

# Quake memories register a 7.1

## Images still vivid after one year

By TOM HONIG  
Sentinel managing editor

10-14-90  
**I**T WAS THE main topic of conversation for months: "Where were you during the quake?" And as the one-year anniversary of the Oct. 17 earthquake approaches, the 7.1-magnitude shaker is back in the center of our public consciousness.

Not that it's ever been off our mind. The downtown lies in ruin; gaping holes where buildings used to be remind us of what happened a year ago. Many Summit residents lost their homes; most have vowed to rebuild, although they've done battle with the county over whether they should be allowed to. In Watsonville, the earthquake took its toll on those who could least afford it: the poor, who already had been forced into crowded, sub-standard housing. The quake knocked hundreds out of their homes, and the city's now grappling with how to replace all that housing.

However, the impact of the earthquake hits far more deeply. Six died in Santa Cruz County, a surprisingly small number considering the substantial property damage. But the quake is felt still by probably everyone who was here. Even those who live here but were away traveling remember that feeling of wondering what was happening at home.

Then there are those who still must struggle to put their lives back together. Their stories have been told time and again, on television, in magazines and in the newspaper. But others have faced the struggle in private.

"...I was in the only house in our neighborhood on Old San Jose Road, near the summit, that was totally destroyed and we were the only family not interviewed by the press," writes Jacque Bonesio.

Like so many others, Mrs. Bonesio and her family face an uncertain future. Their house has yet to be rebuilt, and they face severe financial worries. "Here we are in our middle and late 40s and we are starting over: new home, new furniture and no savings."

Stories similar to that of the Bonesios are told again and again. More than 200 people shared their experiences with the Sentinel, writing in to tell the story of the great quake of '89, relating the tragedy, heroism, humor, fear and courage that every disaster wreaks on those who witness it. Their stories are told in today's Features section, starting on Page B1.

Bearing up has been difficult for those whose homes were most battered. But everyone — including those whose homes weren't damaged — has a story to tell.

"I was inside one of the old buildings that fell down (above Chi Pants)," reports Patrick Meyer of Santa Cruz. "(I) watched the windows fall in and part of the wall fall out. My colleague tells me that somehow I tried to keep my cup of coffee from spilling even as the walls fell down."

If there's a common thread running through the earthquake stories, it's how a natural disaster can bring people together and how disaster can teach what's truly important in life. No one articulated the positive side more than Joan Kell's seventh-grade class at Aptos Junior High. "Neighbors were brought closer together in their attempt to understand the overwhelming strength of nature," writes Julie Sherwood. Sasha Jones says: "I grew closer to my family and friends. It made me realize how lucky I am to have them."

But it was classmate Sara Hagins who perhaps sums up the feelings of everyone in Santa Cruz County in the aftermath of the great quake of '89: "I hope I never feel another shake."



The warm scenes of the Cooper House and downtown Santa Cruz in Jacque Baker's print are overshadowed by the reality of rubble. Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel



Mayor Mardi Wormhoudt: 'Life isn't just quite the same again.' Dan Coyro/Sentinel

## A time to rise to the occasion

### Quake thrust mayor into the spotlight

By GREG BEEBE  
Sentinel staff writer

**M**AYOR MARDI Wormhoudt's home was built in 1872. "It feels like it's falling down when the washer is on the spin cycle downstairs."

So, at 5:04 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 17 — when the 7.1-magnitude Loma Prieta earthquake violently shook the town she has served since her election to the City Council in 1981 — "I really didn't have any idea how bad it was, judging from my house ..."

"My very first thought was, 'What happened in San Francisco?'"

Like a lot of other people, I always assumed the really big earthquake on the San Andreas Fault would be in San Francisco. Plus, I have family there. It never occurred to me that the quake was *that* close to us ...

"It's not like I didn't have a clear indication, but I don't know, maybe it was denial or shock," said Wormhoudt.

"I just immediately decided to leave and go to City Hall," she said. "I was at City Hall by 10 after 5 at the latest. ..."

"And I just felt like I was never really off-duty after that."

Please see WORMHOUDT — A4