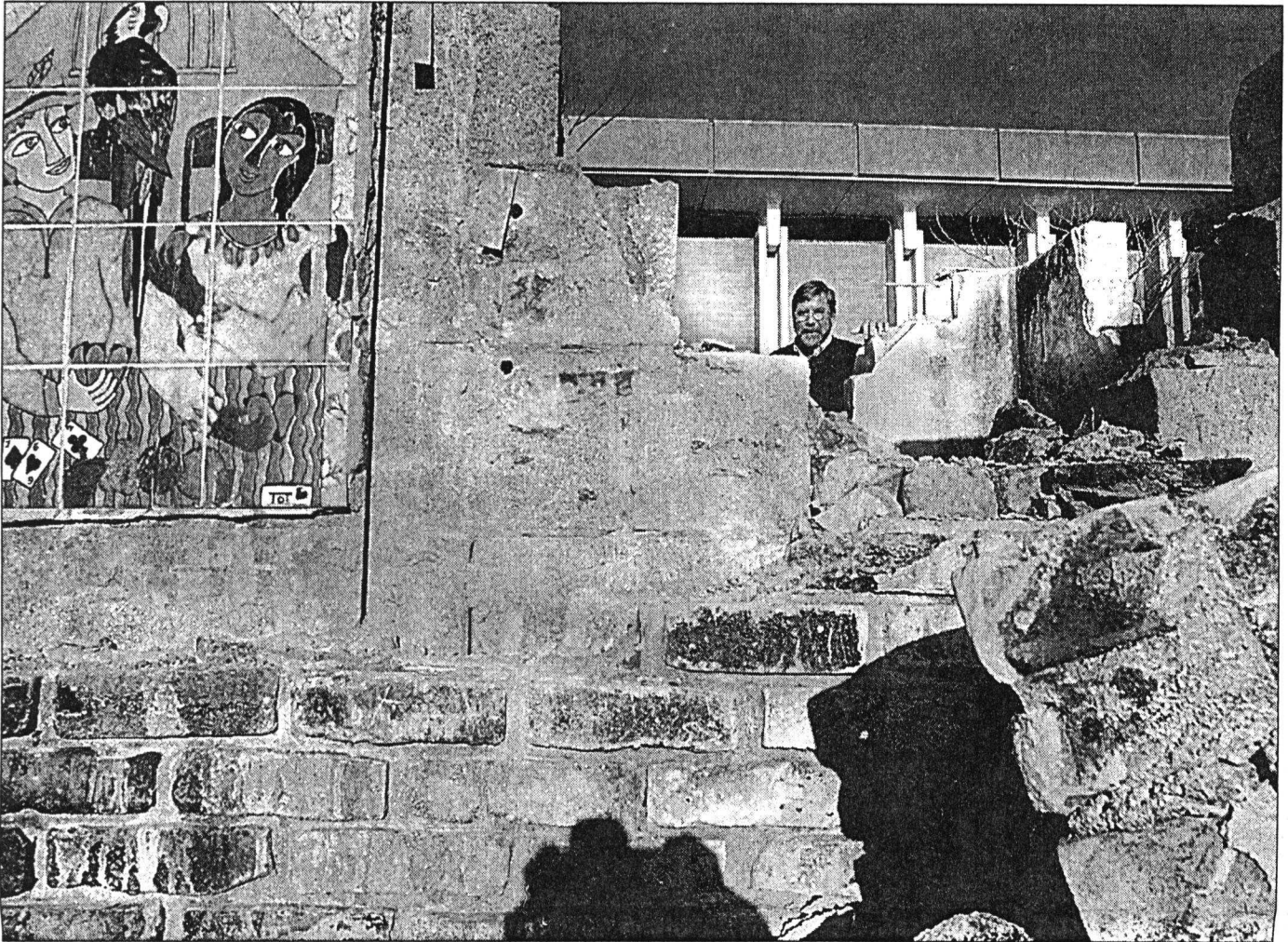


City demolishes quake memorial



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Bill Ringe, who was chairman of the monument committee, said he's upset that the decision to replace the memorial was made without telling the people who worked to raise funds and erect it to mark the death and destruction wrought in 1989.

Leaders of fund-raising upset with decision by council to replace fountain with planter

By KAREN A. DAVIS
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

The city's earthquake monument will soon be a large planter, thanks to the City Council's decision that there are better uses for the fountain.

"It's good to remember the past, but important to look forward to the future,"

WATSONVILLE said Councilwoman Judy Doering-

Nielsen. "It's not being destroyed. It's being made into something (that is a) more useful, more functional tribute to the earthquake."

A tree will be planted in place of the fountain, which has not been used for safety reasons. City officials turned off the monument's fountain several years ago after children were observed playing in the water.

The monument, a joint project of the county Farm Bureau and Agri-Culture, was dedicated Oct. 17, 1991 — two years after the Loma Prieta earthquake. The monument symbolized the destruction of the quake and the resurgence of the community.

A number of groups donated about \$22,000 to fund the monument, according to Bill

The monument's upright, central portion featured eight windows of painted tiles, which depicted the daily activities of residents prior to the earthquake. The bricks used to build the monument's fountain were taken from buildings destroyed by the earthquake.

Ringe, Agri-Culture president and former chairman of the monument committee.

"I think a lot of people are going to be upset because they put time and effort into helping the city (build the monument)," Ringe said. "And now, within a matter of days, it's being torn down."

Last week, Doering-Nielsen proposed that the middle fountain section be removed and a large tree be planted in its place. This week, deconstruction of that section began.

The monument's upright, central portion featured eight windows of painted tiles, which depicted the daily activities of residents prior to the earthquake.

Those panels, tiles and brick are being removed and saved for future use. Meanwhile, park benches could be placed near the monument.

The monument's outer walls, four panels,

each 15 feet long, will be left intact. Those panels depict buildings that were damaged or destroyed by the temblor, the hour following the earthquake, the tent cities that sprang up in city parks, and reconstruction.

Ringe and Farm Bureau President Nita Gizdich say they are dissatisfied with the city's plans and are bothered that those who helped create the monument were not consulted.

"It was the first piece of public art (built) in Watsonville in decades," Ringe said. "It was a real community effort."

The bricks used to build the monument's fountain were taken from buildings destroyed by the earthquake. Ringe said he also is bothered that a panel honoring a quake victim is being removed.

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