

## NO MILITANTS FOUND

# Deputies sweep the Minton commune

By Paul Beatty—VP Managing Editor

The "bust" was a bust.

A surprise visit to the commune at Minton ranch, off the northeast side of China Grade, one mile north of Big Basin Highway, Thursday afternoon by an armada of Santa Cruz County deputies, an FBI man, a probation worker, county health department men, and two newsmen, in search of armed militants came up with 12 hard-at-work, clean-appearing long-hairs living at the ranch.

The day was warm and beautiful—a summer's day.

The approach to the Minton commune was planned with one group of deputies approaching from the south down-side along the road leading into the commune, and a second group sweeping in through the woods from the north.

The newsmen were with the north group, which first made contact with two telephone company men, who, when they got a good look at our strength, yelled over to us, "We sure hope we don't run into the people you're looking for."

Our group made second contact when we came upon a mini-cabin above the main Minton complex of buildings, and found two young women, partially unclothed, standing out by a small garden plot.

Deputies busted them, and as soon as they had clothed their upper bodies, we continued south through the woods.

Suddenly, what seemed to everyone to be a burst of gunfire was heard from the direction of the commune.

Walkie-talkies cracked between the two patrols, and the Santa Cruz Sheriff's department radio control, and all began asking each other who was in the fire-fight.

No explanation.

We continued our approach—now much more cautiously—toward the commune—and what we thought were armed militants.

The danger seemed very real to our men and shot-guns and carbines were held at ready.

Should the militants be there, armed with army weapons, we would be on the short end of the fire stick.

After a short distance, we hit the commune.

When the reporter arrived five men and five women were being gathered into a group in the yard.

Those deputies with rifles and shot-guns were holding their weapons at ready, but no revolvers were drawn.

Members of the commune live in a large "A" frame building, a 6' by 10' tiny cabin, and in the mini-cabin where the first two women were apprehended.

According to members of the commune in a report made last December to the county zoning commission, there are seven buildings on the

One of the bearded men approached a deputy sergeant, and demanded reasons why the law enforcement officers had come in armed; if they had a warrant; and what right did they have entering the property.

The bearded man became more and more angry, and continued to stand in the way of the sergeant.

The sergeant warned him that he was interfering with the investigation.

As the man continued to demand answers, deputies finally spread-eagled him against a wall, searched him, handcuffed him, and took him into one of the cabins.

Later, the man came out, his hands freed, to tell the sergeant that he did not want to interfere, but that he still did not understand the intrusion.

Another bearded commune told newswoman Marj Von B, of the Watsonville Register-Pajaronian, that he was not a draft dodger, because he had never been called up by the military and had never had the chance to be one.

She answered, "Well, we can't all be heroes."

Violence very nearly erupted over two incidents --one when one of the communal goats tried to gore this reporter who happened to be standing between the awesome beast and a tree it wanted to eat.

And a second incident when a black-bearded communal brother began to rise the FBI man.

The federal agent was dressed in a bright blue jump suit with a small American flag over his left breast. He was also armed.

Black-beard challenged the federal officer (whom the commune suspected to be a CIA agent) to fight; then told him, "Do you know how you'll be written up in the historybooks? As a (obscenity) pig!"

The federal man--6' 2" and 190 pounds of him--replied, "If you were 5 pounds heavier, I'd take you over there and pound some sense into you."

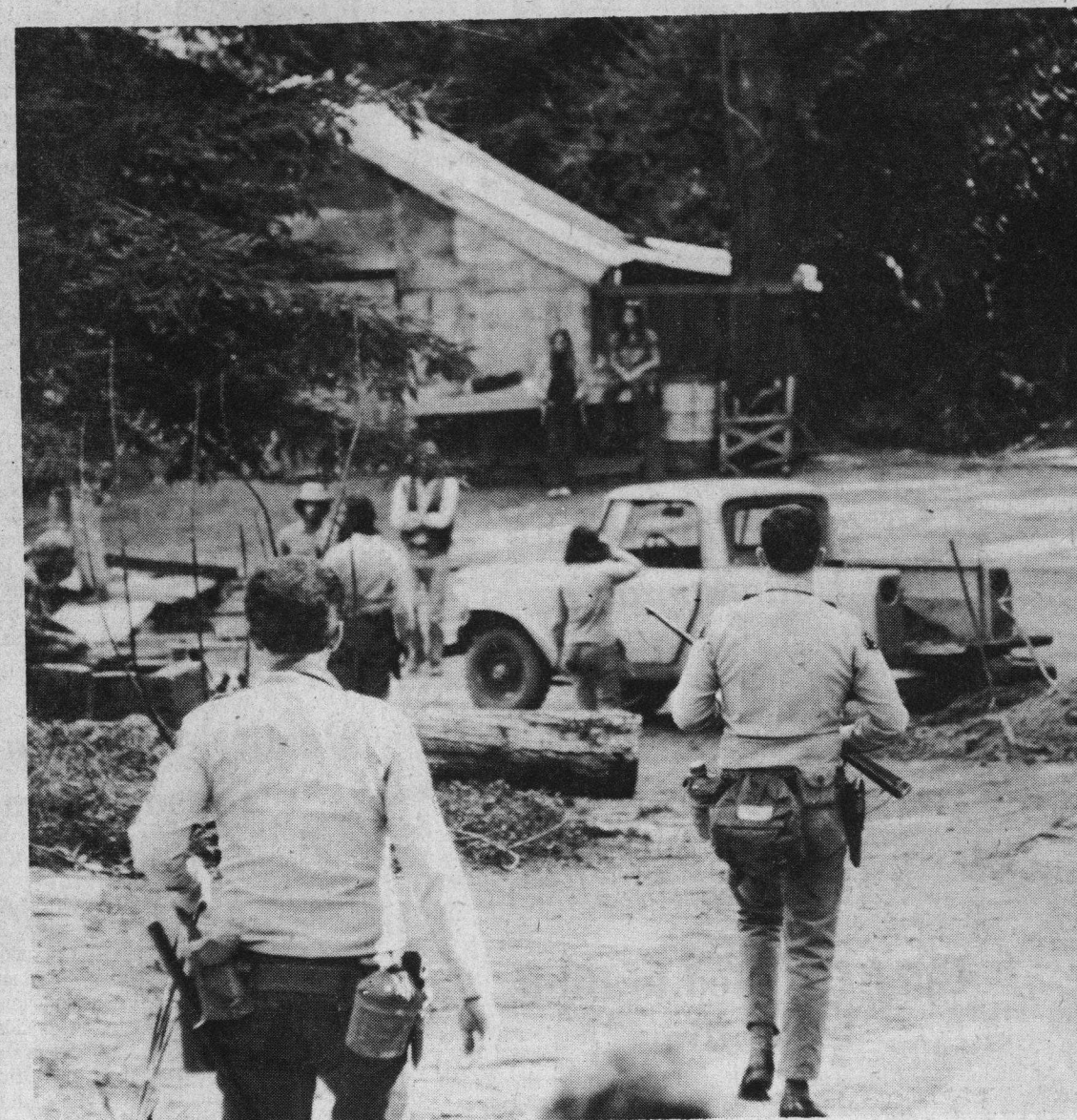
Other members of the commune tried, unsuccessfully, to quiet black-bird.

The hassle continued for minutes, and it was obvious that the formidable FBI man could barely hold himself in check as the cursing continued on both sides of the social fence.

Black-beard, as we left, was advised by the newswoman Von B to take a nap to settle down. He answered "Get out, you filthy old bitch!"

Then standing on the platform of the structure the men were building, he held aloft a curved hand-saw, and screamed, "Some day! Some day, I'll kill one of you!"

No one was arrested from the commune.



## Moving in

Sheriff's deputies move in to the Minton Commune off China Grade Road. The sweep caught everyone by surprise, including the deputies when no armed militants were found. VALLEY PRESS PHOTO.

As our combined patrols left the area, one detective remarked, "I guess we'll have to write this one off as public relations."

The houses in the commune are all tagged by the County, "Unsafe for occupancy."

The County stated in December last year, when members of the Minton commune applied for a zoning permit, "The structures in question were built without building permits and were tagged as unsafe to occupy on October 23, 1970.

eventually we want to have both children and old people with us, so that we have a range of ages as well as the experience and temperament.

"But we do have friends visiting on the weekend, and we consider this an important way of interacting with the outside world. We are interested in what is happening in the country, and its changes for we recognize that we are a part of those changes. We want to interact freely with all people.



property, plus a cave and a sort of lean-to. One of the buildings is a large metal garage, possibly used by the commune for work and storage.

Cages holding goats--a male and a female named "Vanilla"--chickens and rabbits were on the outskirts of the complex of the "A" frame, a small cabin and garage.

The "communités" were flocked together in the yard, and the law enforcement people began checking them out.

Deputies had been briefed to be courteous--to do the job of checking for militants and/or army deserters.

Names and descriptions were taken and radioed into records at Santa Cruz for a check.

The check showed that the communities were from New York, and according to one of them, the members (all or in part) had been at the Minton ranch since last September.



## Gets the handcuffs

An irate "communité" who has just been handcuffed for interfering with the investigation. VALLEY PRESS PHOTO.

Concurrently, the Division of Environmental Health has found the water, sanitary and septic tank systems substandard. Occupancy on the Minton property without a use permit by more than a single-family (more than five unrelated persons) violates the zoning ordinance."

When the commune applied for a zoning permit on December 11, it was turned down.

At this time, commune members are trenching a new septic tank.

The houses, according to the deputies, were clean inside and decorated beautifully.

The group in applying for a zoning permit stated, "We are well aware of the limitations of our facilities and that we cannot take in any more people to live with us at this time, although

All that has been said is an indication of who we are collectively. But we are, after all, not just a group but a group of individuals, and the best way to know us is to know each of us. There is a diversity among us that would seem to weaken us, but we consider this one of our greatest strengths.

"We emphasize our differences, for it is the differences that make us unique, it is the differences that each one of us can give to all of us. And so it is on a larger scale too; it is the varieties of life styles that make the strength of the county or the country. We believe in our life-style for us and that each person living as he wants is what makes us all richer and better people."



## Back at the ranch

Checking out the commune. The pile of dirt in the center of the picture is a septic tank the communities are digging. VALLEY PRESS PHOTO.



## Posted

The County's sign was posted on all of the buildings at the Minton commune. It doesn't deter the communities. VALLEY PRESS PHOTO.