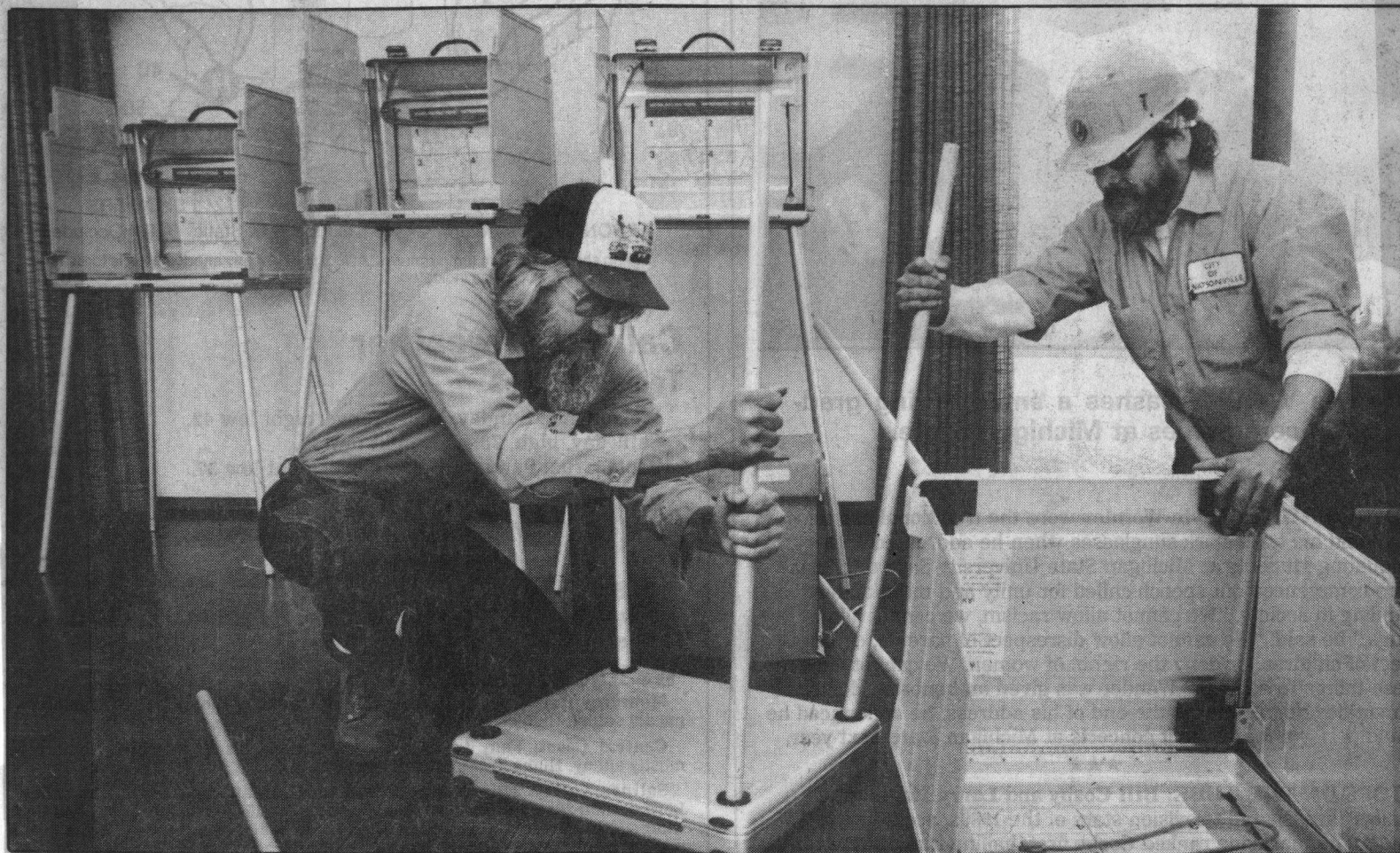


Historic election looms



Kurt Ellison

City workers Ken Selck, left, and John Ortega set up ballot booths at Pajaro Village this morning.

City's first district vote tomorrow

By CHELA ZABIN
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One Watsonville City Council candidate had a campaign ballad sung for her at a rally, another took out a full-page ad in a local newspaper and a third broadcast a radio spot in Serbo-Croatian in last-minute campaigning over the weekend.

Watsonville voters will go to the polls tomorrow to vote in the first city election to be held under the court-ordered district system. Polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Instead of casting a vote for each of the council seats, voters in the seven districts will vote only for a candidate to represent their district. They will not vote for a mayor, who will instead be one of the winning council members, elected to the post by the council as a whole. As many as six new council members may be elected; of the three incum-

bents running, two are opposing each other in the same district.

The election, originally scheduled for Nov. 7, was postponed after the Oct. 17 earthquake.

Most of the candidates, whose campaigns were interrupted by the earthquake, began campaigning again two or three weeks ago. Most are going door-to-door in their districts and are calling constituents to remind them to get out and vote tomorrow. Fliers have been handed out, mailers sent and newspaper ads and radio spots run. Some of the last-minute efforts reflected the diversity of the candidates and their districts:

District 1 candidate Cruz Gomez held a rally Saturday, which featured the singing of a ballad written for her campaign. After the rally, campaign

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workers went back through the district reminding people to vote.

City Councilman Tony Campos, running against Mayor Betty Murphy in District 6, took out a full-page newspaper ad Saturday featuring photos of downtown business people displaced by the earthquake. The ad told where each were reopening, with the words "We need a downtown ... we need Tony Campos" at the top of the page.

Robert Chacanaca, running in District 7, released a campaign ad in Serbo-Croatian on radio station KOMY over the weekend. Chacanaca's campaign literature has been printed in English, Spanish and Japanese.

Lowell Hurst, a candidate in District 3, was planning a "human billboard" on Green Valley Road and Main Street

today.

Many of the candidates are offering rides to the polls for voters in their district and can be reached at their homes for information.

The district system was put into place after the U.S. Supreme Court let stand a district court's decision that the city's at-large election system diluted Latino voting power and was a violation of the Voting Rights Act.

The city was carved into seven districts, two of which have a 75 percent or larger Latino population, in an attempt to increase Latino representation in city government. Although Latinos comprise more than half of Watsonville's population, none had been elected to the City Council until Tony Campos' victory in 1985.

The lawsuit was brought by the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, which has been successful in forcing district elections elsewhere. Salinas voters approved a district-election system last Dec. 6, after MALDEF filed a suit identical to the one in Watsonville, against that city. Tomorrow's election is being closely watched by voters rights and Latino groups around the country.

City Clerk Lorraine Washington said this morning that she's expecting about a 30 percent turnout at the polls. Normally, when a mayor is being elected, about 50 percent of registered voters vote, she said.

"I had hoped before the earthquake that that was what we'd see this time," she said, but, considering how distracted every one has been since the quake, she now thinks it'll be lower.

"I hope I'm wrong," she said.

The earthquake may affect the Latino vote as well. Most of the people displaced by the earthquake who are still without housing are poor Latinos, many of whom were living in substandard housing before the quake and who have few resources for finding and keeping other housing.

Washington said that the city has received a higher amount of absentee ballots than it usually gets. Usually about 500 voters use the absentee ballot method; this year Washington's office has nearly 900.

Twelve city charter amendments, an advisory vote on the city's utility users' tax and a mobile-home rent-control ordinance will also be on the ballot.

Here are the City Council candidates: District 1, Cruz Gomez and Paul Milladin; District 2, Ray Hoffman, Dan Dodge and Oscar Rios; District 3, Bob Armstrong, Lowell Hurst and David Wildman; District 4, Todd McFarren and Gwen Carroll; District 5, Parr Eves and Luis De La Cruz (Marie Williams, whose name will appear on the ballot, withdrew from the race in September); District 6, Tony Campos and Betty Murphy; District 7, Robert Chacanaca and Johnny Kacsmark.