

A Habit of Helping Hands

South Mountain Company and the Climate of Reclamation

by John Budris

South Mountain has a habit of lending helping hands. For as long as I've known John Abrams, founder of the employee-owned company, whenever a call comes for support for any number of projects – large or small – he and the company are always there.

Beyond South Mountain's commitment to crafting the finest of homes is the commitment to wise energy use, innovative, green technologies and a sustainable vision of Martha's Vineyard for the long run.

The company was among the Vineyard leaders to not only champion the effort to raise funds for affordable housing, but to more importantly raise awareness that a whole sector

Islanders without stable homes lays a frail foundation for the Vineyard community of the future.

South Mountain's trucks and heavy equipment have hauled sound houses scheduled for demolition to new home sites to provide that first

starter home for grateful Vineyarders. Their designers and builders have helped plan and execute practical and beautiful homes to make the most of fleeting affordable housing dollars.

One company gesture took me by the lapels and gave me a little shake. When one of the homes at the late Katharine Graham's estate was slated for razing, South Mountain came not with the bulldozer, but with cat's paws and pry bars. Board by board, beam by beam, one nail at a time, South Mountain



Board by board, nail by nail, South Mountain Company's carpenters took apart one of Katharine Graham's summer retreats at Mohu for Vineyarders to wisely re-use.

disassembled the home and added the salvaged materials to a repository of doors, hardware, flooring, trim – you name it – for Vineyarders to wisely use. The effort was not the first time the company has done so, but certainly the deconstruction with the most flare.

Let's talk real conservation. Just think of the

money, petroleum and over-all time saved from the wise use of these rescued materials. In some small but significant way, the cost of the Jenny Way affordable housing community in Edgartown is softened by South Mountain's use of reclaimed materials, harvested on the company's dime.

"Ideally, someday, just maybe, we can have on the Vineyard something like Habitat for Humanity's 'stores,'" says South Mountain's Peter D'Angelo.

"In parts of the country, Habitat has storefronts and storage, where in a very

organized way, qualified home builders can come in, and almost

custom order what they need from a huge inventory of salvage."

Today I am sawing, sanding and hammering on a *mitzvah* project for a 93-year-old gentleman whose bathroom is about the same age as he. As

I lay down some very old southern yellow pine flooring, the tart scent so very manifest, as evident is the source of the lumber: South Mountain's little wood mountain in the yard out back.

I thank you. The elderly gentleman thanks you. And Vineyard Style does too. – JB vs

