

Contractors from page 1F

by at least 10 percent.

■ 94 contractors and subcontractors, 35 percent, reported that mid-year work volume had decreased by 10 percent or more. That figure was 44 percent at year-end.

■ 65 contractors and subcontractors, 24 percent, indicated that they plan to increase their workforce during the next six months. The corresponding figure at year-end was 18 percent.

■ 56 contractors and subcontractors, 21 percent, reported better cash flow compared to six months ago.

That figure was 19 percent at year-end. "A lot of work (now) seems to be done in hospitals, school renovation work," Rieger said. "That's not big dollars, but bigger than we had before."

"What has been keeping us afloat is public works," Hacias said. "Thank God for that. I suspect money loosening would help. Money is tight in the banking industry, as I understand. Maybe the election will bring something."

"Cash flow from ownership down is practically non-existent," Rieger added.

ed. But both remain optimistic. "You go through peaks and valleys," said Rieger, who started in the building supply business in 1957. "It's grown tremendously. A lot of changes have occurred over the years. I can see it continue to grow. Every product and system has peaks and valleys." "This has been a tougher down period than the last recession," Hacias said. "I've been in the business 32 years. I've been through cycles. Every time we hit bottom, there's a bright spot in the future."

Natural stones require special care

AP — Few materials can rival marble and granite for luxury and beauty. Without loving care, however, these natural stone surfaces can become stained and dingy. Keep them in good condition by following these simple maintenance and clean-up suggestions from the Marble Institute of America:

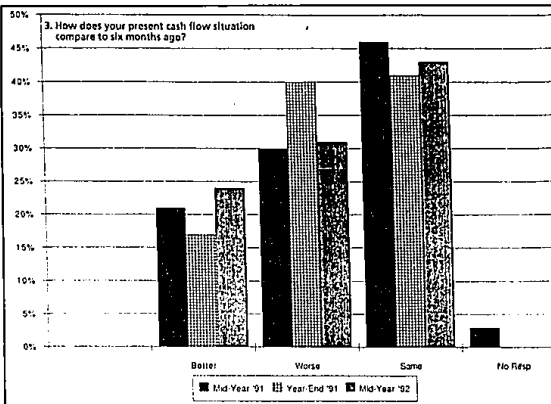
■ Proper placement. Installing marble and granite

deserve the same careful attention given to fine wood furniture. Use coasters or place mats when putting dishes on them. Clean up any spills immediately.

■ More than skin deep. Excess waxing and polishing can smother the stone and cause a loss of luster. For everyday dirt, wipe marble and granite with a damp sponge and buff dry.

Use the "general poultice" method to draw most food stains and deep-seated dirt and grime out of the natural stone. Combine a laundry bleach or a 6 percent hydrogen peroxide solution with a white absorbent material — such as Fuller's Earth or untreated white flour — to form a paste. Apply mixture at a half-inch thickness with plastic and cover with plastic for 48 hours. Remove the mixture, then rinse.

■ No pain, no gain. To remove oil stains, use the poultice method with acetone as the liquid cleaner. For rust stains, a simple application of naval jelly or other rust removers should do the trick. Commercial smoke removers will take out smoke stains from your marble mantel.



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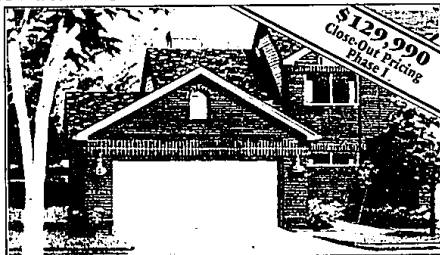
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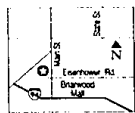
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