

Quake

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Wally's daughter and son-in-law, Mary and John Aalto, arrived around 11 a.m. They lived 18 miles away and had also been in the earthquake.

After making sure that the older folks were all right and didn't want to come home with them, they left. The Thomsons wanted to make sure that their home was protected before leaving.

"We spent the afternoon sitting in our backyard in superb weather. Every so often our house would shake from the aftershocks, some of them over 5.0 (on the Richter scale)," the Thomsons wrote.

Aalto returned late in the afternoon, to take them to his home. The 18-mile drive, which took about an hour, was appalling.

"There were scenes of disaster all the way. Most traffic lights were out. Chimneys down, apartments without walls, ambulances, fire engines, total confusion. A pall of acrid smoke hung over the valley," they recalled.

The Aaltos' home already had its utilities restored, so a cooked meal - using boiled water - was in order. Telephone service was erratic, but John and Mary had managed to call their step-sister, Cathy Flick, and several other family members spread across the country.

"The TV showed Myrtle and me for the first time the extent of the quake. Up until then we had little idea of how widespread the damage was and the effect it was having on the valley and the whole country. We were horrified to hear it called the Northridge Earthquake," Wally Thomson wrote.

When they returned to their house the next day, "a building inspector arrived and spent an hour checking our house. He said our foundation was OK

and so were the fireplace and chimney. He said that we had the only undamaged chimney on the street. The front of our garage had sustained major damage and was our worst problem."

Later that afternoon part of the block wall around their backyard collapsed.

It took the couple two days just to clear a path through their kitchen. Their Guatemalan housekeeper, Carmela, showed up January 19 to help with the cleanup, later bringing her brother and daughter along.

It took five days for Aalto to scrounge enough plumbing supplies to repair the leaks and get the hot water heater going again.

As they later watched newscasts of the devastation, Thomson wrote, "We were appalled to hear of the damage around us. The apartment house where 16 died was only 1.4 miles southeast of us, just across from our post office."

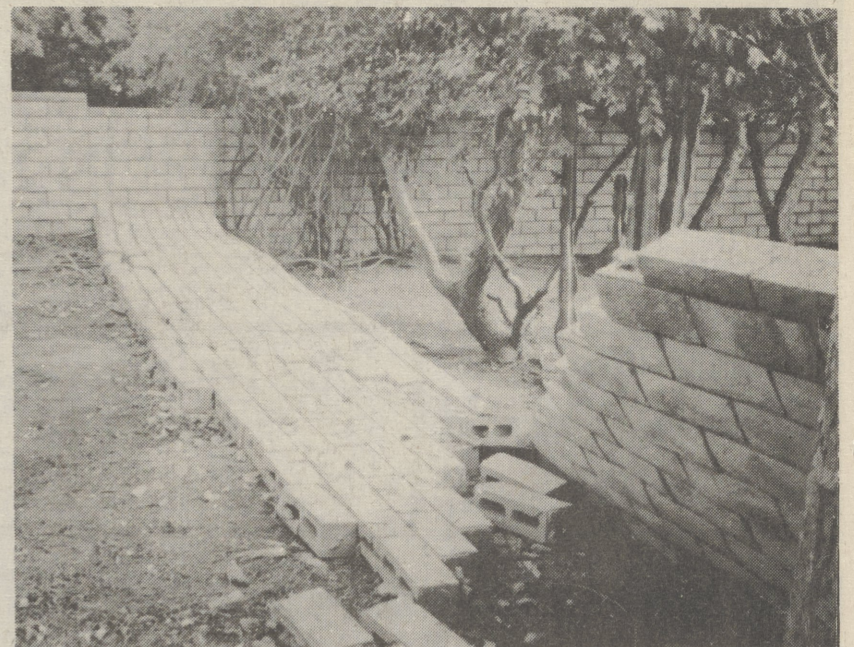
A shopping center which they frequently used and local discount stores were also severely damaged.

"Cal State Northridge, only two miles from us, was severely damaged - at least \$120 million. We had been to the library there only a week before the quake. Its fourth floor has collapsed onto the third floor. The epicenter of the quake was determined to be at the corner of Reseda and Roscoe, 2.4 miles south-southeast of us. The major quake area has been determined to be a square 10 miles on a side. We are right in the middle of that square."

Thomson described how they had been prepared for such a disaster: flashlights, enough non-perishable food to last two weeks, six gallons of drinking water, first-aid materials, a



SCENES OF DESTRUCTION - January's earthquake in California toppled storage shelves in the garage and walls outside of Wally and Myrtle Thomson's Northridge home. Cathy Flick of Kunkle



shared the letter and photos she recently received from her mother and stepfather. Their home was a little over two miles from the quake's epicenter.

camp stove, propane lantern and a wrench stored by the gas valve.

Their house was bolted to its foundation, while the water heater was boarded up to keep it upright and storage shelves had rope ties across them to secure stored items.

They roughly estimated their damage at \$10,000. They didn't have earthquake insurance - the typical policy has \$10,000 deductible and probably wouldn't have helped them, Thomson wrote.

"There must be 100,000 people in the same shape we are, maybe more. There may be 10,000 a lot worse off than we, including the dead, the injured and the homeless."

Several weeks after the earthquake, the Thomsons are still cleaning up and trying to get back to normal.

Family members have already begun to plan trips to

California to help with repairs, which Flick says won't begin until the aftershocks have subsided, probably in the summer. Her parents have told her that they plan to rebuild.

At a Super Bowl party, the

50 guests, all quake victims, compared notes and agreed that Myrtle and Wally Thomson had been hit the hardest.

Thomson concluded: "Myrtle and I consider ourselves very, very lucky. Here we were, right

on top of the worst natural disaster ever to strike this country and yet we escaped uninjured and with damages that we can pay for....We will never again really trust Mother Nature."

Zone change

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procedure."

According to the Standard Industrial Codes (SIC), developed by the federal government to classify businesses by the type of work that they do, the making of wood kitchen cabinets is classified under the manufacture of wood and lumber products, excluding furniture.

The Harveys Lake Zoning Ordinance of 1993 defines light industry on page 2-15 as "A use engaged in the manufacture, predominantly from previously prepared materials, of finished products or parts, including process-

ing, fabrication, assembly, treatment, packaging, incidental storage, sales and distribution of such products."

Although he has denied that he is manufacturing in his shop, Sopp has requested a hearing for a variance to allow him to manufacture there.

His landlord, Joseph Pagliante, has also applied to the Luzerne County Planning Commission to rezone the lot where Sopp's business is located from commercial

to manufacturing.

He also wrote that he is not considered to be a manufacturer by the state because he doesn't use raw materials, which he had defined at the November 11 hearing as "timber, whole trees."


At that hearing, Sopp had described how he makes custom cabinets and counter tops: "The plywood is cut to size, screwed together and hinges installed. The Formica tops are glued to the plywood."

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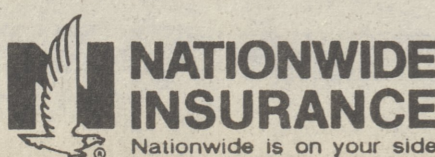
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