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# Cooper House Changes for the Better

## Landmark's new owners aim for a better clientele

by **Richie Begin**

Workers sand, refinish, paint. Carpet layers are coming soon. In storage sit old sideboards, track lighting and (yes) that horrible buffalo head. And everywhere is the scurrying presence of ace restaurant interior man Michael Bates.

Things are about to change in a big way for the Cooper House now that new owners Steve Sanchez and Jerome Jason are on the case.

"We didn't want to own the building if we couldn't have the restaurant as well," says energetic and cherub-like Sanchez. "We plan to upgrade the whole building and in the process attract a better clientele."

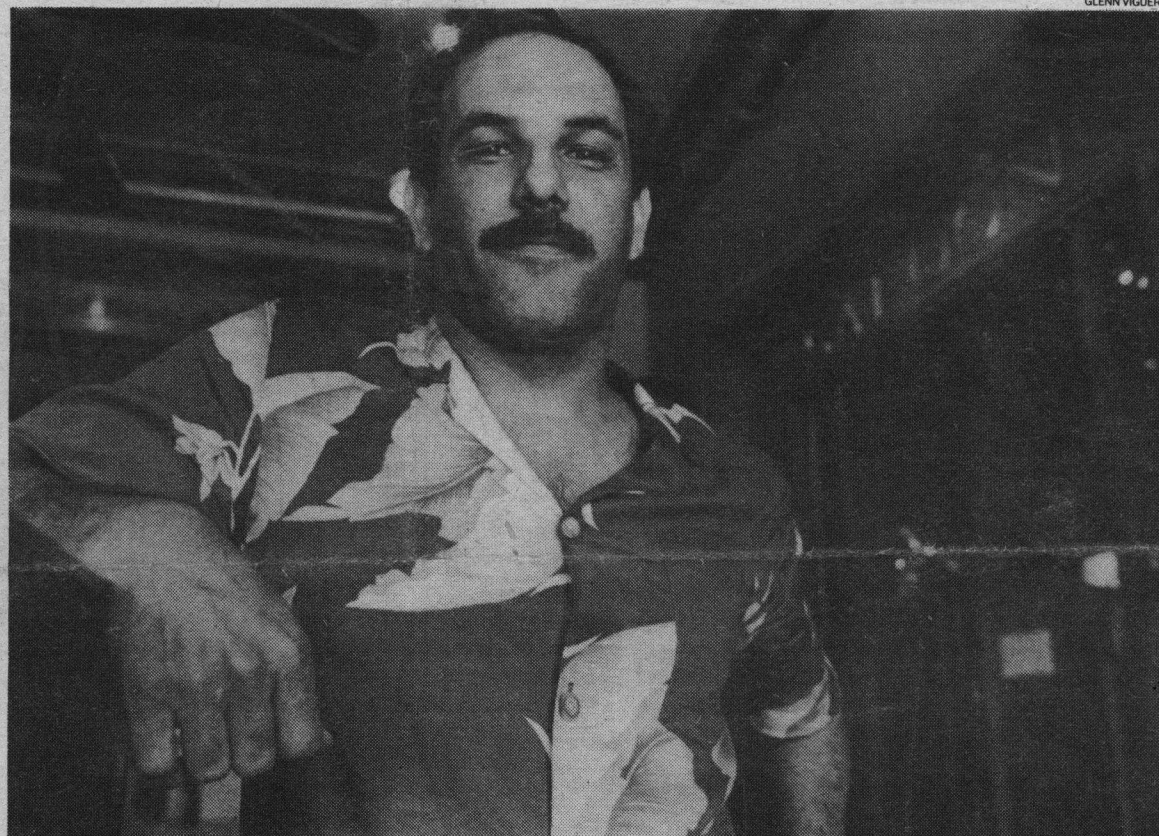
Upgrading will bring several things.

"The Cooper House shops will have their own storefront looks so each business will be more separated and more unique. Also it will eliminate the 'where do I pay for this?' kind of confusion that exists now. The businesses will be more like their own boutiques with separate identities. We also plan to change the lighting throughout. The downstairs bathrooms will be done in bright white tile to reflect light. They've been cleaned up considerably, too."

However, the most sweeping changes (and the most visible to the public) will take place in the restaurant and bar operations. The new European-style, light Italian continental restaurant will be called **Jason's**, and the bar will go by the same name.

"Jerry and I want to attract a business crowd for lunch, and we want it to be classical but casual in feel," says Steve. "We want to feature soups and salads so that people can get in and out in a hurry, but they will be not your ordinary soups and salads."

"The restaurant will have a European feel to it with high ceilings and all, but not stuffy ... white tableclothes and maybe some palm



Cooper House's new half-owner and bar and restaurant namesake, Jerome Jason

trees in the bar area. A place where you can come as you are, but still receive top-quality food and service."

The remodel calls for a raised outdoor patio with the entranceway lined by flower planters. Outdoor lighting will be revamped.

"We also plan on opening up the indoor bar to the patio by putting in connecting doors. In this way the 'observation patio' and the bar will be on the same level, and congestion on the stairs will be greatly reduced. Plus it should give the bar a more open feel," says Steve.

Steve is quick to add that he has no intention of changing the Cooper House's long-standing musical

tradition. If anything, the music will be more varied instead of following the same format all week.

"We plan on having different types of music in the outdoor patio — from jazz to maybe classical ... maybe even a couple of different groups, one early in the day and another as the afternoon wears on."

The bar already has a slightly more contemporary look to it with a snappy new neon *objet d'art* behind the bar. Local bar patrons will also be pleased to know that the new owners have no intention of bringing back the ill-fated computerized bar guns that measure out an ounce and a half of liquor right down to the

microliter. Real bartenders will pour quality well liquor right from the bottle into the glass.

The new owners of one of Santa Cruz's cherished landmarks say they want to showcase its individuality in a classy way. "I just love Santa Cruz," says Steve. "There's no place like it in the U.S. People can be themselves without being a curiosity, and if they are, at least it's not for too long."

The new owners set an opening date sometime in late May. Meantime, the outdoor patio with food and bar service remains open for business Wednesdays through Sundays. •

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