

Little Self-Pity In Resilient Santa Cruz

By Rick DeVecchio
Chronicle Staff Writer

Santa Cruz

In the foggy coastal valleys and densely forested mountains south of Silicon Valley live people who are not used to much outside help.

Isolated from the mainstream by choice or by poverty, they live just outside the grasp of the white-collar commuter grid that dominates the Bay Area. Their small communities — in dead-end mountain hollows, Santa Cruz Victorians and Watsonville neighborhoods on the edge of broccoli and strawberry fields — are close-knit. But they do not often have much contact with each other. Nor do they expect help from the outside.

After the earthquake, they fell back on resources developed in years of poverty or isolated living. They turned to what they knew — to hammers, chain saws and carpentry skills, to extended families and to their neighbors.

The Santa Cruz Mountains

Lompico, an isolated settlement tucked under redwoods and fir trees in the mountains 20 miles north of Santa Cruz, was hard hit by the quake. But in the entire 1,300-square-mile Zayante fire district, where Fire Chief Ken Boynton counted more than 500 homes with substantial damage or worse, only 40 people showed up at the local emergency shelter at a Zayante religious camp.

"The initial response of these people was not to flee. They elected to stay in their homes," said Matt McLaughlin, who runs the shelter.

Among those who stayed away was Don Guerland, a Lompico car-

penter who lost an \$80,000 house perched on stilts above Lompico canyon. One of his tenants, a male nurse who works the night shift, was nearly killed when he tumbled downhill with the wreckage.

Impatient to Rebuild

Guerland skipped the Zayante shelter and slept in a sleeping bag in his truck instead. On a rainy afternoon three days after the disaster, he clambered over his wrecked hillside and a big smile broke out under his handlebar mustache. A man who makes his living fixing broken things, he could hardly wait to heft his tools and start rebuilding his cabin — this time on flat ground.

"I could have the foundation poured in two days," boasted Guerland, 36, a fifth-generation San Franciscan, as he sifted through splintered floorboards on a hillside strewn with belongings, a claw-foot bathtub and empty beer cans. "I could have the frame up in a few weeks. In two months, I'd have my toilet-paper roll in place."

A summer resort for San Franciscans in the 1950s, Lompico was a hippie hangout in the 1960s, then a biker haven. Recently it has attracted a sprinkling of professionals from San Jose, but the canyon remains rough-hewn, with muddy, hairpin drives wending into the woods and peeling bark on the redwood beams of the old cabins.

Backwoods Homestead

A few steps down a path from Guerland's place, computer repairman David Mays prepared to crawl under his damaged home to turn on the gas. His wife, Linda Rae, cradled their 2-month-old daughter, Sara,



BY CHRIS STEWART/THE CHRONICLE

The Rev. Mike Miller, pastor of Watsonville's St. Patrick's Church, conducted Mass in the auditorium of Notre Dame Catholic School

There were dogs and cats and two goats in a pen.

The Mays' homestead was well under control. Friends had come by with jacks to shore up the damaged house in the hours after the quake. Later, Mays talked a reluctant Pacific Gas & Electric Co. man into restoring power before the damage was repaired.

Mays, 26, his shoulder-length hair tumbling out of a cap, said he figured he needs \$15,000 to \$20,000 to get his house back in shape. He was savoring the challenge.

"We've had more fun in the last few days than we've had in a while," said Mays, who moved to the serenity of the redwoods from Southern

California. A sudden aftershock that shook a shower of water drops off the fir trees above him did not shake his smile.

As Tom Petty music poured from a neighbor's stereo, Mays' wife said she and her daughter had ridden out the quake inside the house while half of their rear wall crashed to the dirt road below. Three days later, Linda Rae seemed unperturbed.

"It's something that kind of happens every few years," she said, amused that outsiders might think that she and her neighbors needed help.

Watsonville

To someone from San Francisco or San Jose, Watsonville before

hood child serving as an interpreter, he added that he was waiting for the weekend to be over so he could go back to work.

Thirty feet away on the edge of the park, a slim, red-haired woman, neatly dressed in jeans, looked in the fly screen of an older, four-person tent supported by an aluminum frame. Carol Stern, 31, a realtor, had come down to Callaghan Park to see if anybody needed housing.

"Every night I've been sleeping in my bed thinking that there are families out here that need help," she said. "I think all the neighbors around here should adopt a family."

Then she leaned back toward the tent and spoke a few words to the Hispanic woman resting inside with her children. The mother nod-

you could imagine," said Joe Whiting, 30, a local car mechanic.

Spirit Intact

But Santa Cruz, like Watsonville to the south and the mountains to the north, has not let its spirit crumble. Its subcultures are being recreated again in private homes and in the Civic Auditorium, where 250 homeless people are staying. Over the weekend, one group at the auditorium watched the 49ers game, and displaced vegetarians enjoyed tofu salad and vegetable soup. Someone had decorated the wall behind the television with children's crayon drawings of quake scenes.

Students and free-spirited young adults who used to congregate on the mall met instead in the many open-door houses they have

To someone from San Francisco or San Jose, Watsonville before the earthquake looked like a place where the 1960s never happened, much less the 1970s or 1980s.

Set among apple orchards, and miles of fertile broccoli and tomato fields, it had a real downtown, old Victorian buildings on Main Street and a pretty park. A beautiful old Roman Catholic church — St. Patrick's, built in 1903 — served as its landmark and spiritual core. Comfortable 1930s-style bungalows sheltered the same families for three generations. In poorer neighborhoods, it was not uncommon for one three-generation Hispanic family to share a house with two or three other families.

After the earthquake, Hispanic and Anglo families found themselves camping together in a tent city of 200 outside the high school. But the shake especially hurt older, run-down houses in Hispanic neighborhoods.

No Theatrics

People there took the tragedy without despair or a sense of outraged entitlement. Five days after the disaster, the streets were still eerily quiet as people tried to piece their lives back together. Nobody blew a car horn. In the lines at shelters, nobody demanded anything. Almost nobody cried.

The earthquake knocked St. Patrick's steeple askew and shattered its wooden statues and white marble altar. The church, which serves communion to 4,000 every weekend, may have to be demolished. The Rev. Bill Miller, the pastor, took the disaster philosophically.

"The church was our home," he said on Saturday, while loading up his car with brass candlesticks and vestments salvaged from the wreckage. "But we'll find another home." Communion was held yesterday in the parish hall across the street.

Patient Campers

Outside their tents in Callaghan Park two blocks away, a score of families had staked out spots and were cleaning up after breakfast as though it was almost normal to cook eggs over a camp stove. Near one old tent, a grandmother, her gray-streaked hair pulled back tight into a bun, washed dishes.

Nearby, Ramon Sencion, 36, a packing house worker, sat on a flattened cardboard banana carton, cradling his 3-year-old son.

His family of seven, he said, was living in a nearby van. They were not going to a shelter for fear that the family valuables — crystal, the television, the VCR — would be stolen from their damaged home a block away.

"I don't have a jacket," he said matter of factly, smiling and friendly, with no hint of self-pity or outrage. In Spanish, with a neighbor-

the tent and spoke a few words to the Hispanic woman resting inside with her children. The mother nodded. Outside the tent, the children's grandmother, just finished washing the dishes, looked up, nodded and smiled, and got ready to move to a new temporary home.

Santa Cruz

Pacific Garden Mall — a six-block downtown shopping area closed to cars and softened by trees — was the heart of Santa Cruz. Before the earthquake, all the city's eccentric subcultures mingled here. Deadheads, former University of California students who could not bear to leave town, and the elderly rubbed elbows with suburban shoppers, the homeless and the rootless people known locally as "trolls."

The quake destroyed the watering-holes that sustained all of these subcultures. All three bookstores and the used-record outlet were destroyed, along with the Chameleon, a cafe and restaurant that residents described as "classic Santa Cruz."

"It was the kind of place where you'd have a table of lesbians, a table of skinheads and a table of street people. Any kind of person

young adults who used to congregate on the mall met instead in the many open-door houses they have rented throughout the city. At one house on Gault Street, a resident whiled away the time stitching the sleeve of his leather jacket. Others listened to funky George Clinton music and watched a campy war movie on television.

Chris Holden, a 23-year-old handyman in work boots, threw darts at a board and expressed concern that the rebuilt Santa Cruz could become a featureless "Mogadishio by the Bay."

Yesterday, that seemed unlikely. On a sunny afternoon only five days after the disaster, the city was showing its character.

A group of advocates for the homeless demonstrated against the arrests of three women accused of violating the city's anti-camping law. There was an earthquake "healing ceremony" at Natural Bridges State Park Beach. Flyers advertised the Santa Cruz Rollout Pro Skateboard Mini-Ramp Competition, set for next weekend.

Sylvia Caras said: "I guess it'll be a creative experience to build the place back up again."

Katy Butler contributed to this story

Pattern of Aftershocks Is Normal, Scientists Say

By Charles Petit

Chronicle Staff Writer

Aftershocks rumbling through the Bay Area in the wake of Tuesday's earthquake have kept residents jittery, but experts say the pattern is normal.

A magnitude 3.8 aftershock rattled the Santa Cruz region at 7:24 a.m. yesterday, typical of the quake's aftermath as the Earth's wounded crust adjusts to its new configuration.

However, the stretch of the San Andreas Fault that broke Tuesday carried only a "slight risk" of major aftershocks of magnitude 6.0 or larger, and chances go down by the hour, geologists assert.

"The chances that there will be a magnitude 6 in the short term is declining. It is certainly finite, and we have to consider it possible, but it is not likely," said William Ellsworth, a seismologist at the U.S. Geological Survey in Menlo Park.

Smaller aftershocks with magnitudes between 4 and 5 are almost certain and could cause some additional damage in areas near the epicenter in the Santa Cruz Mountains, including Watsonville and Santa Cruz.

The aftershocks rumbling

through the region have kept many residents nervous, including hundreds of people in Watsonville who have camped out rather than go back inside. Many engineers agree that large aftershocks approaching Richter magnitude 6 could bring down buildings, bridges, or overpasses that have been badly weakened by the main shock.

The chances of such a large aftershock in the 24 hours ending this morning were down to 1 percent, geological survey seismologist Peter Ward said.

"We are certainly going to see some magnitude 4s and 5s" however, Ward said.

The total of aftershocks measuring more than 3.0 on the Richter scale, big enough to be felt by people near the epicenter, reached 74 by yesterday morning. There had been 19 of magnitude 4 or larger, and three of 5 or larger.

Scientists have stressed that they do not believe that the quake had reduced the long-term threat of similar, or even larger, quakes in the Bay Area. Numerous reports have named the Hayward Fault in the East Bay as the most dangerous in the Bay Area because it runs directly under a heavily populated area.