

Speech: The house that Grandma Dorothy Simao built: A dream come true

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THE HOUSE THAT GRANDMA DOROTHY SIMAO BUILT: A DREAM COME TRUE

HON. SPARK M. MATSUNAGA

OF HAWAII

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, March 25, 1976

Mr. MATSUNAGA. Mr. Speaker, a home of her own was for many years the dream of Mrs. Dorothy Simao, a youthful grandmother of six who is employed as a fieldworker by the Gay and Robinson Sugar Plantation on the island of Kauai.

Last month, her dream came true. She moved into a comfortable, four-bedroom home which she literally built with her own hands in her spare time in the little town of Hanapepe Heights.

The house was built with Mrs. Simao's two sons and her grandchildren in mind. There will be plenty of room for them when they visit.

Over 200 of Mrs. Simao's neighbors turned out for the housewarming last month. They did not think she could build the house—they knew she worked hard all day, that she had only a sixth grade education, and that her husband, John, was crippled by rheumatism and unable to help with the heavy work. But they underestimated Mrs. Simao's resourcefulness and determination to make her dream come true.

I know that my colleagues will find the story of Mrs. Simao's new home as inspiring as I did. I am submitting for inclusion in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD an article from the February 27, 1976, edition of the Honolulu Star-Bulletin which describes her 6-year project in more detail:

GRANDMA BUILDS HER OWN HOME
(By Paul Stoffel)

HANAPEPE, KAUAI.—It took her 5½ years, but Dorothy Simao of Hanapepe Heights has done what few other women can lay claim to.

In her spare time, after long hours of work on the plantation, she has built her own two-story home. And she did it almost single-handedly.

"Six years ago something told me to build a house," said the 58-year-old grandmother. "And I did."

It was a proud day for the entire family when she completed the family home, and the housewarming last weekend was almost a community event.

Some 200 friends came by to see the product of her 5½ years of rugged toil.

Simao is a friendly, hard-working woman, six times a grandmother and her neighbors like her.

They knew she built the new home outside her regular shifts as a canefield worker for Gay & Robinson plantation. And they knew that job—repairing irrigation flumes and hoeing weeds—pays her only about \$400 a month.

They knew also that she was not an architect and had never before built a house. But none of those seemingly insurmountable odds deterred the determined Hawaiian-Portuguese woman.

Her husband John is a former plantation truck driver who is crippled by rheumatism

and who was unable to help in the hard work of building a four-bedroom house.

His Kauai-born wife had only a sixth grade education at the old Makaweli school to help her in such technical areas as design and the intricate measuring necessary to build a house.

And she was 58 when she started the project in 1970.

Her son Edgard, 41, who is a plantation "mule skinner," says, "We are proud to have a mother like that."

He said she does not care for the usual feminine chores such as knitting or crochet work.

But she planned and built and financed a home that is far superior to the plantation cottages in which most of her fellow workers live.

She was always one for tools and the hard handwork of carpentry, he said.

Her husband also takes immense pride in his wife's house building. Cost of materials and of installing plumbing and electrical wiring was about \$14,000 or \$15,000, he said.

Although Simao could not do the plumbing and wiring herself, she built the foundations and mortared into place the concrete blocks which form the lower half of the house.

She did all the carpentry work on the upper structure, which is of wood, and did much of the painting. She made the numerous interior cabinets, shower stalls, shelves and closets.

Most of the rooms have wall to wall carpeting and the furnishings include an ornate combination TV set and stereo music player.

The Simao house has several unique features. For one thing the stairways from the first floor to the upstairs living and sleeping rooms are built exterior of the house and are protected by wide overhanging eaves. This arrangement makes possible maximum use of the 26-by-33 foot floor space on each level.

A walkway outside the second floor serves the practical purpose of providing a place to wash the large windows which give an ocean view.

In planning the house Simao had in mind the varied needs of her family of two sons and six grandchildren.

For example, her eldest grandson Zachary, who is a senior in Waimea High School, now makes his home with his parents, Edgard and Rosalie, in a rented plantation house.

However, when he is 18, the plantation rules require that he pay \$40 a month to live there.

Grandma Simao built an "extra" bedroom with access to shower and toilet so Zachary can have his own place to live.

The Simaos also have another son, Alvin Barnard, who lives in Pennsylvania. There will also be rooms for him and his wife and two children when they visit at the Hanapepe home of his parents.