

The mall comes tumbling down

By GREG BEEBE
Sentinel staff writer

11-8-89

SANTA CRUZ — Victoria Clark had been volunteering at the city's PacOp earthquake command post downtown for five days, but she hadn't seen the devastated Pacific Garden Mall until Tuesday.

She didn't like what she saw.

Clark, a 25-year resident of the Santa Cruz area, sadly chaperoned a small media tour through the ever-changing mall landscape. Heavy equipment groaned and squeaked as two more Pacific Avenue businesses — Logos Records and Books, and Bookshop Santa Cruz — crumbled before the wrecking crane.

Unlike the stubborn Cooper House, these buildings went without a struggle. Bits and pieces of displays and showroom fixtures quickly disappeared in a dusty, churning mish-mash of carpet, plaster, boards and glass.

A large crowd of onlookers gathered behind a wire fence to watch Bookshop Santa Cruz's demise.

"It's kind of like saying goodbye to an old friend," said Clark, her eyes watering.

Elsewhere on the mall, friends and employees of the Camouflage shop used a back entrance to quickly cart out the shop's eclectic offering of lingerie, T-shirts and sexy curios.

Gaping holes where shops such as Robert's Leathers and Shockley's Jewelers once stood gave the mall a strangely airy, eerie feel. Broken glass, splintered boards and wayward bricks littered sidewalks where street mu-



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Victoria Clark takes her first look at post-quake Pacific Garden Mall.

sicians once plied their trade.

Bicycles remained locked in stands, as if time stood still on Oct. 17. A colorful array of Halloween costumes and gory masks peeked out from behind the boarded storefront of Lily Wong's.

A persistent beep emitted periodically from a second-story window of the Palomar Hotel. Probably a weakening smoke-alarm battery, a firefighter said.

Oddly, some of the mall's exotic collection of flowering trees were in full, vibrant bloom. "See, there is still *some* beauty left on the mall," Clark said with a sigh.

Stately white Grecian columns — once a part of a snazzy window display — stood like cockeyed sentries in front of Cat N Canary clothes. Pretzeled pieces of rusty metal were piled high near the spot where the band Warmth once played sunny jazz. Nearby, three beer kegs leaned unfestively against a wall.

On the sidewalk at the corner of Pacific Avenue and Cooper Street, three large truck tires — origin unknown — soaked in the mid-afternoon sun.

Automatic-teller machines sat idle, blank screens coated in dust. A purple

sweater took root in a mall planter box. Employees of Zoccoli's Delicatessen canvassed outlying areas of the mall, searching for plastic outdoor dining furniture abandoned hastily during the quake. Rescue workers had used the chairs to take a load off during the quake's aftermath.

A lone brick hung precariously from the uppermost corner of the Trust Building, perhaps waiting for another aftershock to trigger its final descent.

Demolition of hazardous mall structures is "well under way," said Larry Pearson, PacOp public-information director.

"Plaza Books demolition started this morning," Pearson said. Removal of the buildings takes about two or three days. No new demolitions are scheduled for today, he said.

"We're waiting on the real big demolition questions — the Good Times building, Pacific Western Bank building and conceivably the Palomar and St. George hotels down the road," Pearson said.

Some buildings, Pearson said, may not be worth saving.

"In some ways, the problems are as much economic as they are structural," he said. "Certain merchants could get back into business were it not for impending demolition" of nearby buildings, he added.

Pearson saw hope amid the shattered mall.

"I see tremendous opportunities here. I could envision a much better mall. The old mall was great, but it was a canyon," he said.