

✓ 4-9-87 G-7 Auto Plaza S.C.

# Automakers Deny Forcing Local Dealers to Move

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DEALERS' claims that national distributors have threatened to pull franchises out of Santa Cruz unless more modern quarters are found by July of next year are not backed up by the automakers.

Spokespersons for Toyota, Ford and Dodge deny that the dealers are under industry pressure to abandon downtown for higher visibility.

"I don't care if they stack cars on the roof," said Toyota attorney Wanda McKnight, who explained that any decision to move the Toyota

dealership would be made by franchise owners Lee Courtright and Charles Canfield, not Toyota.

Toyota dealer Lee Courtright refuted McKnight's analysis, saying that he is under direct pressure from the manufacturer to show movement on an improved facility by July 1 of this year, and to be in that new facility by July 1, 1988.

Courtright, who also owns the Nissan/Dodge dealership, said he is not under pressure from either of those

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manufacturers to move from downtown, but would like to have all three of his dealerships under the same roof.

Donald Krupp, a spokesperson for Ford in Detroit, said Ford dealer Bill Winterhalder "can do whatever he wants to do" about moving his Ford franchise.

Krupp said Ford does "encourage its dealers to better themselves," but he had never heard of Ford pulling a franchise simply because a dealership had outgrown its salesroom (a common problem in cities all across the country).

Speaking for Winterhalder, Courtright said he understood Winterhalder's Ford dealership was not

under the gun, but that the manufacturer was pressuring Winterhalder to split his Lincoln/Mercury showroom from his Ford showroom and move to bigger quarters.

Chamber of commerce president Gary Reece (who stressed he was not trained in the car dealership business) said he understands from the dealers that pressure from above "is very real. I know that's a fact because it's the same pressure that made (the Cadillac dealership) move — and it's particularly a problem with Toyota."

Courtright said several weeks ago that the dealers had closed a deal on the Kinzli property, but two city councilmembers say there is an escape clause if the proposal doesn't fly. •

—Sam Mitchell