

# S.V. commuter bus arose out of the quake

By JONDI GUMZ

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SCOTTS VALLEY — William Brooks left work early, driving home from Sunnyvale, so he could watch the World Series on television. He arrived home just in time to save the life of his neighbor, buried in a pile of rubble when her house collapsed. He heard her yell, located her under a skylight, broke the skylight with his hand and pulled her out.

Then-Police Chief Stephen Walpole didn't go home that night. He stayed at City Hall, where the council chamber became an emergency operations center, with city employees responding to reports of damages at homes, streets, water mains and overpasses.

Then-Mayor Joe Miller, working at a high-tech company in Los Gatos, was lucky to be out of the room when a big cable drum came rolling through the wall. He and his wife found Highway 17 closed, so they took the long way home through Saratoga on Highway 9. Repairs took several weeks, so they began commuting together with a California Highway Patrol escort.

Rey Retzlaff, who built the 40-year-old Montevalle development, let people worried about their safety sleep in his motor home. One of his neighbors, Kay Trieman, 75, did not survive. She was trying on slacks in a dressing room at Ford's Department Store in downtown Santa Cruz when the building caved in.

Virginia Hooper slept in her car for a couple of nights. She was relieved when electricity came back on in 48 hours so the food she had in the freezer for her son's West Coast wedding reception was OK.

Their memories of the Loma Prieta earthquake 5:04 p.m. Oct. 17, 1989, remain vivid 20 years later.

One of the four homes

destroyed was on Cadillac Drive, where William Brooks still lives today. His neighbor, Beverly, moved to Santa Cruz after her insurance company wouldn't cover the damages. Before the quake, she had hired a contractor to brace her house, which was located on a steep hill. After she moved, someone else bought the property and built a home.

"To this day, we have emergency food, flashlights and radios," said Brooks, 57, who teaches at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. "I have everything battery-operated."

A ham radio operator, he has great appreciation for his wood-burning stove, where his family cooked until power was restored.

Walpole, 61, recalled how city and county agencies worked together to respond to the disaster.

Fellow officers credited Walpole's foresight in stocking City Hall with food and other emergency supplies. He had completed an emergency preparedness handbook in April and organized training for officers in August.

"We learned you need to do that annual training," said Walpole.

About 400 homes in the city suffered major to minor damage. Walpole himself lost a deck and a wall, which was categorized as minor, but cost thousands of dollars to repair.

Inspectors walked the town looking for chimneys about to collapse.

Miller, 68, recalled how his chimney twisted 90 degrees. He and his son-in-law chopped it down before it could fall.

The Granite Creek overpass was deemed unsafe for travel, so a gate was opened on Green Hills Road for emergency access.

Parts of Scotts Valley Drive were flooded. A bridge across Carbonera Creek washed out, cutting off Seagate Technology,

William Brooks saved his neighbor from the wreckage of this Scotts Valley home.

then 10 years old.

"Everybody lost lots of dishes and keepsakes," recalled Retzlaff, 92, proud to report the Old Mill, the centerpiece of the Montevalle mobile home development, suffered no damage. "We built it so well."

About 12 of the 220 homes at Montevalle were red-tagged, a relatively small number.

"They were built to drive the road at 65 miles per hour," Retzlaff said.

Ninety officers came from as far away as San Diego and Sacramento to serve on the security detail when

President George Bush toured the area three days after the quake. He made a stop at the Scotts Valley Senior Center.

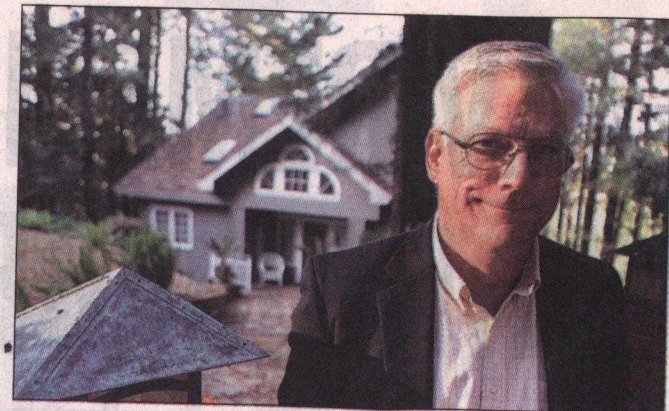
For a long time after, a notice on the toilet in the men's room said "George Bush sat here."

Hooper, 89, who is active in the Scotts Valley Historical Society, said the shutdown of Highway 17 led to creation of a San Jose commuter bus that picked people up in a parking lot by Santa's Village Road.

"That was one good thing that came out of the quake," she said.



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL FILE



PHIL CARTER/SENTINEL

William Brooks stands in front of his neighbor's home on Cadillac Drive in Scotts Valley. Brooks saved his neighbor from her home after it collapsed during the Loma Prieta quake. The house has since been rebuilt and now has new owners.