

## A final song for the Casa Del Rey

### Earthquake brought down the retirement hotel — and its band

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SCOTTS VALLEY — With a song in their hearts and a tear in their eyes, members of the Casa Del Rey Rhythm Band gave their final concert over the weekend.

The Oct. 17 earthquake brought down both the band and the venerable retirement hotel that 150 retired people, including the 14 band members, called home.

Crews began taking the seaside hotel down Friday.

Clad in their red-and-black outfits, the band members were determined Saturday to keep the mood bright as they noisily tapped their tambourines, clapped their coconuts and jingled their bells to an eager audience at the Oak Tree Villas retirement complex.

Some of their old friends from the Casa Del Rey dropped by, too.

"I tell you, I cried when they started to play. I should be happy, but I feel sad instead. We had such a nice group there," said Esther Meyers, who lived at the hotel for 22 years.

Like the happy songs they always played, rhythm band members tried to look on the bright side of the future.

"I've got a check from FEMA for \$1,900 to get me started again," said 72-year-old Carol Beasworrick, who already has made plans to move into a new, federally subsidized retirement center in King City.

But in the process, she will have to say goodbye to the man who should have been her father.

Their meeting two years ago at the Casa Del Rey is a heart-warming story.

Seems that Carol's mother,



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Hotel was fatally damaged in the quake and is being torn down.

Jenny V. Hand, and a fellow, by the name of Clark Chickering were sweethearts back in 1914 in Fort Collins, Colo.

They split up over a lover's quarrel and Jenny Hand married another man. Clark Chickering married Jenny's best friend. He wound up in Santa Cruz, working more than 30 years at the cement plant in Davenport and Jenny went off to raise her family in Washington. They never saw each other again.

Later in life, Jenny confided in her daughter that she had really always loved Clark.

Two years ago, Carol Beasworrick moved into the Casa — as the residents called it — and sat flabbergasted when she heard the an-

nouncer at a talent show there call Clark Chickering to the stage.

"He has the same pictures in his photo albums that I have in mine," Carol said Saturday.

"We became very good friends. Now I'll probably never see him again."

Clark already has moved into an apartment on Soquel Avenue where, the other night, he watched on TV as the wrecking ball cracked into the Casa Del Rey, his home of more than nine years.

"I don't like it, but it's nobody's fault. It's the earthquake's fault," he said.

Like Clark, Iris Douglas was an original member of the rhythm band.

She is currently living with a daughter in Scotts Valley, but



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Xylophonist Iris Douglas, an original member of the Casa Del Rey Rhythm Band, played Saturday.

hopes to be back on her own again at Oak Tree Villas.

"I had a lot of friends there (Casa Del Rey). Maybe a couple will come by to visit," she said.

"I feel very sad, very sorry for Mr. Canfield (Charles Canfield, whose Seaside Co. owns the hotel). He made the place so nice for us," she said.

Pat Bond, a retired model and saleslady, was one of the newest

residents of the Casa Del Rey, moving in just six months ago. Still, she said, "I always called it heaven on earth."

She was entering the dining hall there for dinner at 5:04 p.m. when the earthquake struck.

"I just stood there and watched the gorgeous fireside room crumble. It was like slow motion."

Staff quickly ordered the resi-

dents to evacuate. They huddled in the parking lot at the rear. Some spent the night on mattresses in a hallway. But Pat and her friends sat up in chairs in the parking lot.

She and those friends used to spend much of their time sitting on the large sofa in the hotel lobby, solving all of the world's problems.

"There was nothing we could do about the earthquake," she said.