

LOMA PRIETA EARTHQUAKE, OCT. 17, 1989: 20 YEARS LATER

15 SECONDS THAT CHANGED US

# AFTERSHOCKS







DAN COYRO/SENTINEL FILE

Rescuers lift and dig through fallen rubble searching for survivors in Ford's department store in downtown Santa Cruz.

Everything was rearranged. Twenty years ago today, at 5:04 p.m., Tuesday, Oct. 17, 1989, an earthquake centered below a redwood forest in Aptos shook Santa Cruz County along with much of Central and Northern California.

People died.

Buildings collapsed.

Homes crumbled.

Lives were forever changed.

In downtown Santa Cruz, the Pacific Garden Mall became a symbol of the earthquake's immense power. As searchers dug through rubble looking for trapped people, and bodies, the street

lay in ruins.

In Watsonville, the city's downtown would never be the same. Hundreds of homes were knocked off their foundations. Frightened residents huddled on sidewalks, riding out the ominous aftershocks.

It was a time before a revolution in communications would change the way we experience the world, but on that day and the days that followed, people were desperate for information about what happened — and what would come next.

In these pages, Sentinel photographers and reporters recount the earth-shattering events of the Loma Prieta earthquake — a moment in time that is still reverberating after two decades.

