

## Historical Houses



**APARTMENTS**—Chuck Abbott (left) chats with young persons in front of apartment house he has rehabilitated in Santa Cruz. Students helped in re-

habilitating the building. The youths are (from left) Marvin Brandt, 20, Soquel; Karin Hough, 20; Shirley Den-Dulk, 20, and Jennie Hartman, 20.

## SANTA CRUZ REHABILITATION PLAN

# Photographer On The PROD

By **BOB LIGON**  
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**SANTA CRUZ** — Chuck Abbott, 78, rubbed his big hands together as he talked of his plans to make Santa Cruz a showplace of Victorian mansions.

"The idea could spread like wildfire," he said, his eyes gleaming.

The last time he had that gleam, he was expressing his idea for a garden mall in downtown Santa Cruz. The mall's a reality now and Abbott is not the type to rest on his laurels.

Abbott, and his wife, Esther, both world renowned photographers, reside in a Victorian mansion they refurbished at 504 Lincoln St.

When not traveling throughout the nation on photo assignments, they devote much of their time to civic affairs.

picturesque lighthouse

on Santa Cruz' Lighthouse Point was built and donated to the city by the Abbotts.

Abbott calls their latest project PROD, which stands for Private Rehabilitation of Downtown.

"The city has many older houses and mansions that, if rehabilitated, would add much charm to Santa Cruz," he says.

The Abbotts recently bought five apartments and an old house that they have rehabilitated to rent to persons of low income.

Abbott started his own private "job corps" by hiring students to do the work, under the direction of skilled union craftsmen.

Many of the students who did the work are now living in apartments they helped refurbish.

The Abbotts rent only to low income groups — mostly older persons and students — at rents below those charged by many other landlords.

"What I'm trying to do is show that anyone with an older house can do the same thing as we are doing," he said.

He said the idea behind PROD is similar to programs offered by the Federal Government.

"The big difference is that no public money is involved and that we can get things done quickly without red tape," said Abbott.

He said only the owners of older homes who cannot afford to make repairs on their own can qualify for the "job corps" workers.

Abbott took it on his own to seek out private financing for such projects, to get approval of the union for the workers, and in general to set out a course of direction that others can follow.

Santa Cruz merchants and city officials refer to Abbott as the father of the downtown mall.

In 1965, Abbott, concerned about the deteriorating conditions in the downtown area, met with business and city leaders to see what could be done. As a result, Project Foresight was kicked off, aimed at getting a mall for Santa Cruz.

Abbott and his wife took photo slides of successful malls in other cities and showed them to Santa Cruz groups. The idea finally caught hold and a district was formed to finance the mall.

Abbott then started a campaign to get store owners to fix up store fronts and to remove the clutter of overhanging signs.

Several years ago Abbott formed a group called Associates, aimed at fostering better relations between students and residents of the Santa Cruz area. The group consisted of both adults and students.

Spring Fair was an offshoot of this newly formed group. The fair now is held