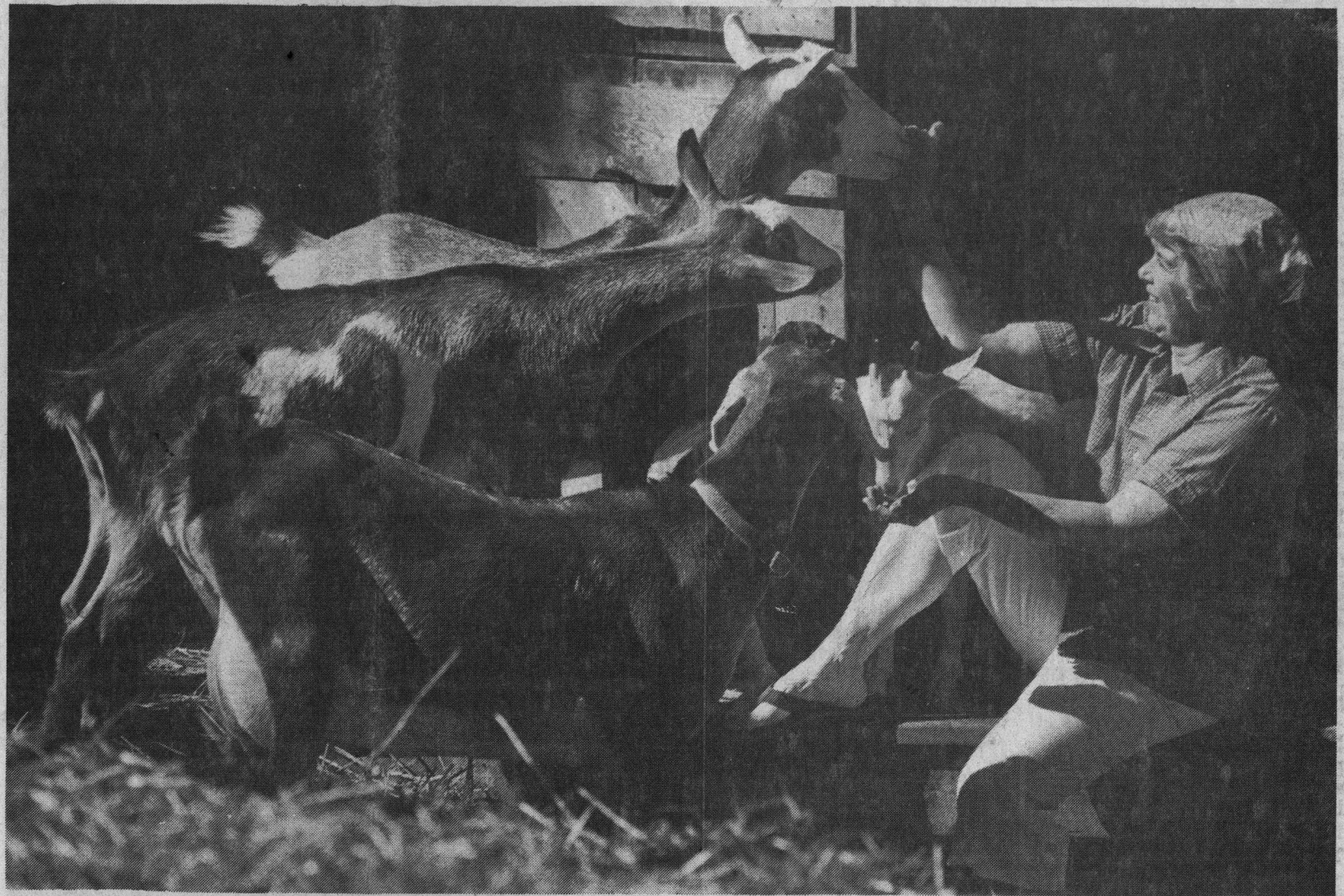


Paradise • lost and found



Home is where the herd is. Betty Smith and her hand-fed goats enjoy a Corralitos afternoon.

Autumn falls like apples in Corralitos

By DON MILLER
Sentinel Staff Writer

HE LOOKED at the soles of his shoes. The traveler had put a lot of mileage on his footsies as he traipsed about the county and now it was time to take stock. Corralitos was a good place to do that — plenty of stock there, good sturdy farm folk, and cloven-hoofed animals popping out like shiny red apples from the peaceful Corralitos valley.

Since he'd gotten this far, the traveler decided to look at his shoes.

said. "There's no market for Watsonville apples any more. A lot of the guys are going into dwarf trees, which are easier to take care of and need less labor, but have less wood." Cutler has four acres of apples of his own.

"Every time an orchard goes under, they subdivide it," said Cutler, who, from his central location, sees most of what goes on in Corralitos. Very few orchards have met the axe in the 29 years he's been watching, though.

"I bet I have 10 people a day in here on weekends asking what's for sale." He said he's glad the area is

when the East Coasters who settled the area were impressed by the stands of redwoods that encircled the valley, making it look like a corral.

Judy Malmin wrote a history of Corralitos, the community she was born, raised and still lives in. It was once the Jose Amesti Rancho. Around 1854, the Hames brothers, Benjamin and John, built a flour mill here. Lumbering was big in the canyons.

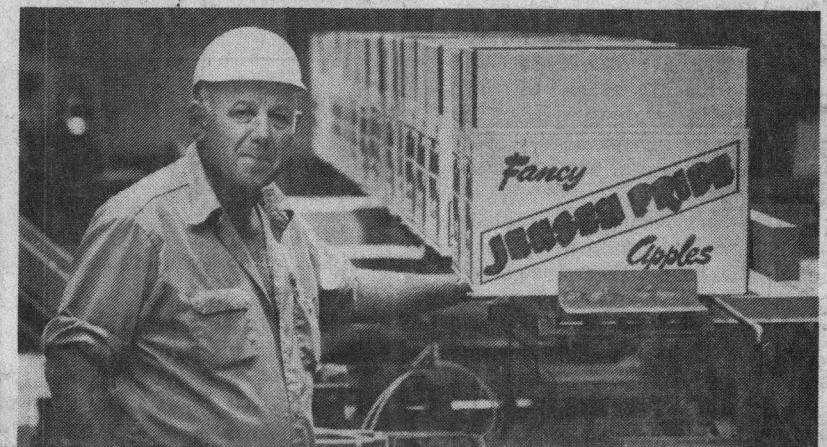
Apples were introduced and began to be grown commercially in the 1880s. The area is still agricultural, Malmin said.

we'll stay with agriculture."

FORMER county supervisor Marilyn Liddicoat has lived in Corralitos since 1967. She said, "It's fulfilled all my expectations. It's still rural. The neighbors are friendly. There's a great sense of community."

And where is it? "I tell people I live way back in the hills, half-way between Aptos and Watsonville. Newcomers here are not considered to be old-guard Watsonville."

She and her husband, Douglas, an ophthalmologist, own 33 acres. Not everyone who moves to Corralitos,



Or in he stepped in something not so holy. After all, this was the country.

He picked an apple from a tree, bit into it and waited to see if any serpents crawled out.

Nada. And his shoes were (relatively) clean to boot.

The traveler drove down Freedom Boulevard, turning on Hames Road, up, down the hills, into Pleasant Valley, up, down the hills again, and then into Corralitos.

Though it was still summer, the air was cool and the reds, greens and pale yellows of the apple orchards made it seem like autumn, in country where seasons rarely fall.

In the center of town, he found a redwood building. "Corralitos Women's Club" read the sign out front. A Methodist church, Corralitos Creek, a community center and a woodsmoke smell defined the town's center. On one corner of the intersection of Hames, Eureka Canyon, Browns Valley and Corralitos roads, sat the Corralitos Market.

Since the 1860s, some kind of store has been here. In the past 30 years, Joe Cutler has built a thriving sausage business on this spot. He uses applewood to smoke his meats, but, as he explained, he's having to buy some of his applewood in Oregon.

"You go with the times," Cutler

from turning into a suburb. Suburb of what? Watsonville, Cutler answered. Watsonville is the city. That's where the processing plants are, the cider bottlers — business is done there.

"The store is the only thing there is," Cutler said of downtown Corralitos. He has four smokehouses now and Corralitos Market sausage is a recognized name in the carnivorous world.

"It's strange," he said, "when I first came here, there were a lot of younger fellows on the volunteer fire department. Now — how should I say it? — there's a lot of expensive homes, big shots, doctors, lawyers, garbage service, cable TV, and hardly any active members in the volunteer fire department."

Expensive land. Cutler said he was part of a group which bought 50 acres of "distressed land" in a slide area for \$15,000 a few years ago. The group sold the land for \$50,000. Later it was subdivided and today lots, on top of a ridge, go for over \$100,000 each.

He smiled. "That's appreciation for you. To see what people pay for land ... ridiculous. But you can't look back."

THE name Corralitos — "little corral" in Spanish — probably comes from the 1860s

that there's a lot of strangers now. A lot. I don't know everybody in town like I used to. There's still the Grange, the Scouts, the churches and the Women's Club, but the new people don't have time to get together.

"The Lumberjack Breakfast (held every May) used to be the time to do that, but a lot of real Corralitos people don't even do that anymore."

Jean Clough is a real Corralitos person. With her husband George, she grows kiwi fruit on five acres off Eureka Canyon Road. The Cloughs might be considered heretics of sorts, in apple-cheeked Corralitos, but kiwis — which currently sell three for \$1 in stores — bring in more money.

Jean's stepfather grew apples in Corralitos, beginning in 1902, she explained, but at their hillside ranch, kiwis, which grow on vines and are trellised like grapes, work better.

"This area is very close to the Bay of Plenty in New Zealand (where kiwis are heavily planted)," Jean said. "It's an ideal growing climate — citrus, avocados, apples, kiwi."

Of course, ideal climates draw lots of people. "I hope they hold as much of the land agricultural as they can," Jean said. "We're staying with it. We have prime land for building, and that's where the money is — in real estate — but as long as I live,

people who may not want to be involved in agriculture, but want to be surrounded by it," Marilyn said.

The Liddicoats send one of their daughters to Salesian Sister's School, a Catholic elementary school on Enos Lane. Marilyn was still a supervisor when the Sisters traded their Porter-Sesnon property in Aptos for a 52-acre portion of the old Corralitos Ranch established in 1883 by Joseph and Mary Enos.

The traveler took a drive up Enos Lane, passing ranch-style homes and gazing out at the incomparable views of the valley and Monterey Bay, until he got to the school.

Blessed are they who go to school there. Catholic school was never like this, he decided. Tennis courts. Swimming pool. Courtyards. Flowers in riotous color. The immaculate Spanish-style buildings stand above Corralitos — send us your hungry, your dispossessed ... your children.

"My mom says it's worth it to come up here," said fifth-grader Lisa Kiedrowski of La Selva Beach.

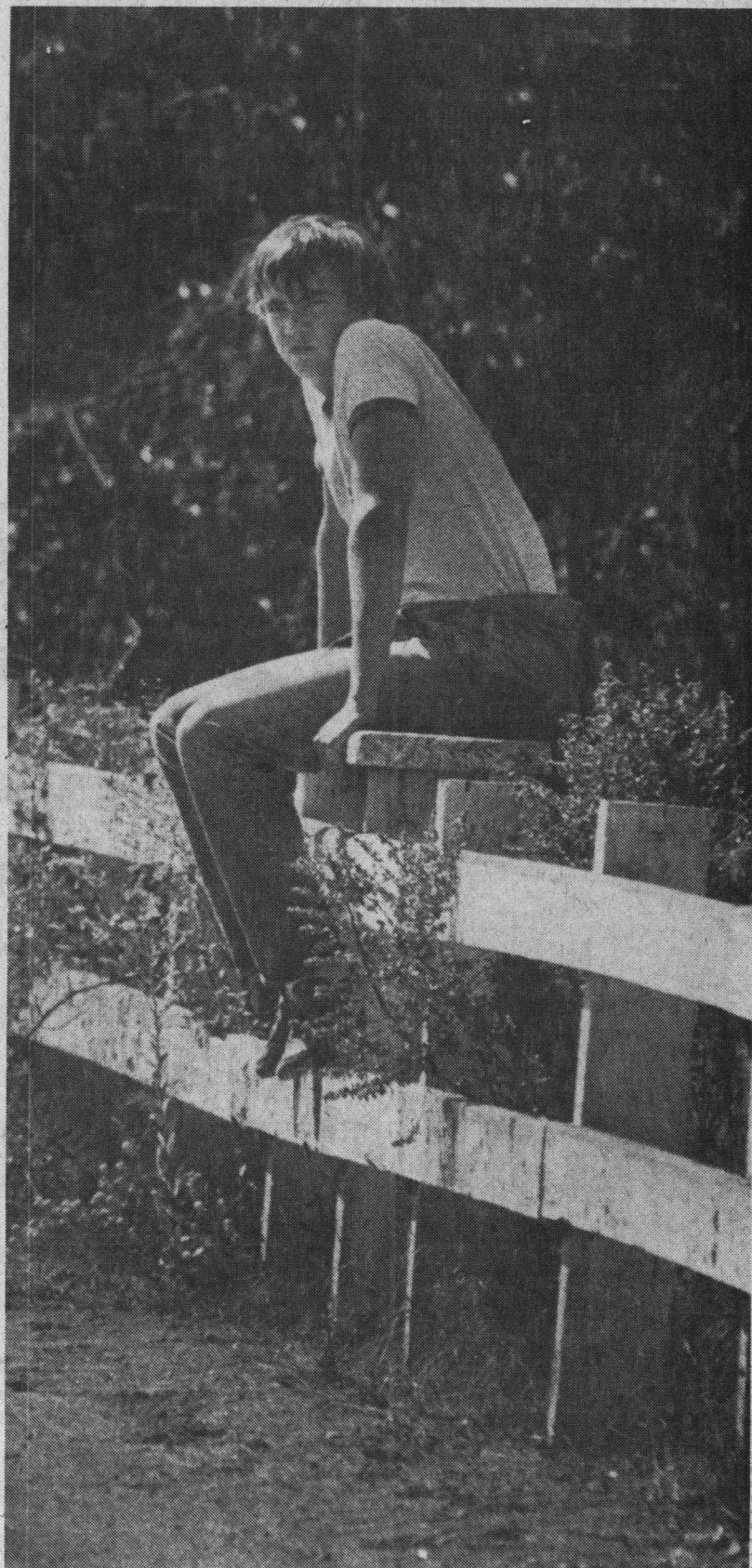
School let out and a few shadows crossed the bright green lawns. It was quiet, meditative ... Crosses have been planted in the surrounding hillsides. A religious statue stood

Please see Page B2



Bill Jensen wears his pride on his sleeve when it comes to apples.

Photos by Bill Lovejoy



Phillip Cramblet finds a Hames Road roost to his liking.

Paradise at the end of unincorporated road

Editor's note: With today's journey into Corralitos, reporter Don Miller concludes "Paradise Lost and Found," a series on the unincorporated communities of Santa Cruz County.

FACTS IS FACTS — and paradise is paradise. After 15 weeks of researching and writing the series "Paradise — lost and found" I can't help but form conclusions.

For one, and more than I ever imagined I'd discover, I found that Santa Cruz County is paradise for many of its residents.

The "traveler" — the sobriquet I used for the series — met refugees and emigrants from all over the United States and from other countries, and most of them said they were lucky to be here.

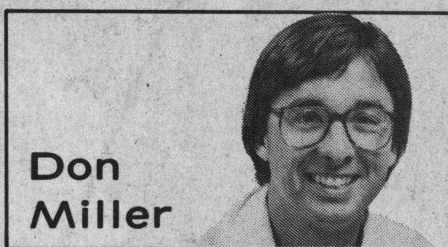
Very few thought they might ever leave or said they wanted to.

In Pajaro, across the Pajaro River from Watsonville and actually in Monterey County, the traveler talked to migrant Mexican families, mostly farm and cannery workers, who, despite discrimination, sub-standard housing and a pervasive mean-streets feeling, felt their move to *El Norte* was an opportunity.

In Soquel, heaven was the satisfaction that perched upon the straining waistlines of diners in the town's many restaurants.

In Davenport, it was the country life for kids. In Boulder Creek and Ben Lomond, paradise was life along the San Lorenzo River, lazy summer days and the escape from San Jose.

Ah, yes, San Jose and Silicon Valley — in one



Don Miller

My turn

after another of the unincorporated communities visited, those names were mentioned, as in, *how could I ever have lived there?*

How glad, people said, they were to get out.

Old-timers would snort and talk about *commuters* as if such a state were a communicable disease. But the commuters, up early in the morning to get to work, returning to their adopted homes late at night after fighting Highway 17, lived on blithely unaware of the resentment against them.

Each place, I discovered, had a sense of identity as clear as an October sky. It wasn't just history — and in Santa Cruz County, history goes way back — but something more, something proud and almost nationalistic.

And the enemy, in place after place, was Santa Cruz. Too much traffic. Out of step with the realities of daily life. The university. The politicians. The street people. People in Freedom or Aromas or Aptos did not get misty-eyed

discussing the city of Santa Cruz like they often did when discussing *my town*.

Rather, they used Santa Cruz as a measuring stick against which their area stood tall.

Problems? There were plenty. The usual ones such as housing, the cost of land, unresponsive county government, poor services, traffic and *it ain't like it used to be around here* came up in most conversations.

There were some new wrinkles, too. In Freedom, it was the fear of old-guard residents that their town was being swallowed up by Watsonville. On the Summit, it was the nasty fire that came roaring up the hillsides last July. In Corralitos, residents worried the area's rich agricultural heritage and lands will be inhaled by suburban development. In Rio del Mar, it was the poor-cousin status of the "Flats" versus the rich relatives on top of the hill that rankled.

People didn't talk about these problems, though, with bitterness or despair. Rather, they saw them as annoyances, as intimations of earthly reality in their nicely-wrought firmament. Insects in the Garden of Eden. Serpents need not apply.

In most cases, people went out of their way to describe what it was like to live in their towns. A few merchants got their feelings hurt and one guy said his reputation and business had suffered for what he said was my selective editing of his comments, but mostly, people told me, yes, this is sort of how it was and is.

Paradise found.

Autumn in Corralitos—

Continued from Page B1

watch over the swimming pool.

"It's gorgeous. It's like heaven," said the principal, Sister Kathleen Curd. Sister Kathleen has been in heaven one month. She came here from east Los Angeles. She said the co-ed school has 180 students, and is home for a girls' summer camp and a yearly retreat for nuns.

RETREAT. That's what the traveler wanted to do when the thundering herd came his way.

"I started out with three goats," Betty Smith said. "Now there's 20." Sister Betty of the Sacred Goathart convent. Well, not really, but something about the way they look at her when she's got a handful of grain ...

Betty keeps her goats in a pen-with-a-view, a mid-sized *corralito* high above the valley. She milks the herd daily, and sells the milk — in addition to goat cheese and accompanied by the eggs she gets from her 30 or so chickens. Not to mention the rabbits she keeps in a warren above the goats, her two dogs, several cats, fruit trees from which she makes wine and the mohair she spins from goat hair.

"It looks like angel's hair," she sighed, showing the traveler a bolt of the flaxen mohair she spun on her wheel.

Betty once taught photography at Cabrillo College, and her photographs — signed "Elizabeth McBride Smith" — decorate the studio overlooking the goat corral.

A trapeze hung down from the ceiling. A piano stood in the corner — "I use it as a music studio," Betty said, explaining she enjoys singing — at recitals or in churches.

"It's a contrasting life — milk the goats in the morning, shovel manure then get all dressed up and sing at night," she said. Betty and her husband, Fritz, a doctor, moved to this ridge overlooking Corralitos 14 years ago.

She described her neighbors as "high-quality people — doctors, lawyers" who have remained kind through the growth of her menagerie. Prevailing winds, she said, carry the barnyard smell away from the residential section of the ridge.

Inside her house, surrealistic photographs and modern art dominate the walls. Two sculpted camels jut out from one wall. Cowhides sprawl across hardwood floors. Outside, windchimes call the animals home.

Betty said most of her animals are somebody's unwanted pets. The goats — and the goat palace — are clearly her most wanted guests.

"They're such intelligent critters," she said. "Sharp as a dog — and just as affectionate. The trouble is you can't take them in the house."

THE TRAVELER, hiding his notebook from a hungry goat, checked the bottom of his shoes once again and headed off down Corralitos Road. The scent of apples hung in the air like red wine aging in oak barrels. Inside a packing shed, just as his father's father had done, and his father's father, Bill Jensen Jr. was helping with this year's apple crop.

"You must want my father," Bill Jr. said, pointing to a big man wearing a white hard hat. A few workers watched as apples came down a conveyor belt, were separated by size and then rolled into boxes.

"We put out a pretty good box," the senior Jensen said. He can pack 1,500 boxes a day of Red Delicious, Newtown Pippins and Golden Delicious, grown on his 87 acres of prime Corralitos land.

Jensen fired up his custom FMC apple gathering machine, a behemoth he modified to shake, rat-

Paradise • lost and found



tle and roll apples off trees.

The apples fell into a canvas-and-rubber canopy and then moved by belt into a crate.

"The apples can fall 500 feet and not be all cut up or bruised," Jensen said, "providing they have this cushion."

Electronic sorting is the coming thing, he said, and his labor force, down to seven from a peak of 25, may someday dwindle to just Bill Jr. and himself.

Which suits Bill Sr. fine. "This is where I've made it," he said. "Automation."

He said California apples have it all over Washington state apples. Better tasting. A perfect balance of sugar and acidity. Premium, vintage apples, just as it says on Jensen's boxes: "Jensen Pride."

Jensen picked up an apple and handed it to the traveler. "I always think of Corralitos and apples," he said. "There has never really been anything else here."

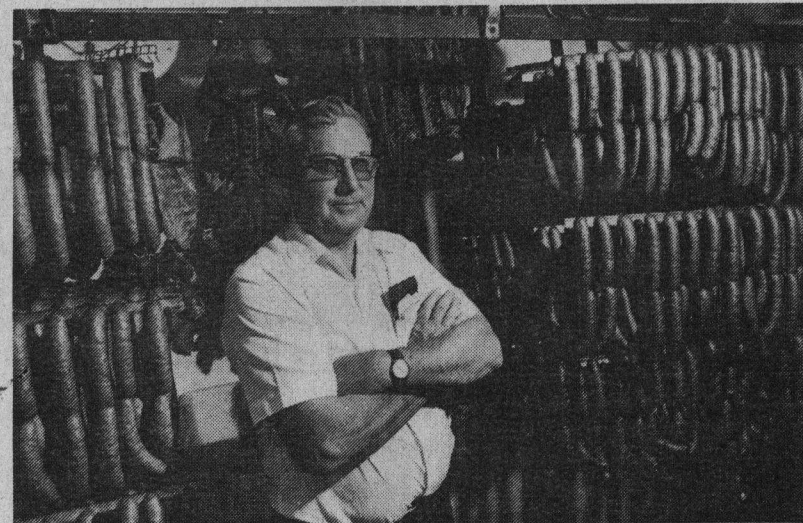
The traveler waved goodbye, slowly drove through the center of town and then back to the city. An old man riding in a smoke-belching tractor pattered ahead of him. A young girl on a bicycle pedaled uphill, swerving slightly to miss an old dog crossing the street.

The wind ran through the orchards and the chill in the air deepened. Fall was coming and it was time to leave.



Jeff Ramos, Laura Benich and Maggie Ramos meet with Sister Sally in the courtyard of the Salesian Sisters' School.

Photos by Bill Lovejoy



Joe Cutler is closely linked with his Corralitos market.

Fashion Design

by Hannelore

Original Designs
and Tailoring
by appointment only.

(408) 335-4011

SPAY/NEUTER

Aid for
Dogs & Cats

S.N.A.P.

Call 423-1583

Val Suzannes

an exclusive consignment
boutique

Discreet confidential consignments taken on designer brand contemporary men's and women's clothing, including jewelry and shoes.

Also profit from the lovely vintage clothing you no longer wear.



Boutique Monday-Saturday
Hours: 10:30-5:30

717 Pacific Ave.

(Pacific and Laurel)

425-7429

Consignment by Appointment

UNHAPPY?

Depressed? Mistrustful? Unfulfilled? Angry?
Lonely? Guilty? Ashamed? Low self-esteem?

If you grew up in a family with alcoholic or chemically dependent parents, you probably identify with most of these feelings. You also are likely to repeat negative feelings and behavior patterns from your past in the present.

There is hope for recovering from the effects of your difficult childhood; for transforming your liabilities into assets.

Individual and group therapy is being offered by

RICK LINZER, MA, LMFT

Call

438-4012

For appt. or info

The Family Center

4901 Scotts Valley Dr.

Scotts Valley

FLORA HANSEN, M.A.

Licensed Marriage, Family and Child Counselor

announces the opening of her practice for

**TRANSPERSONAL COUNSELING
FOR GIFTED AND CREATIVE PEOPLE**

157 Van Ness

Santa Cruz, California 95060

429-6122