines a money tree containing \$20 and tied with yellow ribbons.

The Heines have forged their way through other problems. Mrs. Heine has had two cancer operations and, in addition, underwent surgery in November. She doesn't know how they will pay for the bills from that operation.

After the Love Creek disaster, Mrs. Heine found the stress was building up inside of her.

"One day I was standing in the kitchen crying and not knowing why," she remembers.

Like other Love Creek residents, she has been attending COPE workshops designed for disaster victims.

The workshops have helped, she said.

"It was really hard for me to tell my mother that I was going to a psychologist, because we don't do that kind of thing in my family," she added.

The Heines have learned to take life one day at a time.

There have been good experiences.

"You can't expect the government to hold your hand...and that feels good," Mrs. Heine said.

And by sharing their lives with Taundra, they have learned to appreciate life.

"We really enjoy her. We don't know how long she will be with us," said Mrs. Heine.