

Adventures in McCloudland

By Marilyn J. Ogden

Chapter 38

January, 1995

My visions of a more normal life while staying in the house down the street were faulty from the start. The wood burning in the apartment is something else. I leave the hotel dead tired, hungry and cold. All I want is warmth and food. But the stove in the apartment is something else. But the house is always cold and dark and empty. As I enter I'm faced with "...fire or food?"

My plans of fixing real meals never quite materialize. I usually decide to build a fire, as it's bone chilling cold. I never manage to keep enough wood next to the fireplace for too long and have to go collect it from the shed, build the fire, start it and wait for the icy cold space to warm up. I eat something. Actually eating is my only pastime in the evening. Then go to bed with the blanket cranked up to high. In the morning it's the same process. Sometimes I just forgo heat and head to the hotel usually arriving about 8; just in time for the music of reconstruction to begin. A small electric heater sits by my desk and provides warmth enough for me to use my hands.

I realize that the process of fire building and tending is not at all unusual around here. But I'd always had a thermostat. If I turned it up, I got heat. It was fast, foolproof and clean. No spiders, no splinters and no soot.

I resume work on the drapes and room accessories on the third floor in earnest. I had set up my work space in three adjoining rooms opening on to a balcony on the east side. The hall space widened in this area and I had a ping pong table placed there with measurement marks for curtain, dust ruffle, and table cloth lengths. I'd had a deep grove placed 12' from one end so I could use it as a cutting slot for scissors.

It's freezing up there so I have two electric heaters with cords running out into the hall where the construction power post is located. The iron and sewing machine cords are

also snaked out into the hall. But the hall space is not heated and it's bitterly cold. I buy a pair of fingerless gloves and plan my work day to spend very little time at the hall table. Each guest room gets four drapery panels, 1 queen sized dust ruffle, two throw pillows, an eight foot long padded and covered wood cornice, and a padded, covered headboard. The Opportunity Center in Mt. Shasta had made the wooden headboards and cornice boxes. I store them under the ping pong cutting table and the whole process becomes quite efficient. It takes about a week to make everything needed for one room. When I finish a room, I put all the pieces in a big plastic bag and carry it down to a room at the end of the hall where it is ceremoniously placed with the others. The piles of completed projects start to grow.