

BUILDING SCENE

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THURSDAY, JULY 15, 1993

BUILDING SCENE'S NAMES & PLACES

New digs for Raptoplous

H.C. Raptoplous, a father and son restaurant design team, has moved into a new expanded office space on Maple Road in Birmingham. Harry Sr. and Harry Jr. specialize in commercial, institutional and gourmet kitchens.

Landru joins CB

Michael Landru, formerly the director of development for Little Caesars, has joined Southfield-based CB Commercial Real Estate Group's retail specialty department. He will be responsible for selling and leasing commercial properties on the east side and be involved in tenant representation. CB Commercial is the nation's largest commercial real estate brokerage company. Krenz on Giffels' board



Landru

Krenz on board

Farmington Hills resident Richard G. Krenz, vice president and project director at Southfield-based Giffels Associates, was elected to the architectural engineering firms' board of directors. Krenz, a Wayne State grad, began his career at Giffels in 1960 and has been involved in some of the firm's biggest projects. He replaces James R. Graham who has retired.

Waqhar joins SME

Khalid Waqhar has joined Plymouth-based Soil and Materials Engineers Inc. as a remediation engineer. He will be responsible for preparing corrective action plans and implementing remediation plans. He has 10 years experience in managing engineering and environmental projects.

Back to the stone age?

■ No one is recommending a return to the cave, but with the instability of the lumber industry and the technological advances in the concrete industry, complete concrete homes are looking better and better.

By Chris McCosky
Staff Writer

Dick Manning had been in the concrete business for 30 years and pouring concrete walls for 20 when he heard about this new system for building homes out of concrete. Complete homes, not just basements and driveways.

"I looked at it for a year," said Manning, who owns the Portland Concrete Supply Co. and High Energy Walls near Lansing. "I figured, no way can this work. No way."

Still, the concept intrigued him. Miracle houses. Environmentally sound, energy efficient homes. Houses that are easier and cost less to build than conventional wood-frame houses. Air-tight houses that stay cool in the summer and warm in the winter. Houses like the 4,707-square-foot one in Omaha, Neb., that cost an average of just \$20.68 per month to heat and cool for a full year, and is so quiet you could barely hear a party of 10 people carrying on in an adjacent room.

So Manning looked closer. He went to a seminar in Indiana and inspected some of these concrete homes. He went out to Omaha and saw one of the first test homes. He was struck not only by the efficiency of the homes, but by their beauty. You think concrete homes and you think caves. A return to the stone age? But what Manning saw was architectural and aesthetic beauty, all



Turn to stone: You wouldn't guess this beautiful home is made out of concrete, would you? But it is. Techniques in concrete masonry and precast concrete panels are allowing builders to construct homes that are up to 70 percent more energy efficient than wood-built homes.

sorts of colors, shapes and designs, concrete that looked like brick and stone and wood, something the experts were calling, "concrete homescaping."

"It was scary," Manning said. "This is the best thing I've seen in 30 years. Really. Everything they say about it is true."

Nobody's building them

Yet, Manning is one of a very few who are building these concrete homes in Michigan.

"Nobody around here is building them," said Nancy Rosen, spokeswoman for the Builders' Association of Southeastern Michigan.

In fact, you are likely to get a very strong negative reaction to the concept from area builders and architects.

"I think it's very reactionary," said Keith Logsdon, architect with CBI Design in Birmingham. "I'm not sure we really want a return to the stone age. I mean, there is a reason we evolved from that point."

Said Robert Bryce of West Bloomfield-based Bryce and Palazzola Associates: "I just don't see it, from two

See STONE AGE, 2F

Lumber prices fall but industry frets over Clinton's plan

By Doug Funke
Staff Writer

The spotted owl apparently wasn't the only cause for soaring lumber prices here earlier this year.

Builders now say that the economy, market factors, speculation and greed also played parts.

Back in March, when the Builders Association called for a lobbying effort for relief from timber harvesting restrictions, environmental activists generally and the owl specifically came in for all the blame for higher prices.

But since then, lumber prices, which the Builders Association of Southeastern Michigan had maintained added \$4,500 to the price of a 2,000-square-foot house between October and March, have eased considerably.

And the lower prices have held since President Bill Clinton recently announced a restrictive timber harvesting policy on federal lands, a plan which one BASM official termed "totally unacceptable."

A national index of lumber prices including framing pieces and plywood had fallen by July 6 to the same level as last August, said Robert R. Jones, a West Bloomfield builder who tracks prices for BASM.

The price index has dropped by a third since February, Jones said.

"I think it's a combination of things — I've always felt that way," he said.

"I'm not sure the market situation would have existed if the environmental situation didn't," Jones said. "It's one thing to say, 'save a tree.' But it gives another impact to say, 'save a living animal.'"

"Second, when this whole thing came about, the court decisions were sustained, the government cut back, the perception of the market was that there's going to be a shortage. If people perceive there's not enough supply, demand increases, price goes up."

"Add the third ingredient: We're in a profit motivated society," Jones said. "I suspect (tim-

ber) companies saw if they were getting demand, they could sell their product at a tidy profit."

Demand, however, eased off due in part to a slow economy, Jones said. Some dealers refused to buy at higher prices and suppliers, who had filled up regional reload centers, gradually reduced prices.

Fred Capaldi, a Rochester Hills builder and BASM president, said he's noticed that the price of lumber has fallen by more than 50 percent since the association called for relief and a federal timber summit in mid March.

"I think mostly there was such a supply of lumber in the marketplace, they had to sell. When supply exceeds demand, naturally the price will come down," Capaldi said.

"The market thing is real. The environmental thing is real," he said. "I think one is feeding off the other."

BASM definitely isn't happy with Clinton's plan to limit timber harvests on federal lands in the Pacific Northwest to 1.2 billion board feet annually over the next 10 years.

Some 4.4 billion feet had been cut annually during the 1980s.

"The forest plan announced by the president is a far cry from a balanced solution he called for in April," said Irvin H. Yackness, BASM executive vice president.

"Builders, like any other citizen, care about nature, natural resources. We also care about housing people. We care about jobs."

"Allowing a timber harvest of only 1.2 billion feet annually will cost tens of thousands of jobs, it will force lumber prices up and cause problems with the nation's economic recovery," Yackness said.

Yackness suspects that BASM and the national home building industry will attempt to move the timber battle from the courts and cause problems with Congress.

"I think the only hope left for home buyers and workers involved in lumber is to have Congress develop a plan of its own," he said.

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