

## Stalin

The ghost of bloody, old Josef Stalin is once again rising over the Kremlin, according to Roscoe and Geoffrey Drummond. They examine the phenomenon on Page 26.

# San Jose Mercury

*More Than a Century of Service—1851-1969*

## Rainy

Rain today and tonight, clearing Sunday is forecast by the U.S. Weather Bureau. Friday's high was 64, low 57. Last year's range was 54-33. Details on Page 23.

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## Macabre Santa Cruz Witchcraft Tales

By **BOB LIGON**  
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**SANTA CRUZ** — Macabre tales of witchcraft cults in Santa Cruz County that sacrifice animals and turn humans

into "slaves of Satan" are coming to light here.

A youth in the Santa Cruz County Jail who claims to be a warlock (male witch) tells of participating in fire dances

and blood-drinking rites near Boulder Creek.

A Santa Cruz youth says he saw a group of hippies engaged in a weird dance around a parked automobile

that had five skinned animals, apparently dogs, on its hood.

Several youths tell of witchcraft initiation ceremonies in which participants must eat

the entrails of an animal while its heart is still beating.

There are also reports of persons being placed under hypnotic-type spells by a head witch who puts LSD in cere-

monial wine given to unsuspecting participants. While the victim is under the influence of the drug, the witch impresses on the victim that  
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# Supernatural Rites Practiced By Cults

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he (head witch) has supernatural powers.

Several local agencies set up to help drug users break the habit report young people not using drugs have been coming to them saying they have been hexed.

"I think we are seeing the end result of the current drug scene," said Mrs. Margaret Rovick, who founded the Koinonia Community and Coffee House, a religious group established to help youths with a drug problem. "It's the next step after drugs — superstition."

She says she thinks witchcraft is widespread throughout the county, especially in the remote mountain areas. She said the covens (clans) usually form within youth communes in which young men and women share a common dwelling. She contends there are many such communes in the county and claims that a good percentage of them are practicing witchcraft.

Capitola Police Lt. Dave Esty said that in the past few years he has had about 12 cases where youths have told him they have attended witchcraft rites.

"They are actually scared to death," said Esty. "They

Verbrugge said several cases involving witchcraft have come to his attention in recent months.

Local authorities have long suspected some kind of cultism because of the number of skinned dogs that have been found in recent years.

Steve Stevens, director of Santa Cruz City Animal Shelter, said most of the skinning incidents have occurred in the Errett Circle area in West Santa Cruz.

Stevens said other cases have been reported in Boulder Creek and Scotts Valley.

**"Whoever is doing this is a real expert with a knife" said Stevens. "The skin is cut away without even marking the flesh."**

Stevens told of one case in which a large doberman pinscher was disembowled.

"The strange thing about this is that the dogs apparently have been drained of their blood." He said the carcasses had been dropped along the freeway, possibly to make it appear that they had been hit by a car.

Herb Johnson, a Santa Cruz private detective who has been investigating the case for more than a year, said he, too, believes witchcraft "or some kind of cultism" is involved.

commune in the mountains near Boulder Creek. He told of one ceremony in which a man from San Francisco drank a glassful of blood, which he understood was from an animal.

"I was pretty high at the time and I'm not sure where it came from."

The youth said he would not personally sacrifice animals, "because I have supernatural powers without having to resort to that."

He also told of a fire dance, in which participants circled the fire while chanting.

Kittle said he practices white witchcraft which is a force for good. Black witchcraft, he says, is a force for evil.

He said it is "very easy for a witch to transfer his will to another person," but was vague on how it is done.

Mrs. Rovick said witches occasionally come into her coffee house, 24 Front St., trying to hex the young people there.

**She says they have brought in their "magic potions and sometimes they just sit there and stare."**

"We have no fear of them" said Mrs. Rovick. "We are all Christians here."



years he has had about 12 cases where youths have told him they have attended witchcraft rites.

"They are actually scared to death," said Esty. "They won't talk about it for fear the head witch will get them."

This was echoed by Richard A. Verbrugge, an investigator with the Santa Cruz County District Attorney's office.

"I saw a boy turn white with fear when I mentioned the name of a man he thought was a witch" said Verbrugge.

Verbrugge said the youth had been arrested for using drugs and had offered to put the finger on pushers in the area.

"He (the youth) wouldn't tell us a thing about the 'witch' except that he was weird and had a 'hypnotic stare'" Verbrugge said.

private detective who has been investigating the case for more than a year, said he, too, believes witchcraft "or some kind of cultism" is involved.

"But I've never been able to get anyone to give me names and addresses on it," he said.

The youth in the County Jail who claims to be a witch is Larry Gayle Kittle, 22, arrested on a charge of glue sniffing.

During his arraignment in Municipal Court this week he told the judge he is a witch and that glue sniffing is part of his religion.

Dale Dawson, deputy district attorney, said the youth had been arrested four times previously for glue sniffing.

Kittle, from his jail cell Friday, told how he became interested in witchcraft two years ago while living in a

tions and sometimes they just sit there and stare."

"We have no fear of them" said Mrs. Rovick. "We are all Christians here."

A youth who had been helped by the Rovicks told of an incident at a hippie pad near Paul Sweet freeway overpass along Highway 1 here in which he saw a group of bearded men dancing around a car.

Moving in closer he spotted five skinned animals on the car.

"It was the weirdest thing I ever saw," he said.

A young woman helped by the Rovicks told of her life in a commune in San Lorenzo Valley.

She contends the man she lived with had a strange power over her which she can't explain. In one incident, she said, she was sitting on a bed in the afternoon and for no apparent reason she fell over and fell asleep.

"When I awoke I felt sick and looked up to see him just staring at me, smiling," she said. "He said he had put me to sleep and I believe that he did."

She told of children of persons who visited or lived briefly at the commune being given LSD and other drugs.

"When I asked about it they said that this is a good thing and why should you have to withhold a good thing from someone because they are young."

She told of an experience with another man she described as a witch. She said she was on an LSD trip and he tried to get her to walk through a wall.

"I actually think I could have done it, but if I did I knew I would never be the same again" she said. She said she thinks that witches are people who "walked through the wall."

She said there were several other people in the room at the time. "They talked as if I wasn't in the room but I could hear them," she said. "I heard them say that 'she will never be one of us'."

The girl said they made their living by selling heroin.

"It was like being in a tribe of Indians" she said. Each tribe has its own ritual but each has a lot in common.

Members of various covens spend much of their time studying astrology and cult religions, she said.

## CALIFORNIA WAKE

# Cash Box Bells Tolled Doomsday

VIRGINIA CITY, Nev. (UPI) — The soothsayers said Friday was doomsday for the great state of California, so the mourners gathered for a wake.

A black cloud hung over Virginia City as drinks flowed freely in this old ghost mining town.

There was a "last supper" in the restaurants for the flock of believers in the prediction of a cataclysmic earthquake would sink California beneath the sea.

The moment of disaster was set for 3:13 p.m. (PST), maybe a little later.

The fateful minute came. Bells tolled as the believers, some clad in stove pipe hats and sporting heavy beards, cocked their ears for the expected rumble of the earthquake in the west.

One person yelled in a bar: "Get a radio turned on! Find out where California broke off!"

But the fateful moment came and went. There was no rumble, no earthquake.

Instead, they heard the merry ringing of cash registers in the saloons which were pouring one drink on the house for each one sold. If the

earth trembled, it was from the stampede of visitors hastening to take advantage of local hospitality.

During the fateful moment, Curt Gentry — author of "The Last Days of the Late, Great State of California" which started the doomsday flap — declared himself governor of California. During a mock acceptance speech he said he was going to restore pure air to the state and restore rights of the Indians.

Gov. Ronald Reagan was out of his state, just as he was when an earlier prediction set doomsday for April 4. He sent a telegram thanking local officials for offering the county courthouse as a temporary capital.

Nevada Gov. Paul Laxalt was gone also. He issued a statement saying "Nevada's naval headquarters has been alerted and the ships of the line of the state's fleet are on standby for rescue during the emergency."

Gentry, when asked why there were so few persons from California at the wake, said, "the snow in the Sierra must be keeping them out."