

Builder turns seminar teacher

By MARY RODRIGUE
STAFF WRITER

Building a home can be a stressful endeavor, with buyers forced to make dozens of long-term decisions in a short time frame.

"You think you're getting everything you need from the architect or the builder — but you're not," said Livonia builder Jim Nawrot.

After 30-plus years building single family dwellings from metro Detroit to Gaylord, Nawrot is hanging up his tools for a new line of work.

On Saturday, April 17, he will offer his first home building seminar at the Holiday Inn, Six Mile and I-275 in Livonia.

For \$25 a person, or \$40 per couple, Nawrot promises — in

one workshop — to save consumers hundreds of dollars in energy-related tips.

"I've put together a workbook with 250 to 300 tips, plus drawings. The seminar will be like a miniature home show, with displays on insulation, walls and windows," Nawrot said.

Nawrot holds a U.S. Patent on a double wall system that he claims can heat and cool a 2,000-square-foot home for \$200 a year.

"You keep the home air tight, well insulated and have an air to air heat exchanger," he said.

"I'm an energy nut in the building trades. I'll show them the proper things to do. They should be able to say — it's my house, do it my way."

He says many of the tips can be incorporated into subdivision

houses at no extra cost. On housing, Nawrot's motto is "A steel chain is only as strong as its weakest link."

"Keep it simple, use common sense, make it cost effective," he said.

He promises to offer dozens of insider tips culled from 32 years in the business. A workbook called Energy Efficient Techniques & Quality Construction Methods Simplified will be presented free to the first 100 in attendance. The book will be for sale at later seminars.

Nawrot will address issues such as the advantages of blown-in fiberglass or cellulose insulation, a wall framing technique that saves wood, and how to properly install windows.

The seminar is meant to avoid

on the job education with the idea of learning before you start to build.

Nawrot, a licensed builder, stopped building homes just weeks ago. He is incorporating his new business under the name Home Building Workshop. He hopes to go national with his program within a year.

"There are so many little tips that can save money and aggravation. Have you ever had a towel bar fall off the wall? Or a curtain that wouldn't hang properly? These annoyances can be corrected once and for all with scrap lumber."

"All I can say is anyone who has ever thought of building a house should be here," he said. To register or for more information, call Nawrot at 462-0944.

Hope springs eternal for sales

(AP) — Despite adverse weather and a big jump in prices, sales of new homes increased 4.6 percent in February, government figures show.

"Without the bad weather, the February data would be much, much stronger," said David Berson, an economist with the Federal National Mortgage Association. "The report understates the strength of the housing market."

But Michael Carliner, an economist with the National Association of Home Builders, expressed concern over the 7.4 percent increase in the median price of a new home.

"I'm not sure how severely consumers will react," he said. Sales totaled 595,000 at a seasonally adjusted annual rate, up from 569,000 in January, according to the report Monday from the Commerce and Housing and Urban Development departments.

The February advance included double-digit increases in both the Northeast and West, which offset declines in the Midwest and South. Analysts had expected sales in February to rise about 6 percent. The slower pace and a 12.7 percent plunge in January were attributed to the

winter weather.

"Unfortunately, the March data will also be held down because of bad weather, with the Blizzard of '93 affecting the South and Northeast and, later in the month, more rain in California," Berson said. "But once we get more seasonably spring weather, I expect sales will jump."

So far in 1993, sales are down 10.7 percent from the first two months of last year. At the end of February, the seasonally adjusted estimate of new houses for sale was 271,000, representing a supply of 5.5 months at the current sales rate.

The median price of a new home rose to \$128,700 in February, from \$118,900 a month earlier. The median means that half of the homes cost more and half cost less.

"The price of lumber has roughly doubled in the last six months," Carliner said. "Since October, lumber has added about \$5,000 to the cost of a new house."

Still, analysts expect the rising costs to be partially offset by the lowest mortgage rates in two decades and an improving economy.

Home fire drills encourage safety

The first rule of fire safety is: Be prepared.

Here are some tips for alerting your family about the dangers of fire:

■ Draw a plan of your home (including stairs, windows and doors) and plot two escape routes from each room. Study the plan with your family and assign someone to help young children, the elderly or the disabled. As an extra precaution, apply special decals, available through fire departments or at home centers, to the windows of their rooms so that firemen can locate and rescue them.

■ Hold regular fire drills and designate a place to meet outside for a head count.

■ Some persons may need to use a window to escape. Make sure they are able to reach and unlock it, remove the screen or storm window and get down to the ground safely.

■ Purchase chain ladders, available by mail and from locksmiths, hardware stores or home centers. Store them next to upstairs windows or near beds and practice using them.

■ Install smoke detectors wherever recommended by the manufacturers.

Also hang fire extinguishers bearing the Underwriters Laboratories (UL) label at key spots in your home. Teach your family how and when to use them. Check detectors and extinguishers every six months to be sure they work.

■ Post the fire emergency number near telephones or program a phone with automatic dialing to call 911 or the fire department. Find out the location of the nearest fire alarm box.

Here are some suggestions if a fire occurs:

■ Regardless of the size of the fire, first get everyone out of the house and have someone call the fire department immediately. If you decide to try to put out a small fire, position yourself between the fire and your escape route. If after two minutes you can neither contain nor extinguish the flames, don't waste critical time. Close doors and windows behind you and get out of the house. Once out of the house, don't go back.

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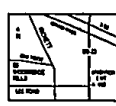
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