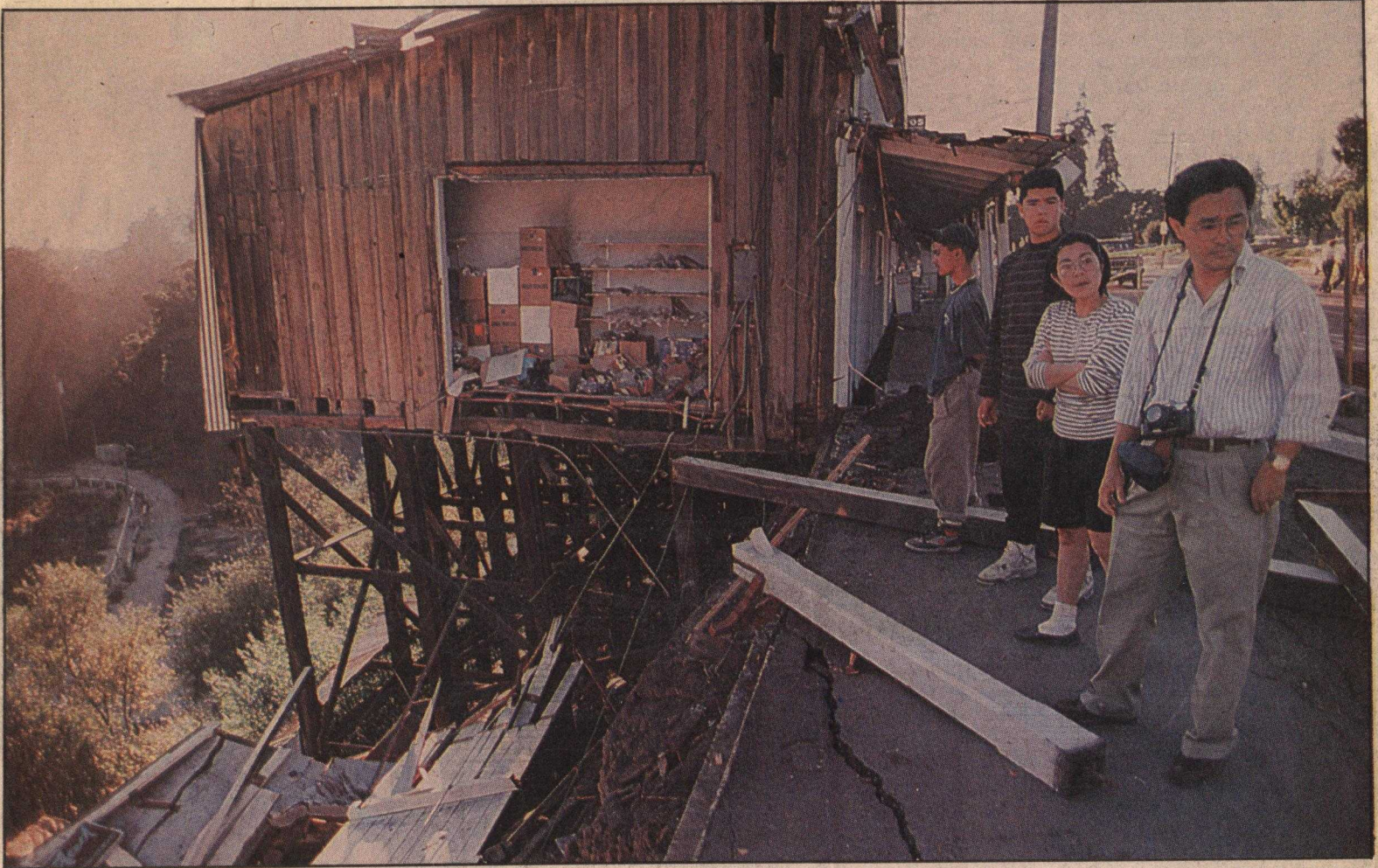


Over the edge

Historic Buildings - South Co



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Gus Montesclaros, right, lost his Aptos Village Philippine import and furnishing store down a cliffside Wednesday afternoon.

Historic Aptos buildings topple

By KEITH MURAOKA
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APTOS — Historic Aptos Village lost a bit of history Wednesday afternoon when two earthquake-damaged buildings toppled into the deep ravine of Aptos Creek.

No one was hurt in the 1:49 p.m. crash. Only a 50-foot gap and rubble remains of Montad Home Furnishings and Colonial Barber.

Both businesses had been red-tagged by county building inspectors, meaning occu-

pants were not allowed to go in to retrieve inventory. The property is owned by 100-year-old Paul Johnston of Aptos.

The businesses, which had been teetering atop damaged piers, gave way within seconds, said Barbara Woodbury, vice president of Monterey Bay Financial Advisors, located a vacant lot away from the barber shop.

"We just heard a rumble and it was over," Woodbury said. "We knew exactly what it was because we've been watching it for the past few days."

For Gus Montesclaros, owner of the Philippine-import home furnishing store, it was a rude welcome home. Montesclaros had been in the Philippines during the Oct. 17 earthquake and had just returned home Tuesday.

"I came by yesterday and the building was up," he said, surveying the damage in shock Wednesday afternoon. "Then, I was going by today (Wednesday) and the building was gone."

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Aptos/ Stores go over cliff

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Montesclaros, who did not have earthquake insurance, estimated there was \$50,000 worth of inventory and equipment inside. Howard Miller, owner of Colonial Barber, had already conceded the loss and set up shop in nearby Scarlet O'Haira's beauty salon.

The collapse made a big impression on three state officials who were touring the county and happened to be standing right in front of the village buildings when they went, said County Administrative Officer Susan Mauriello. The party included the deputy director of the State Department of Finance, the department's budget chief, a budget analyst, and Dan Wall, from the County Supervisors Association of California, she said.

Mauriello said a wide-eyed Wall came to her office 15 minutes after the collapse of the village buildings and told her he would never forget what he had seen.

From nearby Soquel Drive, curious motorists slowly drove by to survey the gap. Fifty feet below in the Aptos Creek ravine, only the old tile and sheet-metal roofs were visible over the pile of rubble. The sign from what had been Montesclaros' store was still intact and visible, sitting on top of the destruction.

Property owner Johnston's daughter, Anne Bass, was also at the scene Wednesday.

She said she talked to Granite Construction Tuesday to see about demolishing the two

businesses, which were among the most damaged of her father's nearly block-long property. "Now we don't have to worry about that," she said, sighing.

Bass believes the building housing the two ruined businesses had made it through the 1906 earthquake.

She has already hired a structural engineer and a geologist to assess her father's property, which includes Aptos Village Market, Aptos Village Boutique and the Village Garage, all of which have been red-tagged by the county. She said she is unsure what will be done about the buildings.

"They (engineers) feel some of it can be saved," Bass said.

Work is already back to normal for some of the other businesses on the same block.

Second (Aptos) District Supervisor Robley Levy said plans continue for getting the yellow-tagged businesses back in operation. Owners of those, Jim Broadwell of Watsonville and Aptos attorney Robert Anderson, have hired the same structural engineer, who will present a repair plan to the county.

Levy has promised to expedite those plans.

That particular portion of Aptos Village, across the street from the historic Bayview Hotel, features western-style wooden walkways, wooden buildings and porch-like overhangs. Levy called it "the heart of Aptos."

Other businesses include Lorraine Bruce Interior Design, Cafe Sparrow, Goldspink



Landlord Ann Bass

Architects, Robert Anderson Law Offices, Monterey Bay Business Advisors, Hanna and Associates Appraisers, Pacific West Realty, Kearney Photography and Richard Peterson Architects.