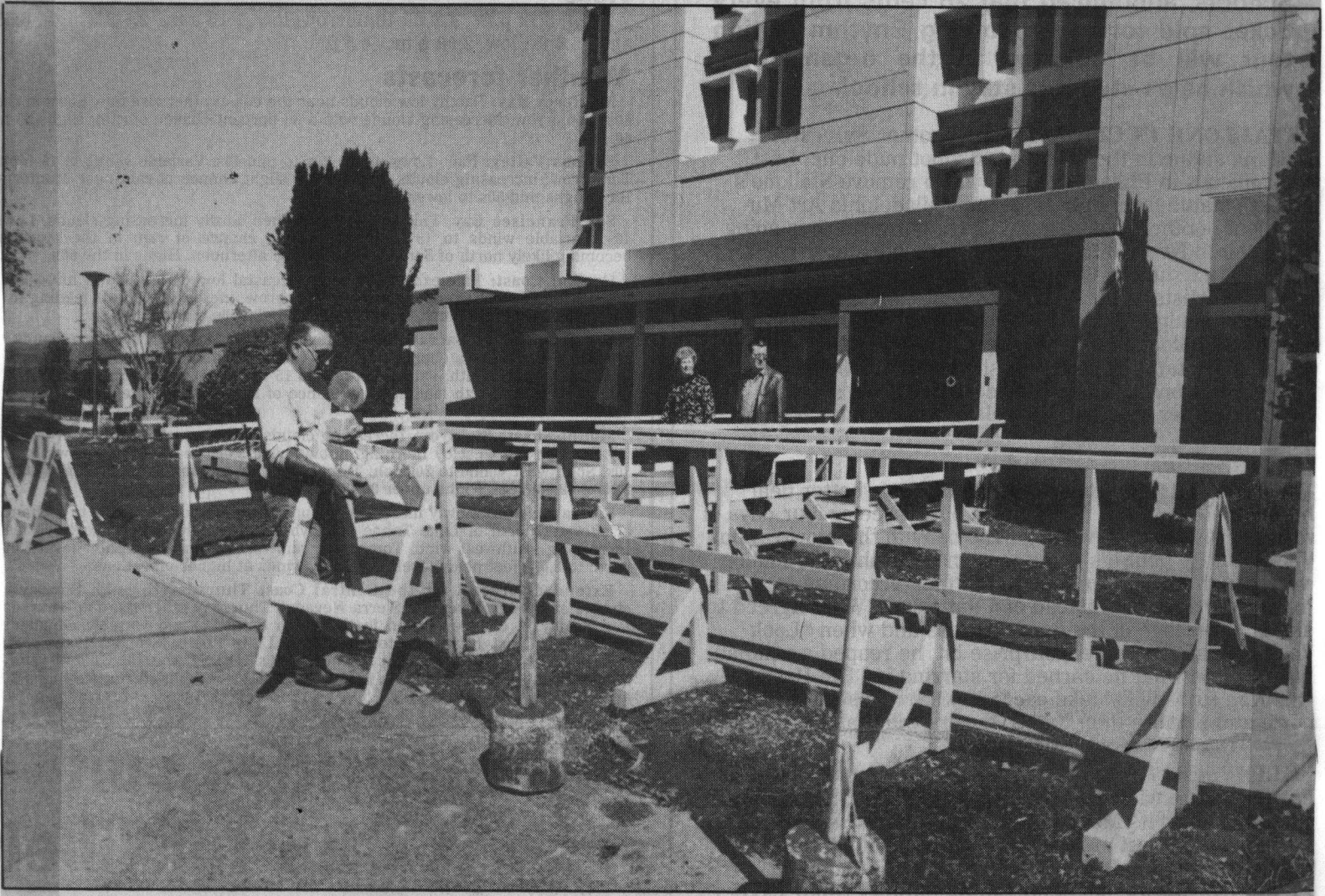


Costly discoveries



Hospital grounds worker Daniel Dias inspects work on the underground sewer pipe yesterday. Diane Varni

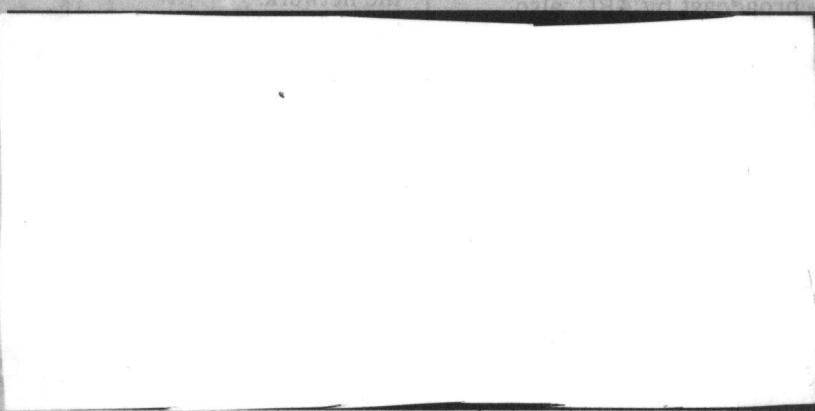
Hospital faces major quake repair

By CHELA ZABIN
STAFF WRITER

Before the Oct. 17 earthquake, there had been plans for reorganizing the hospital's first floor, but Watsonville Community Hospital is looking at something a bit bigger now — digging up and remodeling the entire floor and front entrance.

"In the earthquake, the hospital moved two ways," Barbara Shingai, vice president of the hospital, said, "up and down and side to side."

Some of the damage the hospital suffered in the shaking was obvious — a glass hallway leading from the main building to the Eiskamp building was shattered, a modular unit sank several feet into the ground, parts of the hospital floor also fell in a bit, pulling away from walls and leaving spaces under doors, metal framing buckled, and



equipment and files were thrown around. There was also damage to the hospital's ventilation system.

But, Shingai said, in January, when the hospital started to

smell bad, the staff realized earthquake damage was worse than they thought. A video camera sent down into the hospital's innards cinched the diagnosis — there were numerous cracks and breaks in the hospital's sewage system, most of which is located underground, directly beneath the building.

Shingai said the discovery boosted estimated repair costs from \$2 million to about \$10 million, mostly because the floor needs to be pulled up to get at the network of damaged pipes underneath. Repairs have begun in front of the building, where

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the cement walkway has been removed and replaced with plywood.

Shingai said that the hospital has been working closely with FEMA and the state Office of Emergency Services on the repairs and expects to have most of the repairs paid for between the two agencies.

She said the hospital is planning to do the work piecemeal, moving departments around so that it can continue to function at normal capacity while the work is being done. If necessary, some temporary modular buildings can be set up, she said.

Because the hospital is opting for the phased repair approach, the work could take as long as

two years before it's completed, she said.

In the meantime, the hospital has been plagued by an infestation of gnats, which apparently have been breeding in the broken sewer lines under the building. While a few were still buzzing around on the first floor Friday, Shingai said the hospital attempts to eradicate them have been working — there are appreciably fewer gnats now than there were a few weeks ago, she said.

She said neither the gnats nor the leaking sewage have posed a health problem and that the hospital has been working with a number of different regulatory agencies on all of its post-quake problems.

The hospital will be rerouting some of the sewage system, trying to get as much as possible out from under the building, so that future repairs won't be so difficult, Shingai said.