

*Building*

# Women Build Own Home In Ben Lomond

By DENISE SIEBENTHAL  
Sentinel Staff Writer

They're out in the hot sun at the construction site, pounding nails, laying bricks, pushing up framing and sweating profusely.

Yet this isn't the typical gang of burly, macho construction workers because the building of Gloria Seneres' home in the Ben Lomond hills is being done totally by women.

Another group of women libbers, some may scoff, but this is not exactly the case. Building her own home has been Seneres' lifelong dream way before women's liberation was a household term.

And the women she has working with her - Claudine Cavet, Roseann Hyman and Debbie Parks are all very serious about their work. Cavet, 29, has made construction her trade and Hyman and Parks, recent Soquel High School graduates, both are considering a future in construction.

Seneres, 53, is a vision of limitless energy as she buzzes around the construction site helping here and there and making sure everything is going just right.

A professional painter and sculpture, she's travelled throughout the world with her husband's job as an artist for a worldwide advertising agency, and her goal was always to have a home base.

With their daughter attending Cabrillo College, Seneres and her husband came to Santa Cruz to live. They bought a house in Scotts Valley, but Seneres said she was never happy with it.

When her husband went back to Nairobi, Kenya to work a few two years ago, Seneres took two years to find the ideal piece of property to begin her dream. She found it on a tranquil, Ben Lomond mountainside above Love Creek.

It took the next year and three months just to secure all the proper county permits.

"Having patience is the best quality to have in building a house," she exclaimed. "I get very anxious. From the very beginning, getting the permits was a very nerve-racking thing. Now I'm having problems getting the electricity hook up."

Seneres added that being a woman made no difference in waiting for county permits. "I think everybody goes through the same thing," she smiled.

She also enrolled in the home



It takes a group effort to put up the framing.

on the house.

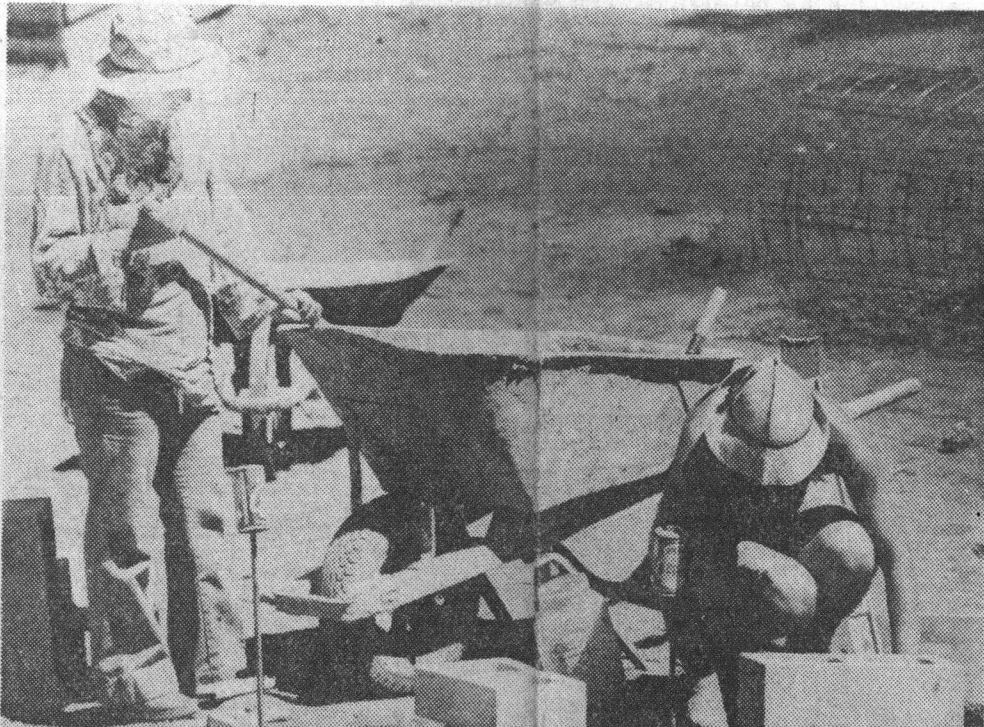
"Originally, I didn't think to use all women on the house, but Santa Cruz just seemed to lend itself to that type of thing," Seneres said.

She placed an ad in the newspaper which read, "Wanted: construction workers with a delicate touch. Women encouraged to apply."

The response was phenomenal, Seneres said, "but the problem was that there were very few women who had complete knowledge of the whole thing from start to finish."

She came across Cavet from a recommendation of "a friend of a friend of a friend." Hyman and Parks, both graduates of the two-year home construction course at Soquel High, were suggested by Bruce, the instructor of the class.

"I've just been around construction a lot," Cavet said of her experience. "I've never built a whole house by myself





construction class at Soquel High School's adult school. From there, she became friends with instructor Bill Bruce who's given the women a lot of advice, but no manpower,

I've only worked on parts of houses. But it's hard to find a man who can do it all either." Although she's never layed a brick in her life, Cavet appeared an expert as she fitted

Gloria stirs the cement as Claudine lays the bricks.

the huge concrete blocks of the house's foundation this week.

"About four years ago, I tried to get into the carpenters' union and they just laughed," Cavet related. "Four years ago I had a hard time getting people to believe I was capable of doing the work. Now, I'm getting jobs by word of mouth."

After finishing the Seneres job, Cavet plans to take drafting and estimating at Cabrillo College. It's no longer her goal, however, to get into the union because she wants to stick to building single family homes.

Union jobs, she explained, usually involve building a hotel or a huge apartment building.

As for advice to women planning on getting into construction, Parks said, "If you want to build it yourself, you have to be in shape for it. Your hands don't stay all soft and beautiful. You work with them and they get all banged up. You have to be willing to get dirty and work hard."

Seneres wants her home to become an example to other women who are interested in such an undertaking. She's secured a grant from the California Arts Council to do a 20-minute color film on the enterprise.

The film also is a total women experience with Sally Margolis and Ann Irving doing the filming and Christina Floyd taking still photographs for use in the film and for publicity.

"I thought it would be good to show women what the problems are in building a house through a film," Seneres explained. "It would have been a good thing for me to have seen such a movie before I started."

Seneres wants women interested in construction to visit the home site. For information on private showings, one can call Paula at 427-2112.

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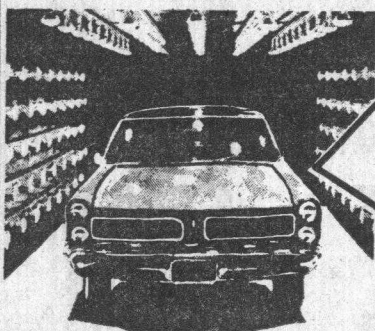
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Roseann, Claudine and Debbie, kneeling, show concentration as they nail the siding.

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October 25	Scotts Valley—San Agustin Hall	10 am—2 pm
November 29*	Santa Cruz—Casa Del Rey Hotel	10 am—2 pm
December 27	Felton—St. John's Catholic Church	10 am—2 pm