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Patton in the lion's den

Supervisor gives Rotarians lecture on growth

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Santa Cruz County Supervisor Gary Patton — not exactly the favorite politician of the Watsonville establishment — explained growth yesterday in terms a bacteriologist would love.

Speaking before 200 members of the Watsonville Rotary Club — not exactly a hotbed of growth-control advocates — Patton explained growth as it pertained to history, to Watsonville Planning Director Bud Carney and, yes, even to bacteria.

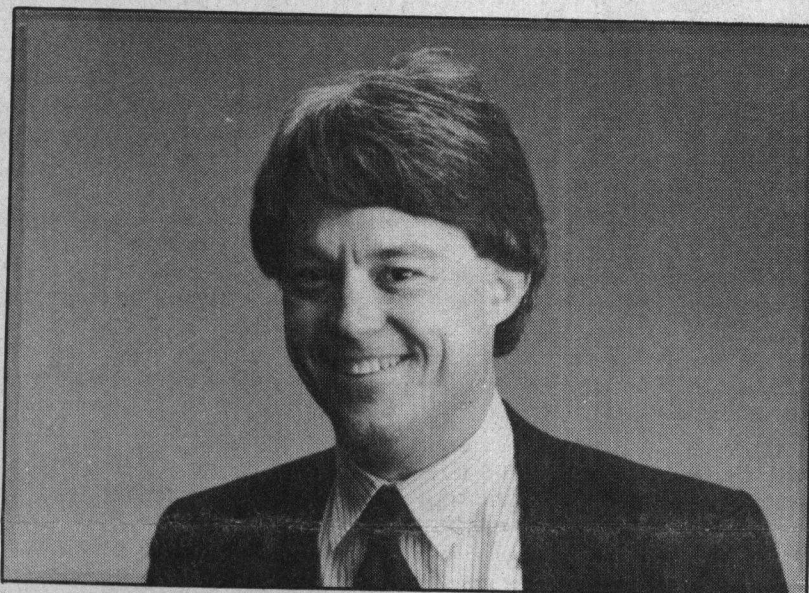
Throughout his speech, Patton alluded to chapters of a "textbook on growth I am going to write some day."

The first chapter, he said, will be titled "Bug in the Bottle," also the title of an essay by scientist Peter Scott. Patton described how the bacteria population in a bottle might escalate if a pair of highly reproductive bacteria were placed in it.

"If they (bacteria) are looking at a space that is 75 percent vacated," he said, "are they going to vote for growth management?"

Patton did not compare Watsonville to a bottle of bacteria, but he did say the city has the fastest growth rate in the county and indicated that without controls the "bottle" would quickly be filled.

Later chapters in his book will deal with growth and history, and growth and planning.



Gary Patton's going to write a book.

the Santa Cruz-area supervisor said. Patton eventually moved on to his "favorite" chapter: "Regulation is Freedom."

Discussing the "Regulation is Freedom" chapter, Patton said individuals should decide, by voting, how a community will allow itself to grow.

"Rather than planning to accommodate growth," he said, "you should decide what you want to happen, and then plan it that way."

A subtopic of the chapter was Measure J, the county growth-management ordinance authored by Patton and approved by voters in 1978.

"Measure J was not a decision by this county to decide whether there should be low or

no growth," he said. "It was a decision by which the community decides how much growth there will be."

Watsonville Planning Director Bud Carney is not the subject of a chapter in Patton's "textbook," but he was the subject of several comments by the supervisor. Patton reacted to comments attributed to Carney in local newspapers Tuesday concerning the future of growth in Watsonville.

Patton read from an article that quoted Carney as saying: "The question is how do you grow and preserve agricultural land? The two are incompatible policies if you want the city's boundaries to grow out in a logical order."

Patton disagreed with the comment.

"With all due respect to Mr. Carney," he said, "to build houses on agricultural land is not the only solution. In the future, Watsonville must make choices and take tough stands concerning growth."

Patton did not elaborate on what those choices or stands might be.

Other references to growth included mention of the San Felipe Project, a project that would allow water to be sent from San Luis Reservoir to Santa Cruz County. Patton said importing San Felipe water would spur "thousands" of people to move to the Pajaro Valley, apparently to take advantage of available water.

Following his speech, Patton briefly fielded questions from the Rotarians. One asked whether Measure J was "intended actually as a control on buildings or as a control on growth."

Patton responded by saying that, in the future, decisions regarding growth in the county could take a different direction in regard to both construction and population.

A different direction particularly, he noted, if he is no longer in office.

"The supervisor who takes my place could decide to widen Highway 17 from two lanes to four, all the way to Silicon Valley," he said. "But as long as I am here, we will keep it the way it is."