



The only snow in sight was man-made variety at Anastacio's restaurant today.

Pete Amos/Sentinel

It sure doesn't feel like winter

By TOM LONG

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Remember last week when you had to keep the heater going all night and it took an icepick and blowtorch to clear your car's windshield off in the morning?

That wasn't winter.

But this Sunday, when you might have to make the tough choice of whether to listen to the 49er's game while lounging on a blanket on the beach or basking in the sunlight flooding your own backyard ... that will be winter.

Because winter officially begins at 2:08 p.m. Saturday, the moment known as winter solstice. That's the time when the sun reaches the southernmost point of its annual travels. It also marks the shortest day of the year.

Of course, some folks take issue with winter's official starting date.

"November, December, January and February are all wintery months," says Ron MacDonald, local official observer for the National Weather. "The solstice is just the technical term for the shortest

day of the year. The date could conceivably be considered the middle of winter."

There are all sorts of legends and superstitions tied in with the solstice. British folklore says that frost on the solstice indicates a severe winter. Medieval farmers used to believe that whichever way the wind was blowing the church weathercock on the solstice, that's the way the wind would blow for the balance of the season.

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REFERENCE



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Finding a weathercock on a Santa Cruz church might be a bit difficult, but if our current weather conditions are any indication of the winter to come, the season may have ended before it ever had a chance to officially begin.

According to MacDonald, Thursday's local high temperature was 75 degrees, as compared to the fact that eight days ago the local thermometer dropped all the way down to 26 degrees.

All of which seems fine for the moment, but in the long run all this nice weather may not have nice results.

"We're having a similar weather pattern to what we've had for the previous two rain seasons," MacDonald explains. "The season started off with above normal rain and then it seems to stop in early December."

"December and January are supposed to be our wettest months. If we miss out on rain for those two months, we may not have adequate water in our reservoir," MacDonald adds. "We've ended up getting normal amounts of rain for the past two years, but since it comes at odd times it evaporates instead of going into the reservoir."

The combination of solstice and sun also seems to have inspired the proverbial dreams of a white Christmas locally, and one Santa Cruz restaurant has actually been spurred to action. Sherman

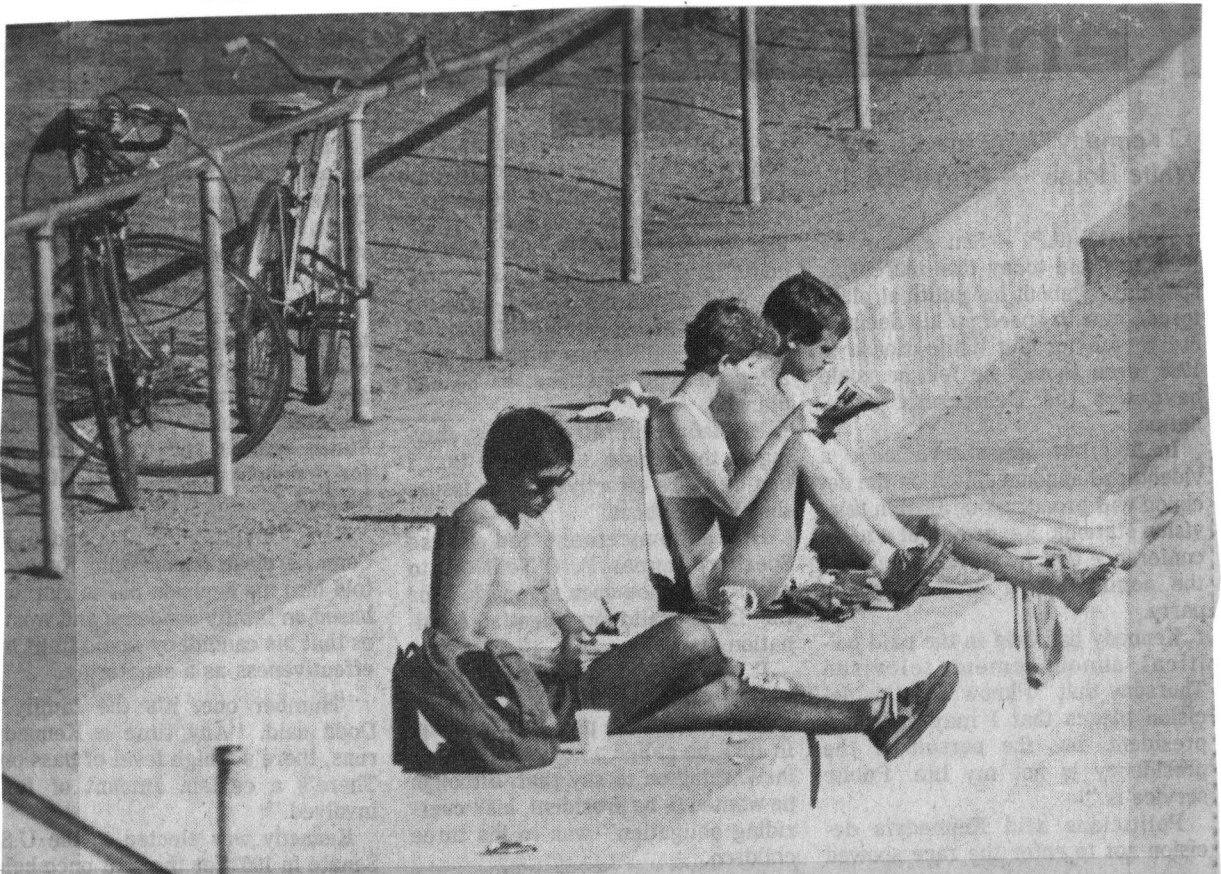
Advertising is promoting Anastacio's, a California cuisine restaurant located at the beginning of Ocean Street, by pumping approximately 84 tons of freshly crushed snow over and around the restaurant

today.

Large trucks surrounded the building this morning as workers fed huge blocks of ice into a machine and then sprayed snow in every direction. The snow should last about two days. Ad-

man Roger Sherman said he was inspired to the idea by memories of a similar event in the Watsonville Plaza when he was young.

And memories of winter may be all that's left this solstice.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

With the mercury at 75, a number of folks were drawn to Cowell's Beach Thursday