

Mushrooming Market For Geodesic Domes

By PEGGY RUDNICKI
Sentinel Staff Writer

High in the Aptos hills sits an unusual home that combines the elegance of a conventional house with the space age modernity of a Sarninen creation.

The house, constructed with 60 interlocking wooden triangles, is shaped much like an igloo and covered with redwood shingles.

It is called a geodesic dome, and although the concept was developed in 1952 by architect R. Buckminster Fuller, the sight of one of these domed houses is still unusual.

Two young men are responsible for building the Aptos home and others like it in the Northern California area. Barry Nottoli and Scott Hewett, both 24, are distributors and carpenters for Cathedral Dome Co. and are developing a mushrooming market for the rounded houses.

The unique house is surrounded by a redwood deck with two large sliding glass doors overlooking a forest of oak.

Inside, the dome home is a multitude of unusual features. Redwood spiral staircases connect a east-west and a pentangle shaped skylight is cut out of the dome's peak. There is sun-ray shaped wood paneling above the bar and a four-person tile bathtub. Blanked glass windows, wood art by the grapevine in Watsonville, and a sleeping loft highlight the house.

Yet, according to the two builders, this type of home is cheaper to build than a conventional house.

The geodesic dome kits, which consist of "an amazingly small looking pile of 60 wooden triangles," costs \$4,295, said Nottoli.

Yet, the small pile will build a 39 foot dome with approximately 1,600 square feet of space.

According to Nottoli, the total price varies depending on what each individual wants in the house.

"This particular dome cost \$40,000," he said. "But that is because there is a lot of custom work."

"The bathtub alone cost \$1,400," he added.

However, since most people choose to do the majority of the work themselves the cost of construction becomes even cheaper, he said.

"People become their own architect, painter, electrician and carpenter. You don't have to be a pro to put one up."

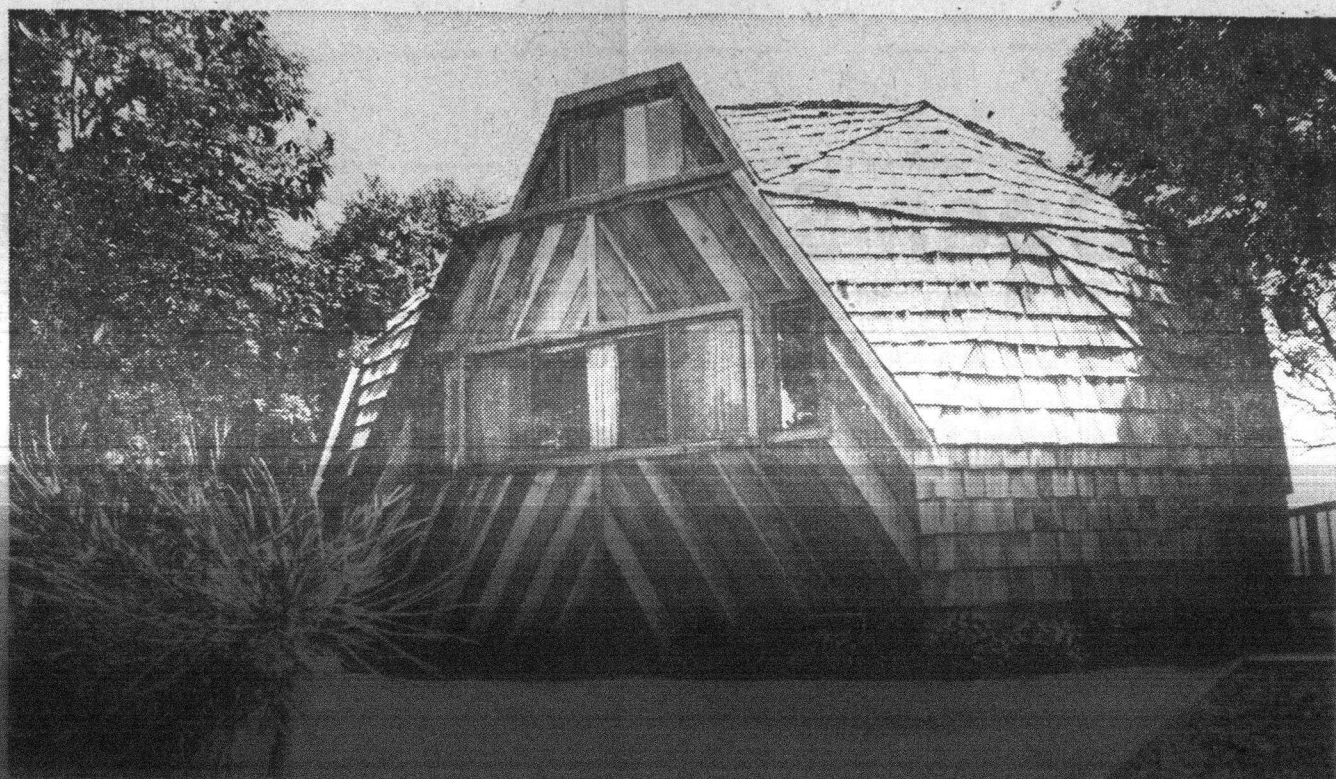
According to Nottoli, the homes can be set up in a remarkably short time.

"We once put up a dome frame in 5 1/2 hours. Most people can get it up in a day."

Assembling the kit is a relatively easy job and takes no construction experience, said Nottoli.

The kit's triangles are bolted together in fives and sixes and then the pentagons and hexagons are bolted together to form the frame of the house.

Builders work from the bottom up, building walls un-



til the final pentagon is set in place at the top.

The structure is completely watertight inside, supporting members, so designers can be as unconventional as they wish about room placement, according to Hewett.

The Aptos home has three bedrooms, two baths and a small of the kitchen set off living room.

"The structure is self-reinforcing," said Hewett. "Because it needs no supporting walls, the dome uses less wood. Framing costs are about half that of a conventional house."

In addition to framing costs, everything in the dome is located within 15 to 40 feet of everything else so wire and plumbing costs decrease proportionately, he said.

Hewett also estimated that heating and cooling costs for the dome were 10 to 30 per cent cheaper than a conventional house. The dome's electricity and heating bill comes to about \$25 per month.

"The lack of hard corners allows heat to circulate," he said. "It is an efficient heat carrier."

Nottoli, who lives in the dome, said the house is easy to clean and requires little maintenance.

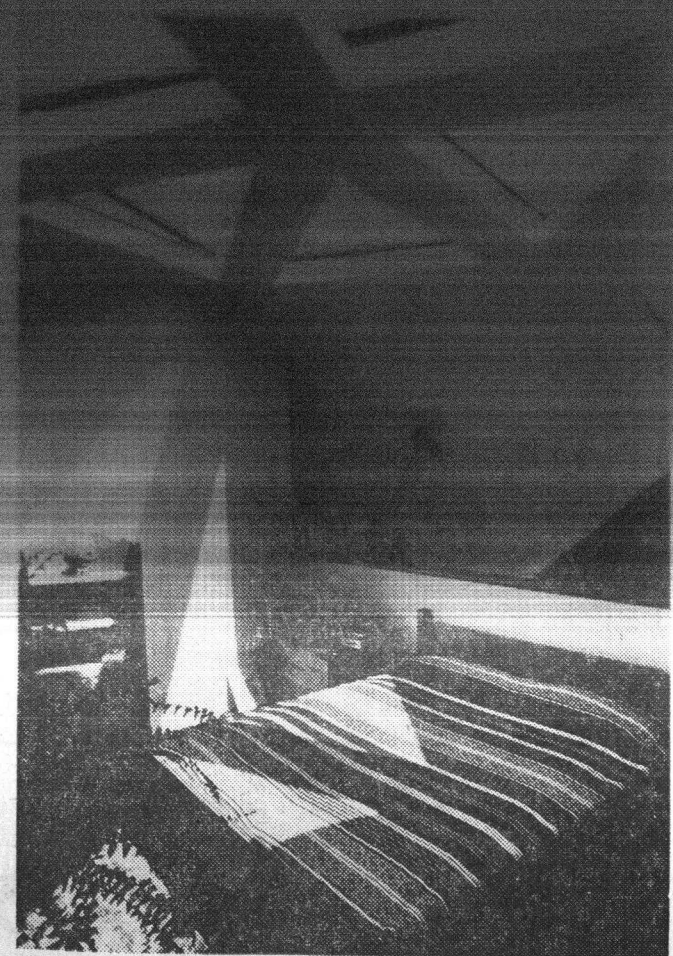
"The only problem with living in a dome is that people stop by the house at all hours just to take a look," he said.

Neither Hewett or Nottoli could define the type of person that buys a dome.

"Teachers, large families, professional people, rich people looking for a second or third home and young couples buy the dome kits," said Nottoli.

The endless possibilities of the dome—bolting two or three domes together, setting them on different levels with connecting hallways and a variety of dome sizes—allow for just about anybody to be comfortable in a dome, he said.

The dome is located at 701 Vista Del Mar in Rio Del Mar and is open to visitors Saturday and Sunday from noon to 6 p.m. and weekdays from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.



Domed house features a large sleeping loft which just above the living room below. A pentangle skylight made of heavy tinted glass lights the room and as Builder Barry Nottoli says, "This isn't a room for late sleepers."

One of the unique features of the house, at left, is the coat closet concealed in the spiral of the stairway. The redwood closet also has small storage compartment than can be reached from second floor landing.



Builder Barry Nottoli stands outside his

Quality Workmans