

Building will bridge generations

Pacific Avenue Ferrari replacement keeps family mark on Pacific Avenue

By ROBIN MUSITELLI
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — Around the turn of the century, just a few years after what became the Ferrari Building was built on Pacific Avenue, Leroy Pera's grandparents immigrated from Italy to settle in Santa Cruz.

The Peras now have five generations of family in Santa Cruz and a second-generation building going up on Pacific Avenue.

The Pera family is constructing a two-story building at 1220 Pacific Ave., the site of the Ferrari building, which was demolished following the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

Leroy Pera's uncle, Dave Ferrari, owned the building for more than 30 years. But after the earthquake, the retired florist didn't want the hassle of rebuilding, Pera said.

So Leroy, retired from the vending machine business, and his wife, Helen, bought the property. Their son, David Pera, is the contractor.

"We wanted to keep this in the family. That's really how it all started," said Leroy Pera. "We're putting a building up there that will be part of the family for years to come."

The old Ferrari building was constructed in 1887; its Italianate building facade overlooked the avenue for just over a century.

It served as a meeting hall for the Masonic Order of Santa Cruz, and later was home to the floral creations of Dave Ferrari.

The Loma Prieta quake damaged both the Ferrari and adjacent Elks buildings. For four years, the neighboring buildings languished on the avenue between Soquel and Walnut avenues, their ground-floor levels boarded up behind chain-link fences.

The two buildings were linked by a common concrete wall, and replacement was delayed by debates over demolition costs and historical value.

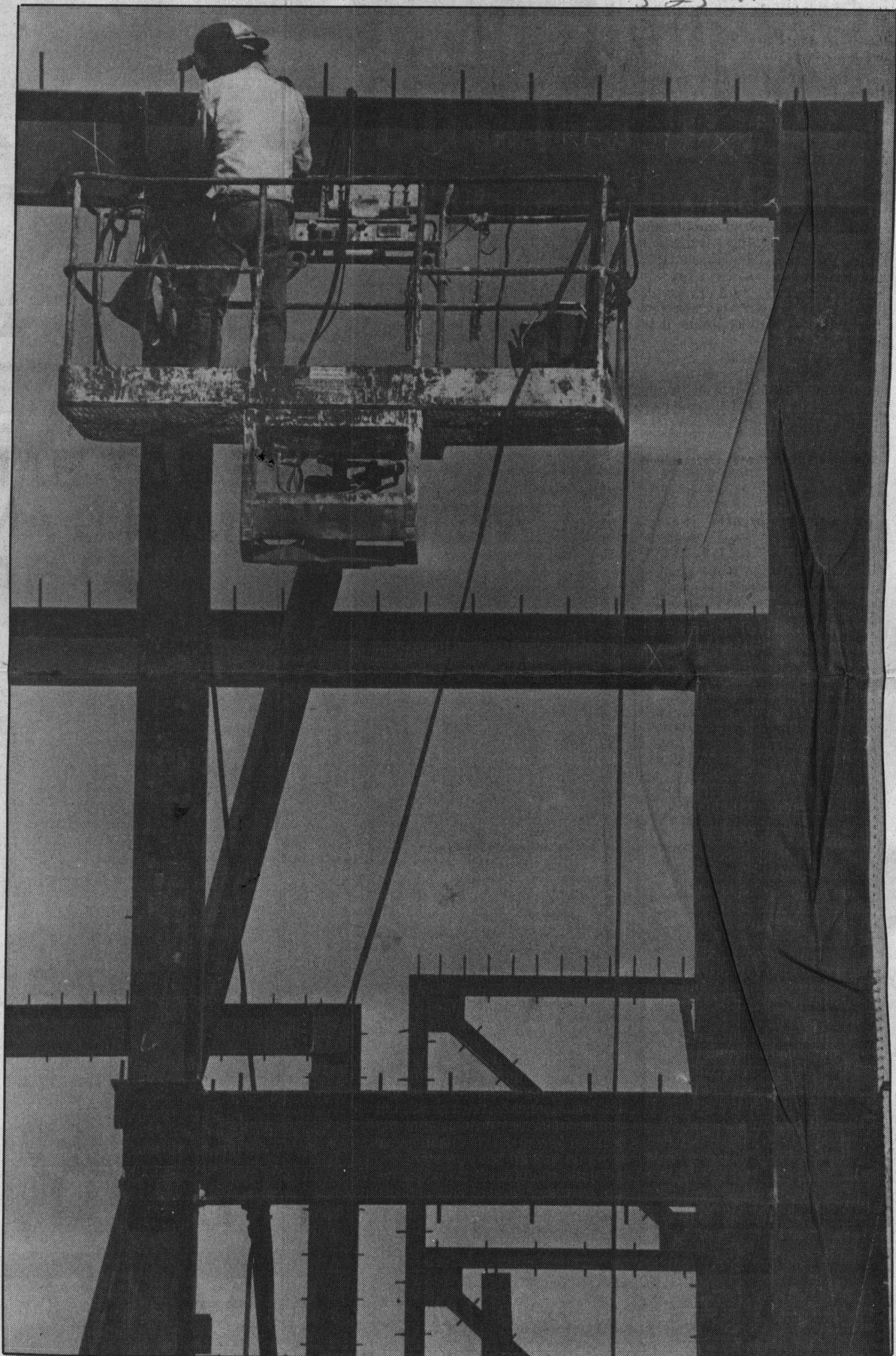
The wrecking ball finally won the argument: the sagging masonry hulks were leveled piece by piece last July.

Like the next generation of a family, the new Pera building will incorporate some of the old. Ferrari Building wood has been saved with hopes of using it in the lobby of the new building.

The Pera building is a modern, open design, with a two-story portico in front that projects from the front of the building. From the sidewalk outside, people will be able to see into the second floor. From the street, passers-by will see a stairway wrapping to the second floor. Dark green awnings will arch over the sidewalk.

The Peras hope to have retail shops or a restaurant on the ground floor, and are negotiating with several possible tenants, said Pera.

The upper floor is being built to accommodate either office, retail or another restaurant, he said. Weather cooperating, construction will be complete in late August or September, said Pera.



A welder finishes up the iron work for the Ferrari Building replacement on Pacific Avenue.

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