

RECORD SEARCHLIGHT

August 14, 1993



R-S photos by Rollin Banderob
Dan Caton of Redding uses a screwdriver this week to attach diagonal bracing strips at the entryway to a steel-framed house under construction in Palo Cedro.



Patrick Lynch of Redding checks the placement of a roof truss.

STEELING HOME

Metallic house taking shape in Palo Cedro

■ Sizzling summer temperatures make steel studs too hot to touch, but the owner is saving big on labor and material costs while conserving trees.

By George Winship
R-S business reporter

PALO CEDRO — Who says you can't steel home?

Certainly not Martin and Judith Fallick, who recently moved to Shasta County from Sunnyvale to retire and build their 4,000-square-foot dream home out of steel.

Silver studs glint in the sunshine while steel trusses and beams frame open spaces or shoot skyward, high above a sunken liv-

See STEEL, A-8

Steel

Continued from A-1

ing room, which features a 21-foot ceiling.

"We're pretty much environmentalists. We didn't want them to cut all the trees," said Fallick, 56, a chiropractor.

If built of more traditional materials such as wood, plywood and pressboard, the same house that is rising quietly and quickly on a 26-acre ridgetop lot overlooking Swede Creek would have required 45,000 board feet of lumber, general contractor Rich Gifford of Redding said.

The steel studs are formed from sheets of metal as thin as a dime.

Ironically, the Shasta County Building Department plan checker who OK'd the home's construction is named Les Wood.

By using steel instead of wood, Gifford said he is saving the Fallicks nearly \$20,000 in material costs alone on the \$500,000 house.

And that doesn't include the savings Gifford is realizing on labor.

Steel studs are pre-punched with holes every four feet for electrical and plumbing connections, saving installation time, he

said.

Dubbed "Domus Tigris," the neo-classical Greek revival home was framed and braced in only two days.

"A steel house will frame a lot quicker. You can do curves much easier than you can with wood. And since steel framing is lighter, we can use less concrete in the foundation," said designer Judy Pate of JP Semingson Architects of Redding.

Using wood and conventional methods, the same structure would have taken at least a week or more to frame, she guessed.

"It's such a fun material. I'm sold on it," said Ms. Pate, who earned a bachelor's degree in architecture in 1989 from Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo.

The Fallicks' house is one of the first of its kind in Northern California, although many more are expected to be built in the near future, said subcontractor Mark Meyer of Redding, who is responsible for all the steel work.

"It's the way of the future. We've got so much interest in it already. Most of the large builders in town have been up here. You'd have to go to Southern California

to see something like this," Meyer said.

A general contractor in Marin County for more than a decade, Meyer said he builds houses exclusively from steel now.

Steel costs less than wood, and there is rarely any waste because of cracks, bows or splits. Steel is stronger and more durable. And instead of hiring a crane, steel roof trusses on most single-family houses are light enough to be lifted into place by one or two workers, Meyer said.

Unlike wood, which often warps, steel-framed walls stay true no matter how dry and hot the air gets. And everything is screwed into place, providing a much stronger structure.

Steel-framed houses in Florida survived Hurricane Andrew. Others have weathered earthquakes and fires, Meyer said.

"And I'm supplying a home that will never need a termite inspection," he said.

"About the only downside to steel framing is that around Redding at this time of year, it gets mighty hot. We have to wear gloves or we'll burn our skin," Meyer added.