



Architect's plans in hand, Isabelle describes the porch and the stairs she will build next, completing the exterior portion of the house.

ISABELLE BUILDS

HER OWN

DREAM HOUSE

ISABELLE FRENCH of the Allentown Laboratory stands outside the house she built in near-by Jamesville and tells an admirer, "You know what? That house was nothing. Now, seeding the lawn — that was a tough job, a lot tougher than the house."

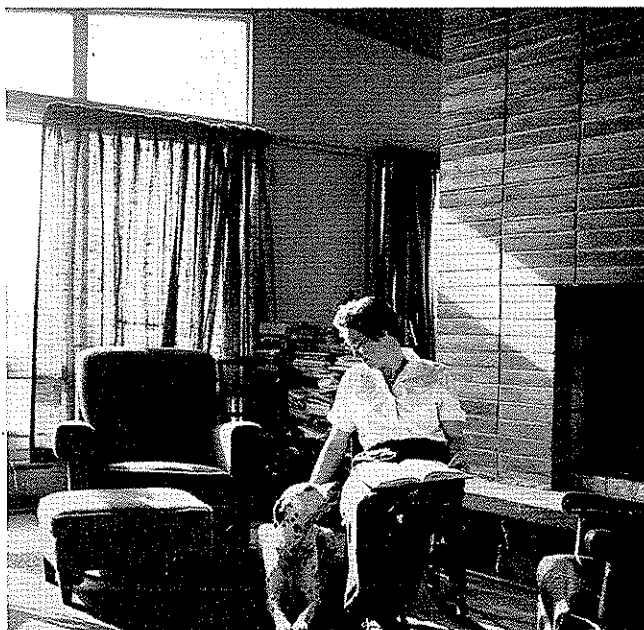
The big redwood and concrete-brick structure and all the work that went into it suggests that Isabelle is a girl who would move a mountain and count it as nothing. This is a roomy place. "The whole house is 32 by 57 feet. Seven rooms. A full basement. That includes the two-car garage."

She Sees a Magnificent View

Isabelle crosses the road and walks up the path towards the house. "We're eight miles from Allentown here in Jamesville. Far enough out to get a taste of the country," she says.

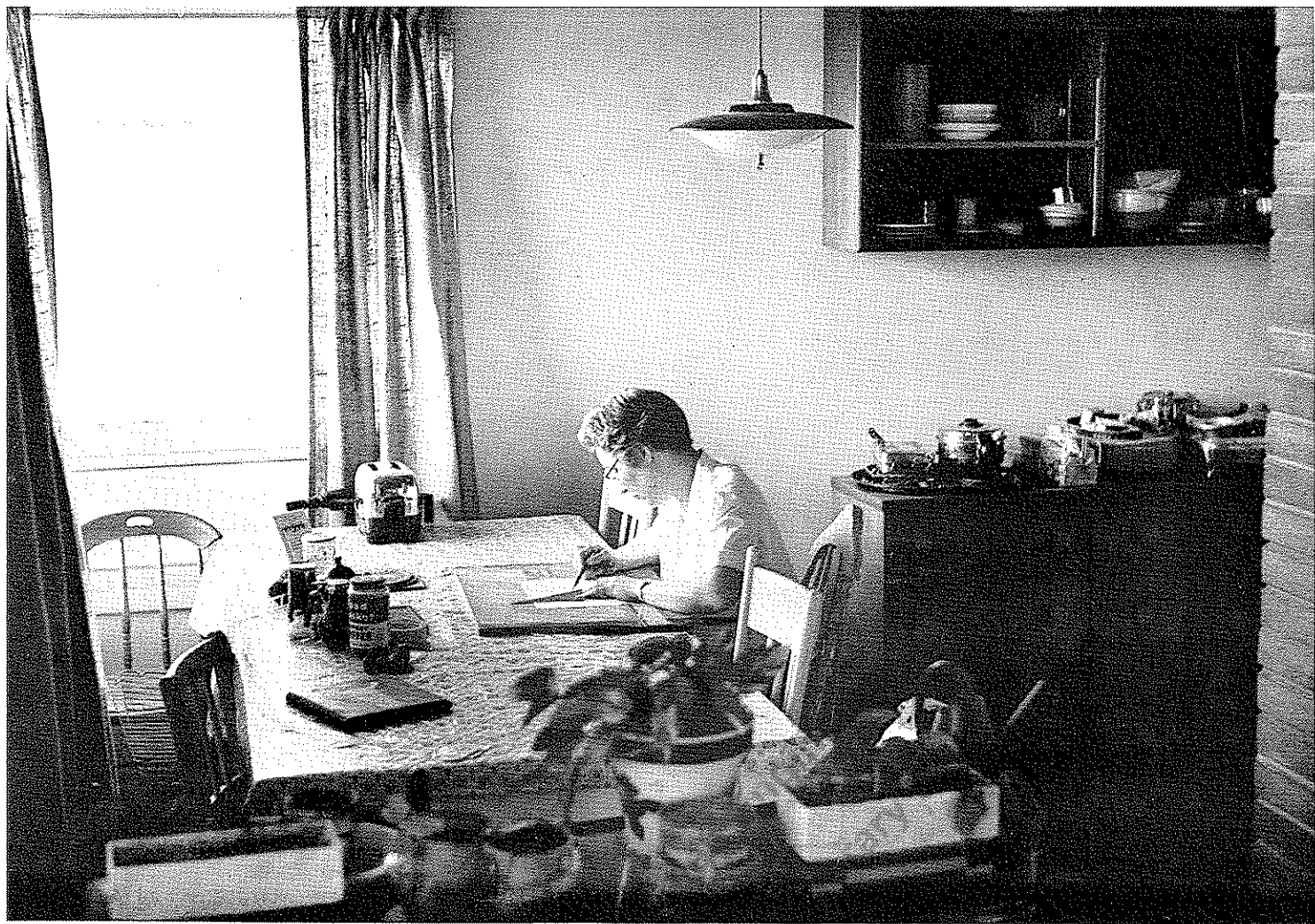
She looks out over the great spread of rolling Pennsylvania hills. "On a clear day I can see over a distance of 30 miles from the living and dining room windows," she points out. "It's breathtaking and it's peaceful, all at once."

Inside the door six steps go up to a 15-foot by 20-foot living room, another six go down to a 25-foot by 37-foot basement. "There's a fireplace on both levels," says Isabelle. "I just like them." In the living room the fireplace opens on two sides for both dining-room and living-room exposure. Here, Isabelle gazes at the view through the floor-to-ceiling picture window that forms one wall, and talks about why and how she has built her house.



Isabelle relaxes in her living room. Behind her, past the open fireplace, is her dining room.

Continued



In dining area, Isabelle works on additional plans. She may convert one end of house into an apartment by installing second kitchen.

ISABELLE BUILDS HER OWN DREAM HOUSE

Continued

"I call it my five-year plan," she says laughing. "A few years ago I hired an architect. Within a year he came up with this house, managing to incorporate a lot of my ideas. So I started building. At the end of five years I expect it to be complete.

More Projects May Come Later

"But I may be wrong," she adds. "If what I've seen of some other home-builders is typical, I'll be having more ideas later of new things I want in it."

What provoked the five-year plan in the first place?

"I think my main motivation was just a woman's desire to have a home," Isabelle explains, "and I happen to be blessed with the skills enabling me to make my own. You see, my dad is a retired contractor, and I picked up the know-how from him.

"Besides, I wouldn't have been satisfied, either aesthetically or practically, with a house I could buy within my budget. And I think when you have ideals in mind and you're capable of realizing them, you ought to go ahead and do it."

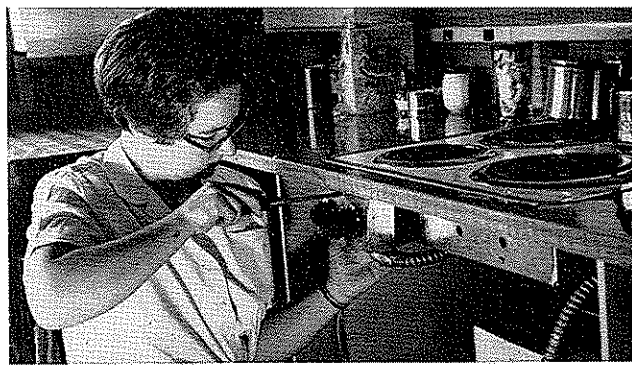
She sits absorbed in her thoughts for a minute.

"Then I think other motivating factors in wanting to build the house were my two favorite hobbies, woodworking and collecting radio equipment. They require a lot of space. I've been able to build that right into the house."

The house is so much Isabelle's handiwork, her visitors don't ask "What did you do?" — they ask "What didn't you do?"

She answers by admitting that the 200-pound trusses did pose a few problems. "I did *not* do the earth excavation, the foundation, the plastering, heating system, or well-drilling. I figure that those jobs are really for the experts." But she did do the carpentry work, plumbing, electrical wiring, bricklaying, roofing, cabinetry, masonry, fireplace-building, and some of the block-laying. Her 83-year old father and a half-dozen of her girlfriends also gave her a helpful hand at various stages of the project.

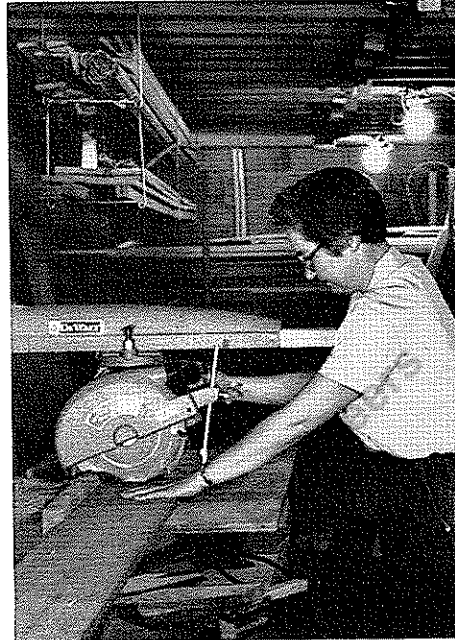
Some of the special needs that have appeared as the



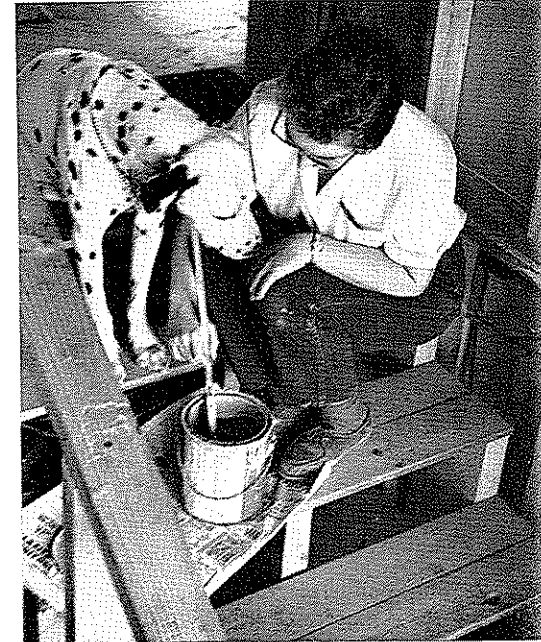
Installing dial controls for stoves may not be everyone's cup of tea; it's easy for Isabelle.



Complex wiring arrangement in house is its owner's pride. One switch operates 13 lights.



Full-basement workshop contains equipment and lumber; also open fireplace and freezer.



"Woman's work is never done" but Isabelle enjoys it all, including the job of painting.

house has grown have required pretty specialized knowledge, she admits. "I just finished pouring a concrete base outside the back door which will hold a prefabricated 20-foot television antenna tower. And building the hi-fi set is pretty recent. Before that came the cabinet sets for the kitchen and two baths."

One of the biggest projects and perhaps the one of which she is proudest, was planning the wiring. Near the stairway she has installed two rotary selector switches from which she can operate 25 lights and outlets all over the house.

Naturally, a Few Slips

In the process of accomplishing all this, there have of course been errors. Luckily, Isabelle says, she's been able to compensate for all of them so far. "They all have their amusing side," she relates. "I think the funniest happened as I was finishing the fireplace here in the living room. As I came to the end, I discovered that I was two bricks short.

"What a shock! The company that makes this kind of

brick had gone out of business, so there were no more to be had!"

The solution was to scoop two out from under a door sill, where replacements are inconspicuous.

Housebuilding is only one of Isabelle's activities. She also tends a quarter-acre garden and freezes a good deal of what it contains, bakes pies, puts up jams and jellies with her mother. At the same time, she points out, she is careful that none of her activities overlap on company time. "If it weren't for that fair day's pay that I owe a fair day's work for," she grins, "I wouldn't have a house at all."

What is next on the house agenda? "The porch and front steps. And my dad is building a rock garden by the front path."

Isabelle's manner about all her work is so matter-of-fact, a guest can become persuaded there really is "nothing to it."

Now, about that wonderful house you always dreamed of building . . .