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All this for 'Insomnia'



KAREN T. BORCHERS — MERCURY NEWS

Author Stephen King arrives on his motorcycle Monday at Bookshop Santa Cruz at the end of his 4,000-plus mile book promotion tour.

Stephen King roars in

Author ends tour in Santa Cruz

BY LEE QUARNSTROM
Mercury News Staff Writer

Best-selling author Stephen King wound up a cross-country motorcycle trip and book-promotion tour in Santa Cruz on Monday by praising independent booksellers, decrying censorship, extolling public libraries and missing the arrest of a man who claims the novelist is actually the killer who shot John Lennon.

Taken into custody when he entered Bookshop Santa Cruz as the writer's press conference was breaking up was Steve Lightfoot, who was carrying a large sign reading, "Stephen King is a murderer. It's true or he'd sue."

Lightfoot — whose van is covered with his written claims that King is actually Lennon's killer, Mark David Chapman (whom the

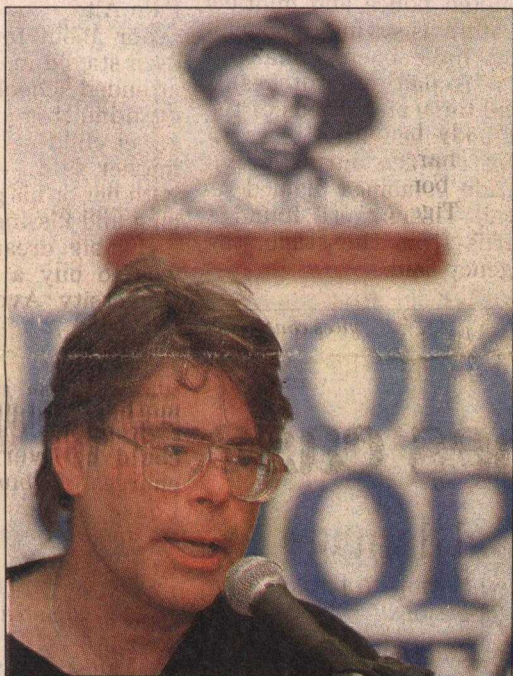
novelist resembles) — has been a frequent sight on Pacific Avenue in downtown Santa Cruz. He said before his arrest that he is a resident "of Northern California."

He has also been a familiar sight wherever King goes, the author said during his book shop press conference.

"Steve Lightfoot has been a stone in my shoe for a lot of years," said King, who did not see Lightfoot arrested but learned about it later. "But more importantly, he's been a stone in his own shoe." King said the man also had claimed that movie star River Phoenix was murdered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture because the young celebrity was a vegetarian.

Lightfoot, who had been or-
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Best-selling novelist Stephen King praised independent bookstores and criticized the chains during his Santa Cruz appearance.



King cycles in on book tour

■ KING

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dered by Bookshop Santa Cruz owner Neal Coonerty to stay out of the store, was nabbed by two undercover policemen when he entered the establishment. He was arrested for trespassing; police said a decision whether to book Lightfoot would be made later.

Santa Cruz was the only Northern California appearance for King, who is promoting his latest novel, "Insomnia." He had a sold-out appearance at the Santa Cruz Civic Auditorium Monday night as well as the afternoon press conference. Proceeds from the book-reading at the auditorium were earmarked for the Friends of the Santa Cruz Public Libraries.

King, who pulled up at the bookstore entrance wearing leather jacket and biker chaps, told reporters he'd ridden his Harley-Davidson motorcycle 4,609 miles from his home in Maine to Bookshop Santa Cruz. This is the end of his cross-country tour, he noted, explaining that his cycle would be crated and shipped to his home.

Saying his career "began in independent bookstores, where my works were sold by people like Neal (Coonerty)," King blasted publishers' policies giving advantages to chain bookshops and price-cutting warehouse stores.

"The independent bookstore is a dying breed," he complained. "It's not right. It's bad for diversity... It's dangerous when American literature is repre-

sented in stores only by people like Sidney Sheldon and Danielle Steel and Tom Clancy and Stephen King."

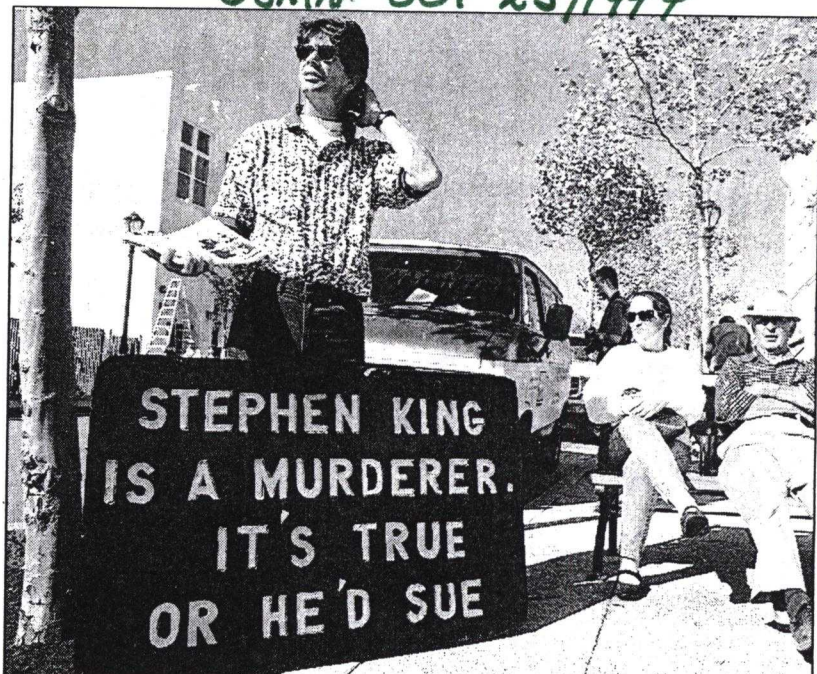
He urged his fans who plan to purchase "Insomnia" to buy the new novel in independent bookstores.

King said he believed that public libraries "are more important than bookstores."

Calling libraries "part of the intellectual lifeblood of a community," he praised them for taking courageous stands against attempts to ban books.

And he had advice for parents and students in areas where books are censored: "If the school board doesn't want you to read a book you'd better hurry up and read it."

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Protester Steve Lightfoot, left, waits outside Bookshop Santa Cruz for author Stephen King to arrive for a press conference.