

Aptos Library Books Come Under Scrutiny

By BILL NEUBAUER

Sentinel Staff Writer

Would you urge a library to remove from its shelf a highly-praised book intended to teach boys and girls some of the things they need to know about sex?

Is it "sick," for example, for a book to impart to either a girl or a boy clearly explained and carefully illustrated information about menstruation?

The Aptos branch of the Santa Cruz Public Library has been urged to remove this book from its shelf by a relative of a boy who borrowed the book and took it home. The relative said on a written complaint form that she could see the book would have value for teen-agers but that she felt it should not be on the shelves.

The Aptos library received another complaint from another reader about a book that offended him as a Mexican-American, and he urged that this book be removed.

Heidi Smith, branch librarian, passed the complaints over to the city-county library staff for consideration in conformance with procedures set up by Librarian Charles Atkins.

Decisions?

The book "Learning About Sex," by Janet Aho and John Petras, will be retained on the shelf. The collective staff decision was phrased as follows:

"After reviewing the book again, we feel, as did the reviews, that it provides 'accurate and sensible coverage about a still sensitive subject.' The authors have succeeded in providing families with a framework for imparting factual information to their children within the context of their own individual value system.

"The Children's Departments of our libraries provide materials for children from birth through junior high school. We know many families with children within this wide age span find this book useful and so plan to keep the book on our shelves. We hope all families will continue to aid their children in the selection of reading material in order to find the most appropriate books for their age, reading level and family value system."

The decision regarding the second book, "Bad Boy, Good Boy," was quite different.

The staff recommends that the book be withdrawn from the shelves because "it has long outlived whatever usefulness it may have had."

Rosemary Milburn, branch libraries supervisor, told The Sentinel that librarians are constantly reminded that what is offensive to one person is not offensive to another, and she asked rhetorically: "What is an offensive book, and to whom? We have books that are offensive to me, but we are certainly buying them because they certainly are wanted and are not offensive to others."

Milburn added: "You don't have to read a book that is offensive to you. Parents who may be concerned about the effect of a book upon a young child should indeed help help them to find more appropriate books for their age and family value system."