

A Year In The Life ...

Only in Santa Cruz

Events

● **Mr. Twister:** The clown prince of parking, Mr. Twister, galloped onto the national media stage after he was ticketed for feeding quarters into expired parking meters in downtown Santa Cruz.

● **Peddling for prostitutes:** J. Robbins, the politically correct Santa Cruz Action Network program coordinator, was busted in a police sting for soliciting a prostitute while riding a bicycle. Robbins pleaded no contest to the misdemeanor charges and was given a year's probation.

Assemblyman Bruce McPherson was invited, then dis-invited, to participate in a ballet skit in "A Gay Evening in May."

● **Santa suicide:** Pipeline, a counterculture emporium in Santa Cruz, aired a television commercial showing a drunken, gun-toting Santa Claus bent on committing suicide. The ad was pulled after outraged viewers said the

North Pole's main man had been maligned.

● **First Night Santa Cruz:** An alcohol-free New Year's Eve celebration made its debut with about 10,000 revelers partaking in the entertainment, which culminated in a countdown and wedding at the Town Clock.

● **Taxed conscience:** Santa Cruz City Councilman Scott Kennedy, a peace activist and conscientious objector, lost his lawsuit seeking to withhold the portion of his taxes used for the military.

● **Pot planning:** City planning chieftain Peter Katzlberger and his wife were busted for growing marijuana at their Felton home. Katzlberger resigned and was granted diversion.

● **Firing time:** The 100-year-old Town Clock caught fire in August, causing about \$57,000 in damage.

● **Collateral Damage:** A controversial anti-war statue was installed next to the Town Clock. The sculpture sits on 100 dismantled guns dumped into its concrete base.

● **Not so Gay:** Assemblyman Bruce McPherson was invited, then dis-invited, to participate in a ballet skit in "A Gay Evening in May." The dump was retribution for McPherson's 'no' vote on domestic partners legislation.

● **Boo to booze:** Santa Cruz banned concentration of "high risk" alcohol outlets.



HANG TIME: World champion figure skater Elvis Stojko performs a jump practicing for 'Too Hot to Skate' in Santa Cruz.

Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Crime and punishment

WHILE more than half of America was watching the O.J. Simpson case, the local hall of justice had its own handful of crime and punishment.

Two brutal murders finally went to trial. ● **Matias Soto**, 25, was found guilty in the Feb. 9, 1992 rape and beating death of 14-year-old Mariana Zavala.

● **Steven Trujillo** of San Jose was sentenced to life imprisonment for killing his lover and fellow drug user Michelle Favela three years ago, then dumping her butchered body into the waters off the

● **Denise Dalton**, 32, of Santa Cruz was charged with luring a 13-year-old into prostitution and drugs. Dalton pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

● **Former Woman of the Year Natalie Rypka** stunned Scotts Valley residents when she was charged with stealing nearly \$9,000 from a middle school cheerleading squad. After the theft came to light, the 41-year-old woman was ousted as the squad's volunteer advisor. Her case is still pending.



Some cases also enraged or shocked local residents:

- **Oct. 27:** Author, college lecturer and mother of two, Nina Leibman, 38, is knifed in her Westlake home allegedly by attorney husband, Kenneth Donney, as they were divorcing.

A season of salmon and sharks

MOST of all 1995 will be remembered as the Year of the Salmon, when the fish were so plentiful the schools seemed endless. It was the greatest run of salmon in local waters in 40 years or more.

"It was phenomenal," said fisherman Dennis Smith. "It hasn't been like this since I was a kid."

Daily limits were the norm, often with only minutes needed to hook a pair of 12-to-25 pound salmon.

- **Chumming** for great white sharks continued off Ano Nuevo Island in March, pitting adventure tourism charter operators against surfers and environmentalists who wanted the chumming stopped. Surfers filed suit for an injunction to stop the use of chum, and the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary began bureaucratic machinations to regulate chumming and the charters.
- The March floods washed thousands of blue barrels and bacteria in the sea. More than 150 barrels of pesticides and other toxic chemicals washed up on Monterey Bay beaches. Nitrogen from farm fertilizer spurred huge plankton blooms and red tides. Dozens of surfers suffered from water-borne sicknesses after surfing in polluted water near rivermouths.
- A long-fought underwater sonar project, the Acoustic Thermometry of Ocean Climate or ATOC experiment found a new site outside the Monterey Bay National Marine Sanctuary and began broadcasting sounds in November from a seamount 50 miles off Half Moon Bay.
- Hundreds of seabirds and 10 others died in Monterey Bay in July. No cause was found, but scientists suspected a natural toxin produced by plankton blooms.
- Marco Flagg, 31, of Watsonville is bitten by a great white shark while diving near Point Lobos in Carmel. He survives with a few stitches. Mike Sullivan, 25, of Santa Cruz, has his windsurf board hit by a great white while sailing off Davenport Landing in September. Sullivan is untouched.

convenience stores.

- **Mourning Deadheads:** Grateful Dead guitarist Jerry Garcia died in August several decades after his finger was buried in Lompico, the victim of a wood chopping mishap. Local psychotherapists held a donations-accepted grief support group for Deadheads.
- **GOP fall:** GOP strategist Gordon Poole was paralyzed in July after falling head first from a neighbor's house. Poole was reportedly trying to steal marijuana at the time.
- **Wharf wedding:** A Yuba City couple tied the knot, then tied their shoe laces and ran in the yearly Wharf to Wharf race.
- **Condom Giveaway:** Gay groups, mad that Santa Cruz County Fair officials wouldn't let them pass out condoms, instead collected condoms to be used in making jewelry.
- **Mystery disappearance:** The city's last billboard, which advertised the mystical powers of the Mystery Spot, was quietly retired.
- **Pruned:** The 145-year-old landmark black walnut tree on Cedar Street was cut back almost to its trunk after arborists declared it was decayed and dying.
- **Bridge fight:** West Cliff wooden bridge sparked a big fight between motorists, who wanted a two-lane bridge for vehicles, and bicyclists, who pushed to keep it as a bike bridge. The City Council compromised, and decided to give each at least one-lane.
- **River St. refugees:** Santa Cruz City Council closed the rain-muddied homeless campground by paying for the remaining campers to relocate at New Brighton State Beach. Some Capitola residents reacted with outrage. Santa Cruz Mayor Mike Rotkin told them to stop whining.

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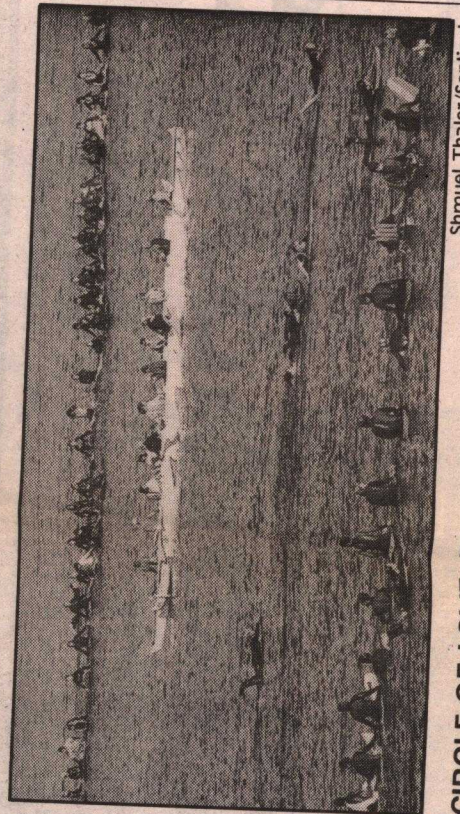
DIRECT HIT: A youthful member of the El Carino boxing club in Watsonville packs a wallop.

Dan Coyro/Sentinel



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

HOMELESS: At left, a homeless youth keeps out of the rain on a Saturday night in downtown Santa Cruz.



CIRCLE OF LOVE: Friends and family form a memorial circle in Santa Cruz waters for Beth Pitts, who died in the surf.

Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Once the county's most wanted fugitive, Jasper Logsdon, 61, of Aptos, got 25 years to life in prison for molesting seven young girls. A Scotts Valley man, served a year in jail for offering to kill two of Logsdon's victims, and two Modesto women are finishing their last month in prison for providing their daughters to Logsdon for money.

The year of secession

THE TOP education story was the attempt by Aptos parents to secede from the Pajaro Valley district and operate six schools on their own.

The county Board of Education decided in December to support the proposal under certain conditions. Now it's up to the state Board of Education to hold a hearing and issue a ruling. State education officials say it will be several months before a hearing is set.

The Aptos High campus quieted after David Hare became principal in August and a new dress code was instituted. In October, businessman Marc Monte organized a fireworks event that raised \$49,000 for Aptos schools.

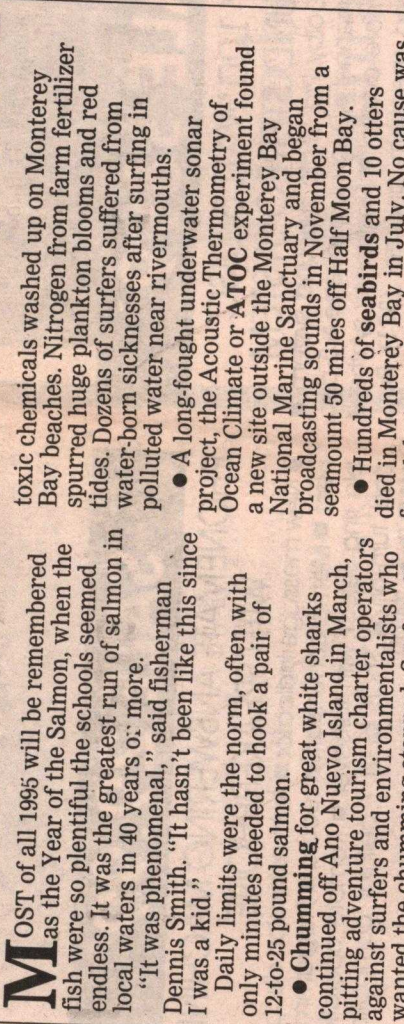
Here are some of the other highlights of the year:

- **New leadership in Santa Cruz.** Santa Cruz city school superintendent David Sklarz left in July. Roy Nelson, a 23-year veteran of city schools, succeeded him as interim superintendent. A decision on filling the position permanently is set for Jan. 10.
- **Live Oak builds school.** Construction of Shoreline Middle School began in June after nine years of planning. New superintendent Steve Herrington came on board in mid-year.
- **Soquel High rebounds.** After several traumatic months that included a student walkout, Mary Lou Mendoza Mason resigned as principal in March. Alice Talnack, a former Santa Cruz High administrator, became principal in August.
- **Soquel unification drive:** In September, Soquel residents proposed linking Soquel High, now a part of the Santa Cruz district, with Soquel elementary schools. So far, they've gathered about 1,000 of the 4,200 signatures needed in support of the idea.
- **Gun found at school:** The incident at Branciforte Junior High on Nov. 29 stunned parents. The seventh grader who had the gun was expelled. Parents will meet Jan. 17 to discuss what to do next.
- **"Huck Finn" attacked:** A parent of a black student asked Santa Cruz trustees for a moratorium on the book, which contains the word "nigger." In response, a teacher workshop on diversity is planned for January.
- **Business Education Alliance:** Members of the business community saw two joint ventures with the Santa Cruz schools bear fruit, with the first graduates of the Delta School program for dropouts in June and a \$1.5 million fund drive to renovate the auditorium, gym and track at 100-year-old Santa Cruz High.
- **Scotts Valley schools:** After officially becoming a unified K-12 district in July, Scotts Valley began planning its first high school.

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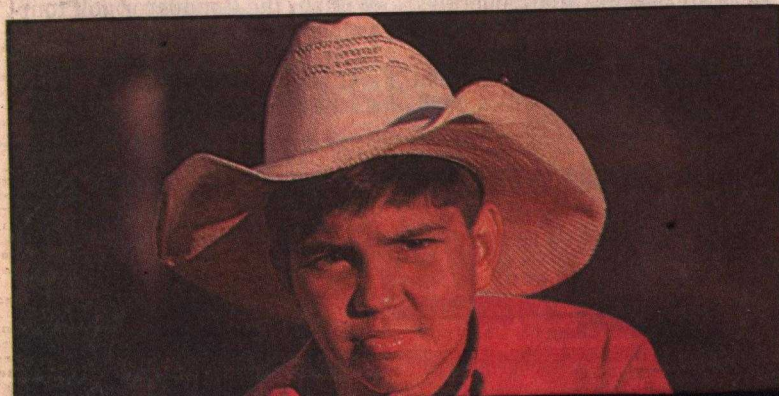
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... Of Santa Cruz County



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

DOWN UNDER: Residents of the town of Pajaro are rescued by raft from water that submerged the entire town.



People who will be missed

- **Aug. 26 and Aug. 28:** A testament to their undying love — noted artist Eloise Pickard Smith, 74, of kidney cancer and her husband of 53 years, Page Smith, 77, two days later of leukemia. Page Smith, a nationally acclaimed historian, was founding provost of Cowell College at UC Santa Cruz.
- **Sept. 4:** Philanthropist Elena Baskin, 69, of a brain tumor. She founded the Live Oak Senior Center, gave \$1.5 million to UC Santa Cruz, and helped establish the Battered Women's Assistance Program, the
- **Nov. 23:** Citizen watchdog Laurence Frommhagen, at the age of 65.
- **Nov. 27:** Popular junior lifeguard instructor Beth Pitts, 19, of Santa Cruz drowns while surfing off Lighthouse Point.
- **Nov. 7:** 71-year-old Charles Cooke of Watsonville, when his home made airplane crashes on its maiden flight.
- **Sept. 4:** 12-year-old German Alanis of Watsonville, in a freak soccer accident after hitting the ball with his head.
- **Aug. 27:** 7-year-old Emily Boemussen

Nature's fury

COUNTY RESIDENTS bore the brunt of nature's fury time and time again in 1995, leaving one dead, thousands homeless and a multimillion-dollar mess in its wake.

The relentless March storms topped the year's list of disasters. Two other heavy storms served as bookends to the year, punching through the area in January and December. All three storms were officially declared disasters by government agencies.

When the Pajaro River broke through its banks in the early-morning hours of March 11, an elderly Pajaro man was swept to his death while thousands of other residents raced for safety as homes and businesses were inundated.

Schools, businesses and farm operations were shut down for days as Pajaro Valley residents took stock of the devastation. Hundreds spent weeks in Red Cross shelters. Much of the area's winter crops, including strawberries and lettuce, was destroyed.

The storm didn't just hit Pajaro Valley: Felton Grove residents were forced out of their homes when the San Lorenzo River crested its banks; mudslides and falling trees tore through homes around the Santa Cruz Mountains; dozens of roads were closed, some for weeks; and power was lost throughout the county.

In the wake of the devastation in Pajaro Valley, however, changes have been made, including a \$2.1 million project to clear brush and remove sandbars to ease concerns that the breaks could occur again.

Some \$1.7 million in Zone 7 Flood Control District fees were used to dredge the river, and another \$400,000 was spent clearing the banks of trees and brush. A study is under way to develop a long-range plan to keep the river flowing while encouraging the revegetation of wildlife habitats.

- The year's first big storm hit on Jan. 4, closing Capitola Beach and wharf because of huge waves. By midmonth, a steady diet of storms had caused mudslides, downed trees and power outages that were the staple for the rest of January.

- On Jan. 9, more than 30 Soquel Village mobile homes were evacuated as rain-swollen Soquel Creek threatened to breach its banks.

- In mid-December, nearly 80,000 Santa Cruz County residents were without power for up to a week after a howling wind and rain storm toppled trees onto power lines and houses throughout the area.

Pacific, Gas and Electric Co. officials, under fire for their slow response, said the storm was more devastating to electrical service than the Loma Prieta earthquake.

- Pogonip was the site of 10 separate fires on Aug. 8, all started by a Santa Cruz man wielding a Bic cigarette lighter.

Some 124 firefighters from throughout the area fought the blazes for more than a day before they



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

EASY RIDER: 10-year-old Jake Nielsen, perhaps the only disabled rodeo rider in the nation.

Return of a downtown

PROBABLY the top business story in the county was the commercial reawakening of downtown Santa Cruz.

The lingering cloud of the 1989 earthquake seemed to have finally lifted, shining new life on Pacific Avenue.

"Downtown Santa Cruz has become alive — alive from the morning to late at night," said Thomas Mantle, president of the Downtown Association of Santa Cruz.

The unique beat of Santa Cruz was once again felt inside new buildings housing specialty shops, coffee houses and a crowd of new restaurants.

The crown jewel was the opening of the \$10 million Santa Cruz Cinema 9.

Since its opening in May, an estimated 400,000 people have gone to the nine-screen complex to see the latest Hollywood has to offer.

"Downtown has certainly seen a resurgence," said Philip Harris, president of the Harris Theater Group, which owns Cinema 9. "Whether we caused that or whether we were there at the right time, it's hard to tell. Maybe a little of both."

The difference in the post-quake downtown is the new emphasis on entertainment, said Mantle, owner of Thomas Mantle Designs.

It also was a year of major changes for Borland International.

In January, the Scotts Valley-based software firm announced the lay-off of 650 of its 1,700 employees worldwide, a 40 percent reduction. Borland founder Philippe Kahn also resigned as company president.

With the coming of 1996, new president Gary Wetsel is optimistic about the company's future.

Borland has entered the world of the Internet and is building tools for developers to create new applications, Wetsel said.

As for Kahn, he has been concentrating on his latest start-up company, Starfish Software. The firm is designing products for on-line services including the Internet's World Wide Web.

In other business news this year:

- **Moving in:** Gottschalks opened in the vacant Ford's department store in downtown Watsonville on Aug. 29.

- **Job losses:** Several big employers announced layoffs this year, including Lipton, Dominican and Watsonville hospitals.

- **Merger:** Seagate Technology, Inc., of Scotts Valley announced plans for a billion-dollar merger with chief competitor, Conner Peripherals Inc. of San Jose.

- **Closings:** Longtime restaurants, including Saturn Cafe in Santa Cruz and The Veranda in Aptos.

- **New owner:** It was announced in October that the Santa Monica-based MaceRich firm was looking at buying the Capitola Mall. The real estate company closed last week on the \$57.5 million deal, said Tom O'Hern, chief financial officer.

Children and the Cabrillo College Child Care Center.

- **June 18:** Tony Franich, the Watsonville native behind the county's most controversial land annexation battle, at the age of 83. His 13-year fight to annex his 72-acre parcel into Watsonville city limits finally succeeded in 1994.

- **Nov. 1:** Radio host and teacher JoAnn King, of cancer at the age of 59.

- **Sept. 9:** North Coast matriarch and pioneer Agnes Trumbo McCrary, at the age of 91.

Politics as usual, and unusual

- **Carolyn Busenhart:** Riding high on the local front was a down-with-taxes crusader who cuts hair for a living. The longtime Soquel resident scored two big hits in 1995, helping to shoot down a school maintenance assessment in Soquel and a road assessment in Scotts Valley to fix Scotts Valley Drive.

Now, Busenhart is gearing up for her next opponent: Live Oak attorney Jan Beautz. The two go head-to-head in March to see who will represent the Soquel/Live Oak supervisorial district. Beautz, who beat Busenhart four years ago, is running for a third term.

- **Capitola finances:** Elected and city officials came under scrutiny for their handling of city and redevelopment agency dollars. City treasurer Glen Hanna finally got someone to take seriously his criticisms that these agencies were sloppy in their

when her dad's tractor overturns at their Summit home.

- **Aug. 13:** 23-year-old UC Santa Cruz student Sean Ryan, killed in a fall at Mount Rainer during a mountain climbing rescue of Santa Cruz restaurateur John Craver.

- **May 22:** 10-year-old Katie Jones of Ben Lomond, of head injuries after a fall from a horse.

- **Mar. 31:** The body George Mihalik of Watsonville is discovered two weeks after the Pajaro River waters flooded his apartment.

handling of millions of public dollars.

Old guys calling it quits:

- **Norman Mineta:** The San Jose congressman and one-time chairman of the House Transportation and Public Works Committee left his 21-year career to take a job with transportation contractor Lockheed-Marietta. The candidates fighting for Mineta's seat apparently tried to break the record for low-down gutter fighting. Voters picked veteran legislator **Tom Campbell**, a Republican.

- **Henry Mello:** Term limits will force this veteran Watsonville Democrat from his state Senate seat at the end of 1996. But Mello had some fun this year anyway, hinting that he might run for another office, such as the state Assembly or his old county supervisor's seat. As the year and the close of the filing period drew near, Mello had not filed for any office.

got the upper hand. Some 20 acres were scorched. The suspected arsonist, Edd Gaspar Aguilar, 30, has pleaded innocent by reason of insanity.

- **Hot, gusty winds** whipped up a fire on both sides of Highway 1 near Morrissey Boulevard on Oct. 4, scorching the roofs of nine Santa Cruz homes and bringing traffic to a standstill for miles.

Neighbors used garden hoses and helped with fire hoses in a successful attempt to save the threatened homes.

The blaze was just one of a half-dozen fires that flared throughout the county during the hot afternoon because of dry brush and sparks caused by wind-whipped power lines.

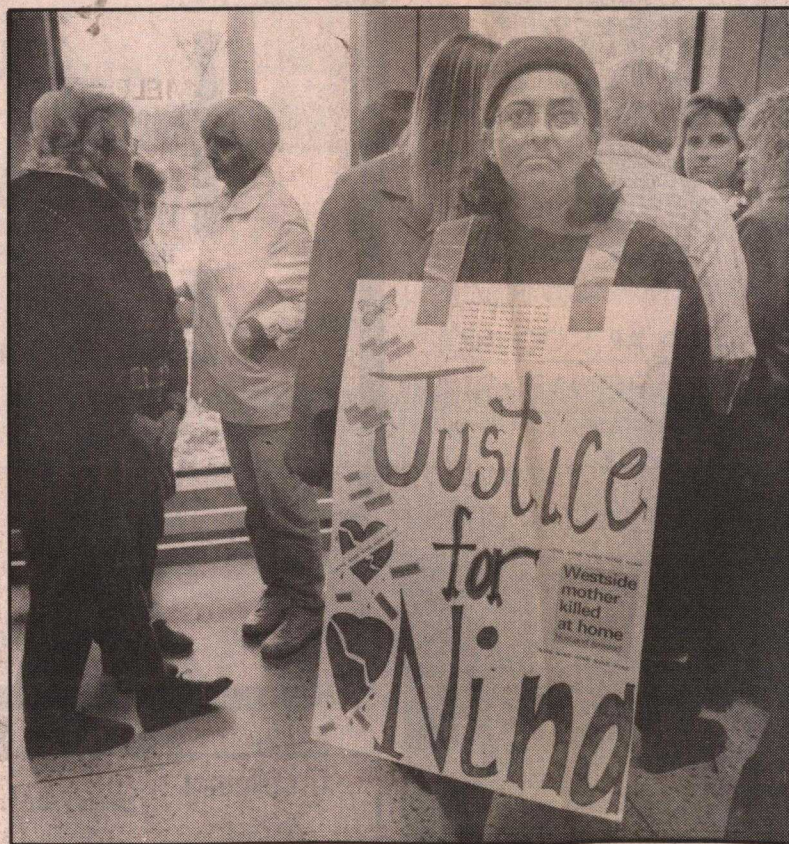
The animal kingdom

- **SPCA dogfight:** SPCA and a breeder of rare Leonberger dogs locked in a fight over an SPCA order requiring the dogs to be spayed and neutered. The SPCA backed down, but then ordered the dogs confined or muzzled when off the property.

- **Junior's getaway:** Junior, a feisty Jack Russell terrier, bit his groomer, made a getaway from the vet hospital, jumped into a white pickup truck and sped to freedom. He was found dead along Highway 1, north of Santa Cruz, apparently hit by a car.

- **Quittin' time:** Burned out rescue workers at Native Animal Rescue called it quits in August. Within months, animal lovers came up with several ways to help it revive.

- **Hog wild:** Marauding wild pigs went on a toot in the Chinese Year of the Boar, rototilling their snouts through gardens, farms and lawns throughout the county.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

THE MESSAGE: Anita Henri attends a court hearing and delivers a message in the killing of Santa Cruz resident Nina Leibman.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

A CLOSER LOOK: Contestants in a frog-jumping contest at Roaring Camp get a close look at the jumpers.