

1988

## George and Pat Hueneman Lot 78

As we rumbled up the seemingly endless deeply rutted dirt road called South Main Divide, with nothing in sight, I angrily declared that we must be lost and should turn back. George thought we should go just a little further and maybe we would see something. He was sure he was on the right road and was following his friend, Steve Wood's, directions. When we finally reached the top, we saw the sign with the words "Rancho Capistrano" carved into the wood. There was a telephone next to the sign and we called Steve to let him know we had arrived. Steve pointed the way to one of the two property sites for sale. As we drove to the site, we saw some of the property owners and residents coming out of the clubhouse after their annual meeting. They all seemed to be dressed western style and some were getting ready to ride their horses around the "ranch."

We found Lot 78. It was hard to see just what lay beneath all the weeds which were between 3 to 6 feet high. But we looked at the view of the mountains and the property was on a high point in the middle of the community and it took us 5 minutes to make up our minds. Also, we didn't want to be isolated from other people, and when we saw all of the property owners at the clubhouse, it made it all the more perfect. We made a full-price, cash offer, crossing our fingers, hoping that South Main Divide would be paved before long. When we found out that our offer had been accepted, we were ecstatic. It was November of 1988, and we were now "land owners" and George could finally become the "gentleman farmer" that he always thought he should be.

It was the year George and I celebrated our 25th wedding anniversary and we decided to celebrate it in England - my first trip abroad. When we returned home, we immediately started to make plans for the land. We hired Dale Selecta to clear the land and make a driveway. It was the first time we saw the contour of the land and it had a lot of promise. John came up on one of the weekends with us and probably couldn't understand the attraction. Tom and Connie Rice came up while on a visit from Florida and later confessed that when they saw the site, they couldn't understand why we bought land "in the middle of nowhere." We pointed out to Tom that that is what people said to us when we moved to Mission Viejo in 1967.

After Dale cleared most of the land, I made a landscape plan to submit to our architect, Jim Dodge, who was also on the architectural committee for the ranch and owned property there. He approved it and we were on our way! Dean Harriman, Chairman of the Architectural Committee, was the first resident who came up and introduced himself. He told me to turn around and look at the house directly down from us and wave. I dutifully waved at "whatever" and lo, there was a hand waving from the window of that house. It was Avenelle and I guess they had been watching us all this time from their telescope.

First the trees. The only visible tree on the property was our big pine tree which stands along side the "shed". Dale was hired to install the irrigation system and plant the new trees along the perimeter of the driveway and down to the pine trees which were on the lot that belonged to the Koontzes. We planted California Sycamore, London Plane Sycamore, Chinese Pistache, Liquid Amber, and White Alders.



Next the Gazebo. April 1990. Since the gazebo was an important part of our ultimate plan, and we desperately needed some shade and a place to have our lunch while we now visited the property every Sunday of our lives, we decided to build it first. We bought a kit from Saddleback Lumber and hired Dale to build it. We modified the plans a bit and instead of latice sides, George and I bought turned wood railings, painted them and gave them to Dale to install. He did a wonderful job. It was completed in May of 1990. We planted our Black Pine and the tams along the rocks surrounding the gazebo.

One Sunday, a Jeep came roaring up the road and into our "driveway". An amiable man jumped out of the car and introduced himself as "Bruno Lendaro" and..."was there anything he could do for us". We mentioned that we could use a wrench to fix something on the irrigation line and before George could get it all out of his mouth, Bruno jumped back into his Jeep and drove off only to return a few minutes later with the wrench. He told us that if we ever needed anything, just call him and he would come. That was our introduction to the ranch "people" and their willingness to help out and be there if we ever needed anything. It has been that way ever since.

The Maxwells (Gary and Mary and their three children) were our only nearby neighbors and we would often talk over the fence. After we moved in, we rarely ever saw them again. Mark and Elaine Reinholdt were finalizing plans to build their home across the street and we could hardly wait to get started on our own.

Then we met the Selways, (Marcia and Steve) who were building their home on the other side of us as a builder/owner. Our plans were finally approved by the insatiable Riverside Planning Commission. Steve and Marcia typed up a list of the contractors and subcontractors whose work they recommended and one of them was Ray and Linda Owens of Rayco Builders, who had done the concrete foundation on their home. We called Ray and asked him to come up to review the plans and give us a bid. Ray, Linda, George and I met and made the deal in the gazebo on January 31, 1993.

We came up the first weekend of construction and finally realized that our long awaited, long worked for, dream was becoming a reality. The pad was laid along with the steps and a bit of framing had been put in place. Our photo album chronicles the progress of the construction. My mother, Grace, would come up with us often. Her picture appears throughout the album. We moved into the completed house mid April of 1993. Mom died two weeks later, never having seen the finished product.

Before we had moved our furniture in, I had come up to the house by myself to hang the swags over the windows in the living room. It was very quiet and I was feeling a bit lonely, when I looked out the open door to the porch. Sleeping in the sun next to the door, as though she belonged there, was "Betty", the Maxwell's springer spaniel, who had befriended us right away upon our first visit to the site. My feeling of loneliness disappeared and I suddenly felt that "this was home."

