

'A Fine Officer'

The death of Sergeant Charles Derby, long time juvenile officer of the Santa Cruz Police Department, removes from the Santa Cruz scene a fine police officer whose compassion aided the lives of countless young Santa Cruzans.

In his 26 years with the department, Charley saved far more youngsters than he arrested.

No one will probably ever know the number and it probably doesn't matter, but for those countless young boys and girls who came in contact with the juvenile officer, statistics don't count.

Assistant Chief of Police Ernie Marengi described Charley well when he said "He combined the qualities of intelligence, compassion, humanity and a touch of humor. He was one of the greatest."

Charley's ability to deal with young people was recognized early in his career. More than 20 years ago he was honored as the "Young Man of the Year." Since he had been cited by numerous organizations.

He was instrumental in the development of the Santa Cruz Hand Gun club at DeLaveaga Park and developed many fine marksmen who shared his interest in target shooting. An excellent marksman himself, he was an avid devotee of safety in the use of firearms.

Unfortunately Sgt. Derby suffered a severe heart attack nearly a year ago while aiding in subduing a psychiatric patient at County General Hospital. Another attack apparently caused his death yesterday at a local hospital.

We offer our sincere sympathy to his family and join with the community in mourning the death of a fine police officer.

— O —

Davenport Tax Disaster

Davenport's record property tax rate due to the improvement of the Davenport Sewer Maintenance district probably is a classic example of the communications problem.

The basic issue is the fact that the tax base for the district is so small that any improvement project, especially a bond program, becomes a financial crisis.

And that crisis is just what happened when the district decided to make improvements in their sewer treatment facilities. Even though the total improvement cost was relatively low and the maintenance costs are fairly limited, it takes a \$9 tax rate to handle it.

The district has set up a monthly service charge which will help to defray operational costs in the future.

In the interim the tax strike which had taxpayers withholding the first installment of their taxes could make things much worse next year although we wouldn't be surprised to see the strike end by the time the second tax installments are due.

By itself, the strike has raised sufficient public attention to the problem so that some corrective measures may be forthcoming to relieve the individual hardships in the future.

There doesn't seem to be any doubt that many of the residents of the district, including some well informed citizens, do not get full explanations of the cost of the project so far as tax rates were concerned.

Hopefully, from the mistakes of the Davenport incidents, a greater effort can be made in the future to explain improvement projects in complete detail.

This particular issue is exceptionally damaging because the Davenport Sewer Maintenance district is hardly the most affluent district in the County. The fiscal hardship hits those who can afford it the least in most instances.

Let us hope that the County can do a better job next time. We don't need any more \$20 tax rates.