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GREG P



The Silent Guardian

HE STANDS a silent watch, guarding the foyer of the Santa Cruz Library's main branch on Church Street, holding one elongated finger to his pursed lips, a warning to those who enter to whisper.

He answers no questions about his past, reveals no plans for the future. No one knows his name. He is an enigma wrapped up in a Santa Cruz mystery.

Library staff call him The Whispering Man.

Almost six feet tall, he rises gracefully from a smoothed, multiple branched tree trunk. His torso, punctuated by a large hole for a soul, is formed by sheets of cut, bent and welded copper. An overly large head with wide eyes and Rastafarian, dreadlocked hair tops the strange figure.

Nobody knows how long The Whispering Man has been at the library. Most seem to agree it has been seven years. He arrived in a pick-up truck, carried in by one, maybe two (nobody seems to know), young men.

Charles Atkins, library director from 1969 through 1982, tried to shed light on the mystery, but too few of the details stand out in his mind. Atkins does, however, remember the sculptor who brought The Whispering Man to the library.

"He was one of those young men who was leaving town and needed a place to keep the sculpture for a short time. I said 'OK, it's not going to offend anyone.' But then this fellow never came back," Atkins said.

Sources outside the library are also uninformed (or not talking) about the sculptor and the statue. No light has been shed on the mystery by the UCSC Art Department, the Cabrillo College Art Department, the Santa Cruz County Art Museum, the Art Resource Center, the City Arts Commission or the Main Street Art Center in Watsonville.

The Whispering Man also is not included in the inventory of public art works being prepared by the City Arts Commission, though staff member Don Ricker promised further research on the matter.

And so the mystery continues. Perhaps a GOOD TIMES reader has a clue. . . to The Whispering Man. •