

Veterans building to be renovated

Veterans
Alternate facility
being used for
operation

By TARMO HANNULA
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Though the flag was lowered at the shuttered Veterans Memorial Building in downtown Santa Cruz Thursday and moved elsewhere, the historic building will be able to once again serve local veterans in about a year.

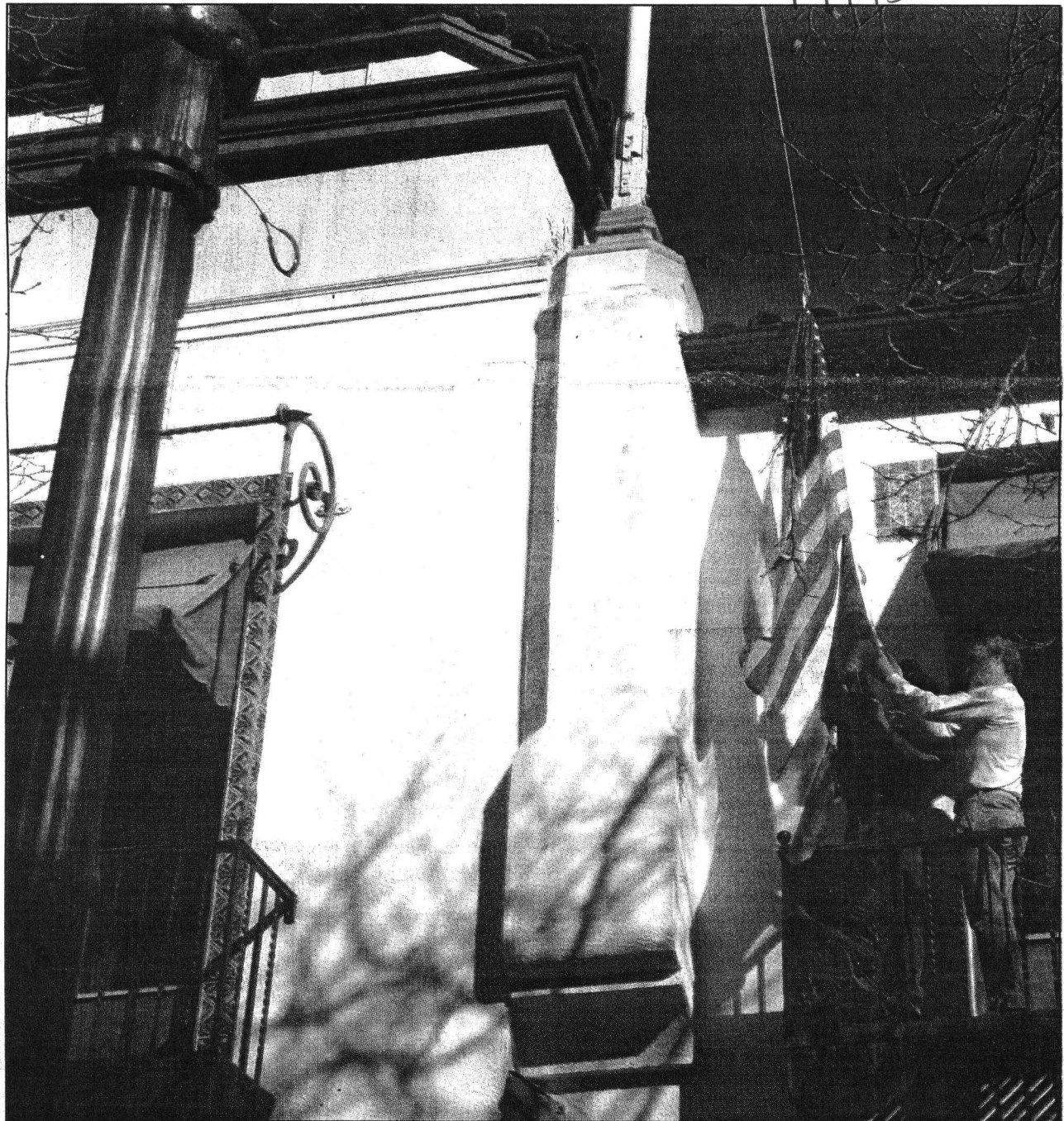
The 1932 Spanish Colonial revival, two-story building, which has been a resource for veterans and veterans services and also a venue for community events, was locked up in January 2010 after structural problems were discovered.

On Thursday, Santa Cruz County Supervisor Greg Caput, city officials, several dozen veterans and community members held a ceremony to mark the launching of the renovation and seismic retrofitting of the building, which should begin in March. The building is owned by the county.

"This building is going to be fixed up and fully renovated," Caput said, "thanks to the persistence of all the vets who have put so much work into making this happen. We have the best armed forces in the world."

"I want to recognize this great moment, the battle to preserve this veterans hall," Santa Cruz Mayor Don Lane said. "This building is a tremendous resource for our community."

Nancy Gordon, head of the County General Services, said the job will cost about \$3.5 million,



Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Vietnam War veteran Gordon Smith helps lower the American flag and the flag for soldiers missing in action or held as prisoners of war Thursday at the Veterans Memorial Building in Santa Cruz.



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The Freedom Post 1716 Honor Guard conduct a 21-gun salute.

VETS

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which includes contingency plans and management expenses. It will be funded through a floating bond. The project is expected to be completed in January 2013.

Thursday's event served as a moving-on point from a lengthy feud that broke out upon the building's abrupt closure. Many local veterans were angered by the closure, which generated a lawsuit, bitter words and contrasting structural evaluations that further fanned the coals for the discontented.

In 2010, building manager Tim Bratton noticed falling stucco at the building, located at 846 Front St. Bratton called the county's General Services Department and after subsequent inspections by local civil engineering companies William Fisher Architecture and The Streeter Group, the building was closed indefinitely on Jan. 21, 2010.

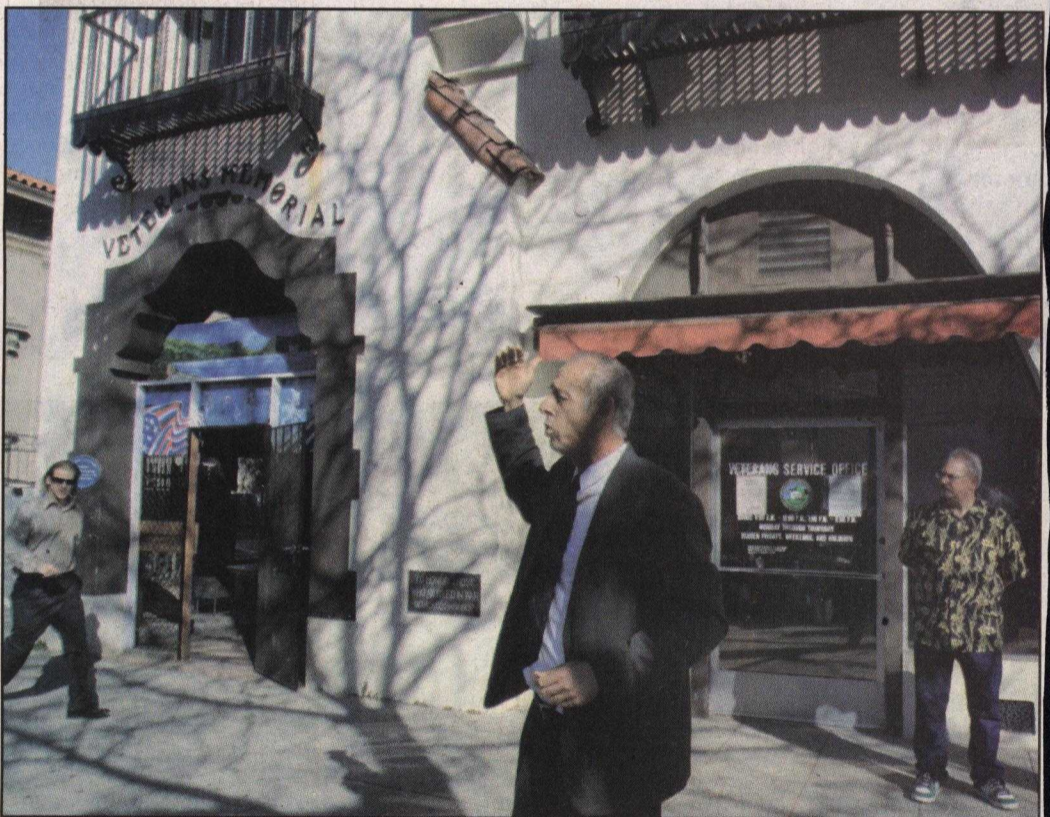
The closure came as the county was facing a \$17 million budget deficit and had few resources to address the needed repairs.

Experts have said the damage was likely a result of the 1989 Loma Prieta Earthquake.

Daniel Young, commander of Bill Motto Post 5888, said an alternate site has been up and running for veterans at the Veterans Center, 1040 Emeline Ave., Building E in Santa Cruz.

"We have work to do to help our veterans," he said. "I encourage veterans to use this alternate site. The Veterans Memorial Building holds a lot of memories for me; this is our home. It's a sacred place and I'm excited about it being renovated."

On Thursday the event was



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Supervisor Greg Caput heads up a tour of the Veterans Memorial Building.

preceded by a meeting for about three dozen veterans, several of whom served in World War II or the Korean War.

Veterans spoke about their needs and of the importance of maintaining support of veterans. Then the flag was lowered from the Veterans Memorial Building — only to be re-raised at the Veterans Center about a mile away. A 21-gun salute was performed by members of VFW Freedom Post 1716. Following "Taps," everyone was invited to tour the Veterans Memorial Building as members of the Tin Can Band sang several songs.

"Veterans are a tough group," Caput said. "When they want something done, they get it done."

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The Veterans Memorial Building is a historical building with a Blue Oval Plaque.

For information about the Veterans Center, call 429-8345.

For video of the event, visit www.youtube.com/register

pajaronian.com.

Reporter Todd Guild contributed to this story.