



A Mr. Twister (in Santa Cruz) says he's no hero, just an average clown "who saw an unjust law and did something about it."

HIS CLOWNING GLORY

Thanks to Mr. Twister, it's now legal to feed parking meters in Santa Cruz

RED NOSE. YARN HAIR. PURPLE high-top sneakers. This perp didn't fit the usual profile. Neither did his crime.

Mr. Twister, a clown in Santa Cruz, Calif., spends his days performing magic, riding a unicycle and making balloon animals. Okay, nothing suspicious—*so far*. Now the weird part: Mr. Twister takes some of the change donated by passersby and drops it in parking meters. Other people's parking meters. This saves them from getting tickets. "When I leave the house in a clown suit," says Mr. Twister—Cory McDonald, 26—of his philosophy, "I want to see 100 smiles every day."

In Santa Cruz, though, the law frowned on anyone—including Mr.

Twister—putting coins in other people's meters, a fact of which he was apprised in September when a traffic enforcement agent spotted him, told him he was breaking the law and ticketed the car anyway. Irked, Mr. Twister went up and down the street feeding expired meters. The agent followed, ticketing cars.

A week later, McDonald hit the pavement again, this time in mufti. As he was doling out coins, a meter maid called the police, who gave him a \$13 ticket. McDonald, who lives with his mother and stepfather in a trailer in nearby Capitola and supports himself performing at parties, was determined to test the law. So he enlisted the help of Ben Rice, a local criminal defense at-

torney, who took the case on what he called a pro Bozo basis. When the council met on Oct. 24, Mr. Twister appeared in full regalia, along with his friend Sprinkles, a lady clown, his lawyer and about 40 boosters. "I urge you to vote this unfriendly law out of Santa Cruz," exhorted Rice. "Mr. Twister is a gift to all of us, a genuine human being." In the face of such eloquence—and petitions from Mr. Twister supporters—council members voted to repeal the law, enacted eight years ago to increase business turnover. Then, in a show of solidarity with Mr. Twister, they all donned red plastic noses. McDonald couldn't have orchestrated it better. "When you find someone being nice," he says, "you should support them." ■