

Villa/ Stately home threatened

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Built of unreinforced masonry, the Villa was badly damaged in the Oct. 17 quake. The structure still stands, but cracks are evident in the walls and the foundation may be damaged. One wall of the guest house collapsed, along with a brick privacy wall, and the home's walkways are buckled and broken.

Owner Harold Lee has been working to place Villa del Monte on the National Historic Register for five or six years now, he said. With the help of a historian, Lee has written a history of the house and its series of interesting owners.

Lee himself deserves a chapter in the Villa's history. Lee invented Pong, the first video game, and retired in 1976 at the age of 32. He has owned the Villa since '76, and until the quake lived there with his

extended family. He now lives in a San Jose hotel, awaiting word on the fate of his property.

The Villa del Monte had not been designated historic when the earthquake hit, and it now faces probable demolition.

Tearing down the Villa would be tragic, but under current county rules it would not be possible to save an unreinforced masonry building, Lee said.

Portions of the Villa could be salvaged, such as the entryway mosaic of a barking dog, entitled "cave canem" — beware of the dog — the 73-year-old grape vines in the courtyard and the glossy carved interior panels. But aside from moving the furniture, Lee hasn't done anything with his damaged building.

"The county said not to spend

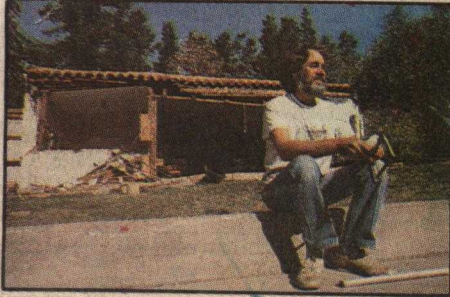
any money on it, so I'm not," he said. "I'm just waiting to see what happens."

Lee has stopped making mortgage and property tax payments, now that the property — at least temporarily — is unlivable and unrebuildable.

"We'll have to re-negotiate the mortgage," Lee said. "There's going to have to be a banker's moratorium until spring."

Several other Villa neighborhood residents have discussed withholding mortgage and tax payments, but such actions have not been endorsed by the neighborhood at large.

Copies of the Villa del Monte history study are available for \$10. For more information write to Villa History, 1253 Lundy Avenue, San Jose 95132.



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Harold Lee in front of guest house.

Old villa's future shaky

By MARIA GAURA
Sentinel staff writer

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SUMMIT — The original Villa del Monte was built in 1916 as the summer home of San Francisco insurance magnate Clarence Schmidt.

Designed in the style of an Italian villa, the white stucco home boasts an interior courtyard and fountain, intricately carved beams and interior paneling, a lion's head water spout at the head of the swimming pool and a bowling alley in the basement.

Originally surrounded by 365 acres of land, the Villa holdings were subdivided in 1957, and the historic residence now sits in the midst of a gracious neighborhood of approximately 102 individual lots. The neighborhood is now known as Villa del Monte, and the villa itself is often referred to as "the old Villa."

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