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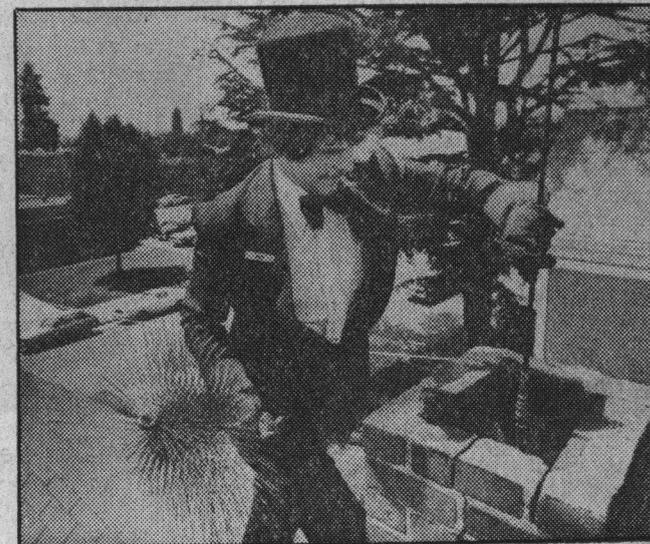
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REFERENCE

# Tree 'n Sea Living

Sunday, August 17, 1992 — Santa Cruz Sentinel — 17

## Chimney Sweep Reigns On The Roof



By BARBARA BURKLO  
Sentinel Staff Writer

**W**HO WEARS A TOP hat, white shirt, black bow tie and pants to work — and in no time at all, gets them very, very dirty?

Nick Miloslavich, Santa Cruz chimney sweep, that's who.

While Nick's garb may go back to the 17th and 18th centuries in England, when chimney sweeps were considered the lowest in the social order and so decided to elevate their station by dressing in undertaker's dignified attire, his equipment is strictly 1982.

The young businessman says a surprisingly good living can be made at the trade by working full time the year around and promoting the service.

Nick takes a clinical view of his work.

And he worries a lot about some things he sees.

The chimney sweep's enemy is creosote — that dusty, carbon deposit that is extremely flammable and poses a serious fire danger when it is allowed to build up.





danger line," Nick says. "You should never allow it to build up more than that."

The current use of wood-burning stoves, set into fireplaces, has vastly increased the creosote problem, and Nick (and fire officials, as well) are concerned.

"I cleaned a wood burning stove set on the hearth of a fireplace recently," he says, "and the creosote had built up to an inch thick after only four cords of wood."

This build-up is hastened because the stoves are airtight - and while they are heat-efficient - with the air flow turned down they are literally starved for air.

"This makes the fire inside smoke a lot," Nick says, "and a cooler, smokier fire builds up the creosote in the chimney faster than a hotter fire would. Occasionally, this kind of fire builds up a tarry, glass-like creosote, and this is the most dangerous kind of all."

What worries Nick the most is that when people install these stoves themselves, when they vent the stove through the fireplace, they simply close up the opening with sheet metal.

The smoke then swirls around in the firebox, having time to condense before it slowly goes up the chimney.

A better way, he says, is to make an elbow shaped stovepipe that goes up farther and requires a smaller amount of sheet metal, located at the damper. The smoke hastens up the chimney and does less damage on its way.

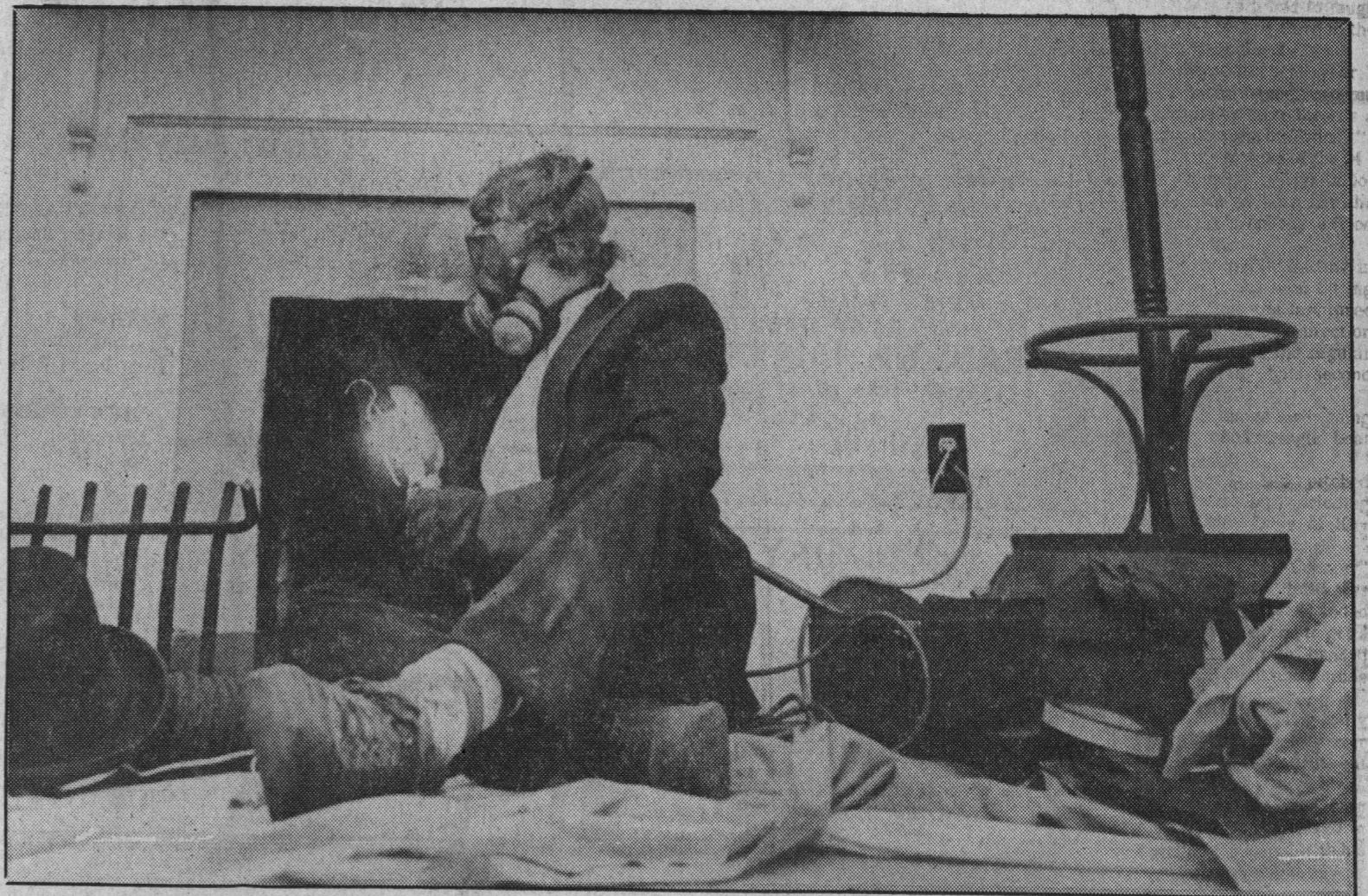
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*Nick Miloslavich's work takes him from rooftop to fireplace hearth -- and, because touching a chimney sweep is said to bring good luck -- he often is asked to shake hands with young and old.*



Photos By Bill Lovejoy



# CHIMNEY SWEEP

FROM PAGE 17

Chimney sweeping didn't begin until the English figured out there was a connection between dirty chimneys and the great fires that several times burned London to the ground.

Because the English built crooked chimneys, the only way to get a brush through the flue was to climb inside with it. Since only a very small person could do that, they began using small boys who served under "master sweeps."

These youngsters were found in poor families or in orphanages, and because they had to breathe in so much soot, often they didn't live very long.

When chimney sweeps adopted their formal style of dress, they brought themselves up to a higher social plane.

It then became good luck to touch a sweep, kiss a sweep — or even have your chimney swept.

Nick says even now people will

shake his hand for "good luck".

For his own good luck, he always wears his traditional uniform and never, never goes up on a roof without his top hat.

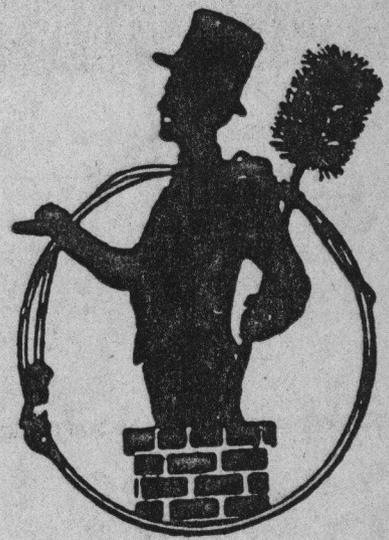
Because his white shirts don't last long, Nick is a steady shirt customer at garage sales and flea markets.

At work, he uses a powerful vacuum system to pull up the debris below while he brushes from above. This, plus the white sheet he places inside on the floor by the fireplace area and re-covers with a drop cloth, insures no dirt reaching the customer's interior.

To protect his health, he wears goggles and a coal miner's dust filter.

When he's up on a roof, often people stop their cars, snatch their cameras and take his picture.

It pleases Nick no end to be considered photogenic on the job — and to be thought of as good luck, too.



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