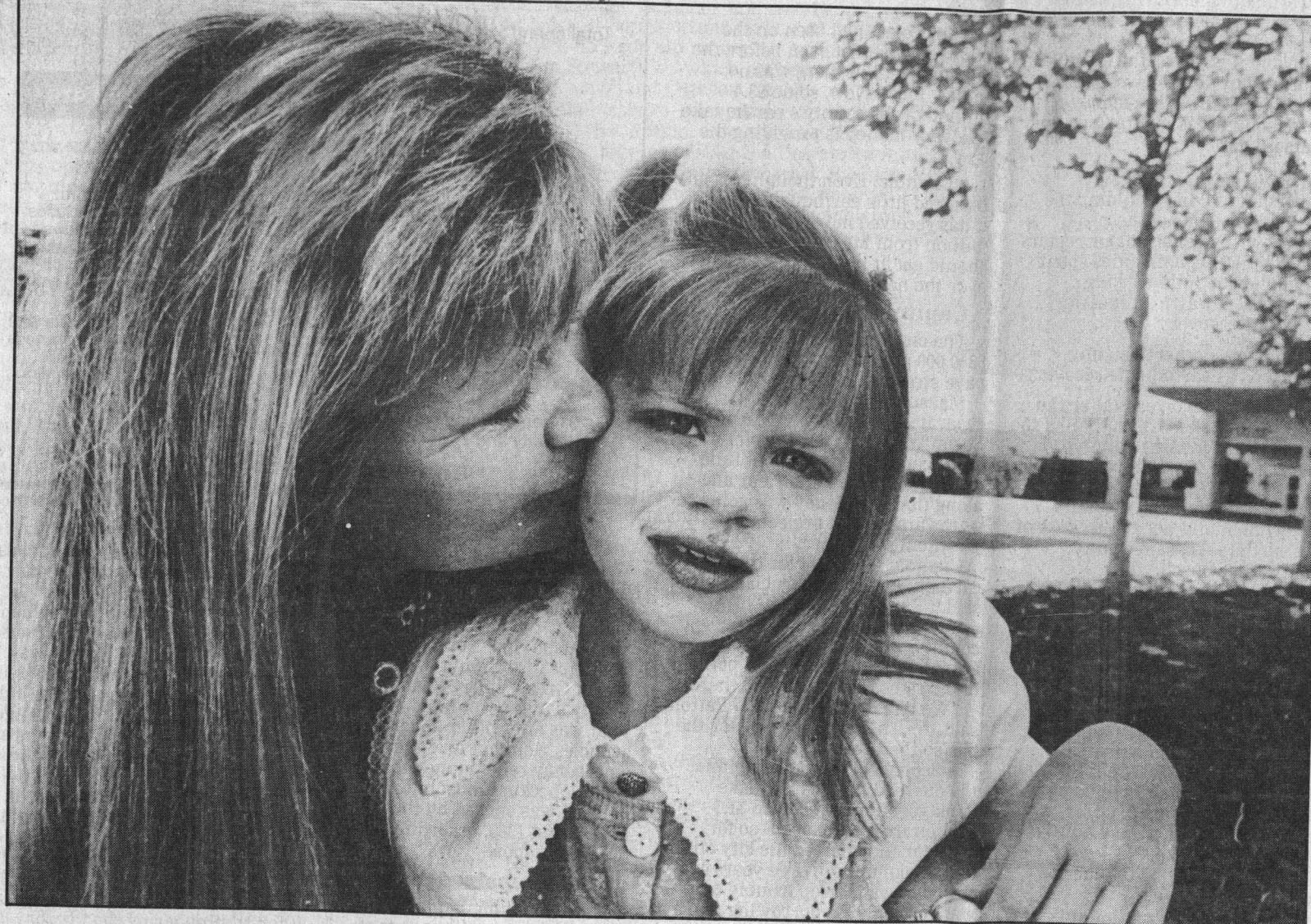


## FIVE YEARS AND 15 SECONDS

# Oct. 17: In their own words

*Earthquake - 1989 - City of Santa Cruz*



Gloria Simpson gives Anne a kiss at the old Community Hospital site, where Anne was born Oct. 17, 1989.

Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

## 'Earthquake Annie' enters a shaky world

**G**LORIA SIMPSON'S Oct. 17, 1989, was a day of terror and joy.

Her baby daughter, Anne Quarnstrom, was born at Community Hospital at 2:30 p.m.

Hours later, when the relatives had gone home, the shaking started.

"Nurses came flying out of the nursery rolling those babies out, and said, 'Here take care of your baby.'"

"Being (at the hospital), you knew you were in the middle of a disaster," said Simpson.

"Helicopters were landing outside. People on the upper floor were moved down, some into the hallways. They started bringing injured people within minutes."

Simpson wanted to go home. Her husband convinced her to stay — the hospital had food,

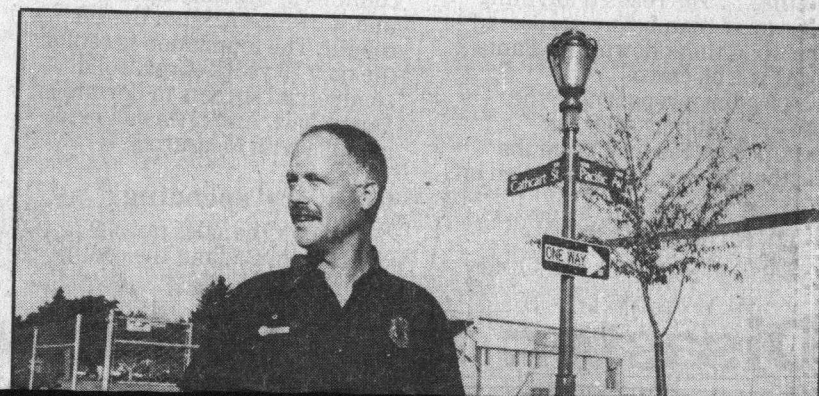
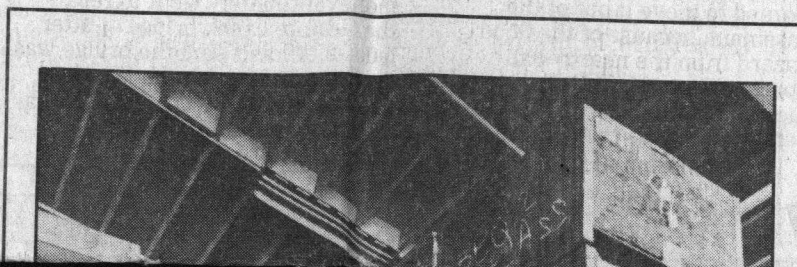
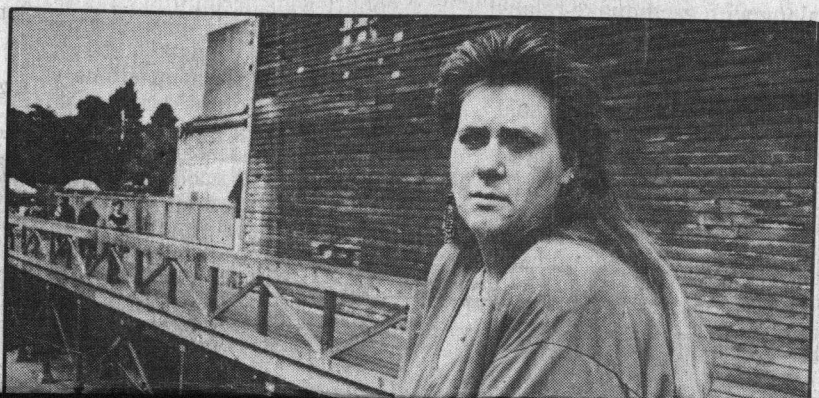
water, power — while he cleaned up the quake damage in their house.

Four months later, Simpson went to work for Project Cope, counseling earthquake victims.

"It was kind of cathartic for me to do that kind of work," she said. This year, on the quake anniversary, Simpson will get together with other Cope counselors.

On the one-year quake anniversary, Simpson and the families of five other babies born in the county that Oct. 17 got together. She's lost touch with most of them since then, but would like to reconnect.

Her quake-day baby is nicknamed Earthquake Annie. The home videos of her birthday show a joyful family, then cut to pictures of downtown Santa Cruz, leveled.







Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Terri McCormick has learned to cherish life.

## When a loved one dies, a family feels cheated

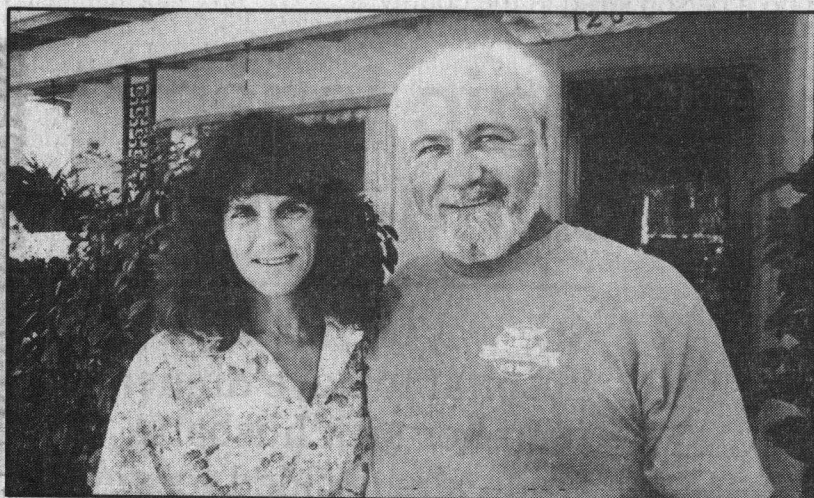
**"I** AM THE SISTER of Shawn McCormick, the young man who tragically lost his life in the Loma Prieta earthquake.

"My life for the past five years has been greatly affected due to the fact I've been cheated out of the love and companionship of my brother. His daughter was cheated out of knowing her father; my mom, cheated out of her son. I feel

so sad when I see and talk to Shawn's daughter, a spitting image of her dad.

"Recover? ... never... I'm dealing with it daily. Looking at life with open eyes, enjoying what I have, always.

"I love my family and I cherish life. I pray for the strength to make it each day, come what may. I pray for the strength to be there in support of others."



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Chris Telles and John Stow took a wild ride in their house.

## 'Poltergeist:' 'That's what we experienced'

**"T**HE HOUSE we lived in, at 207 Blackburn, was completely demolished," recalls John Stow. "It used to sit three feet in the air. It fell all three feet and broke in half. Part of it moved and fell into our landlord's driveway.

"We were in the house during all this. The windows were breaking. The walls were popping open. The floors were buckling in. Furniture was flying throughout the room. Dresser drawers ended up 10 feet out of the dressers."

"Did you ever see the movie 'Poltergeist?' That's what we experienced," says Chris Telles. "Walls would open up and you could see daylight, and then they would close.

"We were trapped inside the house, that was a scary feeling. I

thought we were goners.

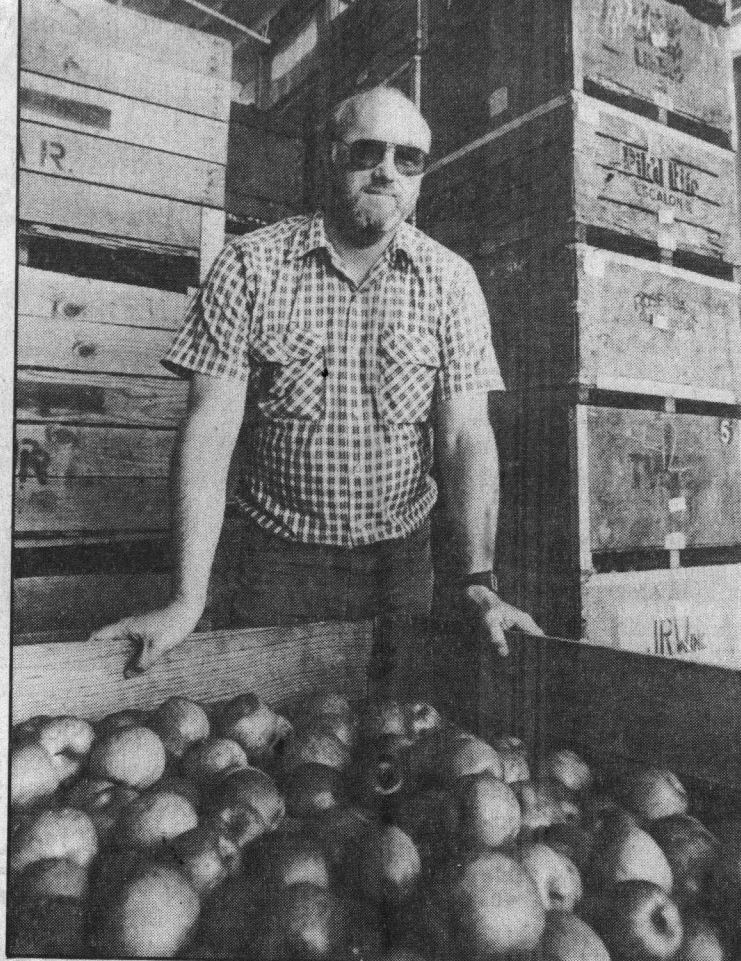
"The house was condemned the next morning at 7:30 a.m. I said a few choice words to them.

"There were looters coming in right away, so we wouldn't leave. We camped out in the backyard for a week, stayed with my cousin for a month, and then I moved back home for two months."

The house was demolished, and hasn't been rebuilt. Telles and Stow bought a home in Santa Cruz's Eastside two years later and plan to marry next year. Overall, the changes wrought by the quake have been beneficial, says Telles.

But their quake memory is still there.

"We think about it, especially when you see other disasters on TV. It brings you right back to what we when through," she says.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Tom Rider stands by a bin of apples, like the one that crushed his leg during the earthquake.

## Farmer got buried in work — literally

**T**OM RIDER can joke about it now, but on Oct. 17, 1989, there was nothing funny about having two 18-foot high stacks of loaded apple bins tumble onto his legs.

"I kind of got buried in my work," he laughs.

The weight of the 1,400 pound bins crushed Rider's leg. He was flown by helicopter from Watsonville Community Hospital to San Jose Medical Center for surgery and treatment. He spent 15 days in the hospital, and another six months strengthening his leg so he could walk again.

Today he has a steel plate and screws in his leg.

"I decided at the time that I had more years ahead of me

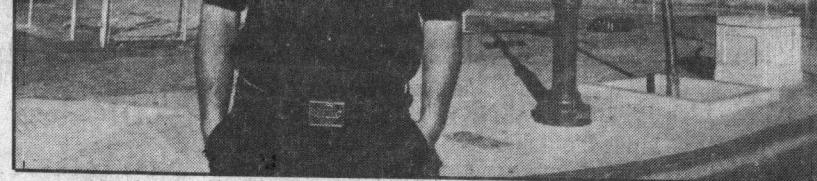
**'I'm lucky I'm alive.'**

— Tom Rider

than behind me, so I had to make it work," he says.

Rider has made it work, but not without a price. His leg hurts him at the end of each day. He has trouble walking in the apple fields at his plant. And, worst of all, he can't play basketball or other physical games with his son, who is now 11.

"That's the toughest part of all this, but we do the best we can with what we've got," he says. "I'm lucky I'm alive."



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Violante was one of the first rescue workers downtown.

## They counted on him

**W**ITH EACH STEP he took, the helpless feeling grew.

"It was a horrible feeling to know I couldn't help them all at once," says firefighter Mark Violante, who was one of the first official rescue workers to arrive on Pacific Avenue, just minutes after the earthquake.

People came up to the uniformed man asking for help. Some were bleeding, others had blank expressions. He was told people were trapped, injured and dying inside the ruined buildings.

"They were counting on me to help them, but I couldn't just rush in and join the chaos. I had to do my job, which was to walk up the whole mall and find out where the problems were the worst," he says.

Just 10 minutes earlier, Violante

and his partner Gavin Scott had been pulling away from the county Government Center when the earthquake hit.

"It rocked our engine pretty good. It felt like the whole thing was going to fall over," he says.

The antennas on top of the county building swung into each other. A woman sank to her knees as if in prayer.

"I told my captain, 'I think we had a big one,'" he recalls.

His captain told Violante and Scott to go downtown and survey the damage.

At the end of his walk, Violante had a list of buildings where help was needed. And a lifetime of memories.

"Talking about this, it could have been yesterday," he says.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Carol Meilicke 'lost everything across the board.'

## Financial losses hurt

**"T**HE EARTHQUAKE pretty much destroyed our family. I lost 65 percent of my bookkeeping business, had \$100,000 damage to one house. We lost our rental.

"Everything rolled over. It was the first time we had been unable to pay payroll taxes, which made us sell the rental, which rolled over to capital gains taxes and now we owe the IRS about \$60,000.

"We didn't initially qualify for any type of funding. They said we

made too much money.

"So basically, because we didn't get the initial funding, we pretty much lost everything across the board. Our retirement, everything.

"And we're probably going to end up losing our main house; we've already gone bankrupt.

"My husband and I split up because of the earthquake and I've been really sick because of the stress of everything.

"So I don't think the earthquake is ever going to go away."



# FIVE YEARS AND 15 SECONDS



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Kim Tucker, right, and Annie Rains put their brains together to stay in business after the quake.

## Oh, what a scare

**I**'M IN THE HALLOWEEN costume business and it was about five years ago today when I was telling my husband how much money I'd hoped to make. He said, 'Don't count your chickens before they're hatched, Kim.'

"Wouldn't you know? Two weeks to the day before Halloween, which are also the two busiest weeks of the year for my store, Cognito Clothing, the earthquake hit.

"Later, people had said that a woman ran naked from my store. All she was doing was trying on a Lady Godiva costume and she had a nude-colored body suit on, which

she paid for with shaking hands about three minutes after the quake ended.

"My partner and I had to pay a lot of bills so we rented a U-Haul, and threw all the costumes in there, pulled it into the parking lot in back of the store and set up a tent for people to try on the costumes.

We ended up making enough money to pay all our bills. After Halloween was over, I took off to Lake Tahoe to get away from all the aftershocks.

"Wouldn't you know there was an earthquake up there? My friends said, 'No Kim, it was sonic boom,' but I knew better."



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Kimberly Monari and Mark Jeannette at their meeting place of Oct. 17, 1989.

## For these two, it was love among the ruins

**MARK JEANNETTE** needed power, and a place to edit his earthquake videos. KMST-TV, where Jeannette was a cameraman, had been trashed, and left powerless by the quake.

About a mile away, KSCO had lights and power. The radio station also had Kimberly Monari.

Jeannette and Monari, although both worked in the news media, had not met until the earthquake, when Jeannette was given permission to set up shop in the radio station.

That night and for the next three days, Jeannette worked out of KSCO offices with Monari.

He loaned Monari his fireman's turnout jacket and drove her



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Isabel Carrillo lived in tents and trailers in Watsonville after the quake.

## 'I was sitting down when I heard thunder'

**ISABEL CARRILLO** and her family lived in a home that was at the point of collapse for two weeks after the quake.

Carrillo was working at La Fondita Restaurant in Watsonville when the earthquake hit.

"I was sitting down when I heard a thunder. We tried to run outside, but we weren't able to because we couldn't walk very well — my whole body was shaking. I was trembling from fear the whole night."

That night, Carrillo, her husband and two children, ages 2 and 10, returned to their Prunedale house, a dilapidated, abandoned structure they lived in for free because they couldn't afford rent. They moved there a few months earlier from Watsonville, where they shared housing with another family. "We were scared, but we didn't have anywhere else to sleep."

Carrillo didn't seek shelter at one of the shelters or

encampments in the city because "I didn't know where to go to ask for help. I thought they were only helping those whose houses fell down completely."

The Carrillos began searching for temporary housing two weeks later, when they were told by the property owner to vacate the building, which was on the verge of collapse.

"I was scared where I was living, and was telling a lady we didn't have any services, or even a bed. She was the one who brought me there."

Her family moved into one of the many tents set up at the Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds, a welcome refuge where the Carrillo family had access to water, bathrooms and electricity. They stayed for two months, then moved to a FEMA trailer in nearby Pajaro, where they lived until June 1991. The family now lives in a home outside Watsonville subsidized by the county Housing Authority.

## Giant lion let loose





Mike Dominguez is lucky his mom survived.

## He found his mother at Community Hospital

SEVERAL HOURS after the shaking stopped, Mike Dominguez realized with horror that no one knew the whereabouts of his mother, Edith Dominguez.

He had heard reports of multiple injuries, that the Pacific Avenue area was demolished and the front of Ford's department store, where his mother worked, was devastated.

Dominguez checked Dominican Hospital, examining every quake injury victim there. His mother wasn't among them.

He found her at Community Hospital. "As I entered the ICU room, I could distinctly hear my mother moaning. Two doctors and at least four or five nurses were frantically attending my mother."

Her leg had already been operated on, and concern remained that she had internal injuries.

And she was the lucky one. A woman customer across the counter from her perished in the rubble.

A photo of Edith Dominguez being carried from the rubble at Ford's became one of the enduring symbols of survival and a testimonial to the quake's power.

Dominguez, now 73, took a long time to recuperate. While in the hospital she fell and broke her hip. She lives alone, and uses a cane.

"Sometime she likes to talk about it. She realizes how lucky she is. At first she had almost a bitter feeling," said her son.

A recent thunderstorm shook her up, a verbal reminder of the crash she heard before the Ford's building fell, he said.

She talks about the quake sometimes. "That 15 seconds in October '89 changed my mother's life forever."

Monari is now news director of KJOM radio in Salinas. Jeannette is a cameraman covering Santa Cruz County for KCBA in Salinas. Both live together in Santa Cruz.

At 5:04 p.m. on Oct. 17, 1994, the two will be married at Lake Tahoe.

It will be a celebration of the fifth anniversary of their meeting, their wedding, the natural disaster of Loma Prieta and the natural beauty of Lake Tahoe, said Jeannette.

"I guess you could say that when the earth moved for Santa Cruz, it moved for me," he said.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Patsy Hernandez overcame grief to help others in need.

## She was put to work, and hasn't stopped yet

PATSY HERNANDEZ didn't plan for a career with the Red Cross, but was recruited by personal tragedy.

"The only reason I got involved with the Red Cross was because my aunt was the one who was killed at the plaza," Hernandez says. "I was put right to work and I haven't stopped since."

Her aunt, Elida Ledesma Ortega, a 44-year-old Watsonville resident, was killed by falling bricks as she left the Bake Rite Bakery next to the plaza. Ortega had stopped there to treat her 7-year-old grandson, who she was raising, to a doughnut after his karate lesson.

As they exited the building, bricks and mortar began to fall and Ortega threw herself over the boy to shield him from harm. The boy suffered a broken leg, and today lives with an aunt in Washington state.

"We were listening to all

these people getting hurt and killed. It never crossed our minds at all," Hernandez says.

Two weeks later, the family found out that Ortega had died, and that the boy was at the nearby Santa Cruz Community Hospital.

"My cousin was not even a block from where my mother lives, and we didn't even know he was there," Hernandez says.

A 33-year-old mother of three, Hernandez decided to answer a plea for bilingual volunteers broadcast shortly after the earthquake. After volunteering for a year, Hernandez was assigned to individual cases, mostly in Watsonville, and in June became Red Cross' director of social services for the county.

"(A disaster) tends to bring out the best in people. That's why we have so many volunteers now. That's why I stayed on — they made it feel like a home."

"OUR DAUGHTER Regina was a 4-month-old infant at the time and her crib was next to a floor-to-ceiling Santa Maria-style rock wall. Each rock weighed about 100 pounds?"

"Seconds before the quake struck I pulled her out and walked outside to check on my other child. Then the earthquake hit and her crib was completely crushed. She would have been killed."

"I was getting thrown around and almost dropped her on our brick patio. My son was sitting on a redwood bench, hanging on for dear life."

"During the quake, we were so shocked we watched the trees move up and down like jackhammers."

"The brick was cracking all around me. It was extremely violent and intense. The roar of the earth shaking sounded like a giant lion. It was very powerful and scary."

"I told the children — a neighbor's daughter was here — to



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Tisha Scurich says Regina would have been crushed.

sit down. I looked around and didn't see anything and out of nowhere a dog appeared and made us sit. She growled at us if we tried to stand up so we sat down and the next series of quakes hit.

"A week before the earthquake, we had decorators out. We were going to refurbish and decorate. The quake destroyed two fireplaces, and our floors buckled."

"After we fixed all that, there was no money left for furniture. Just recently we started furnishing again. We're just so happy our daughter is here with us. It was very close. It was seconds."



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Nathan and Molly at the scene of the gathering.

## Everyone thrown together

"OUR HUNDRED-year-old farm house shook when someone shut a door or even walked too fast, so this was nothing new."

"I didn't think anything of it, then the house began to bounce up and down. My first reaction was to get under my desk, and start praying. (Seven years of duck-and-cover drills at school really paid off!)"

"Then everything went into slow motion. It seemed to go forever. About half-way through the quake I turned my head to see my whole computer monitor, keyboard, and CPU fly off my desk and onto my floor. Then I knew this was going to be a big one."

"Just as the quake stopped my dad opened the front door and told me to get out because the house was going to fall."

"Within minutes, dad was out helping neighbors turn off gas, water and electricity."

"Everyone in the neighborhood decided it would probably be unsafe to sleep in our homes so we would all sleep outside. Since our house had the biggest yard, eight acres of fields and fruit trees, everyone was invited to sleep in our field. All the neighbors brought their cars to our field and circled them and we started a campfire."

"Everyone salvaged what food they could from their houses. 'Somehow we ended up having a feast with all the food.'

"The night went on, the huge full moon in the night sky, the smaller kids went to bed in various cars and the aftershocks rumbled on."

"Ever since the quake, our neighborhood has had earthquake parties, each year rotating from house to house."

"It is a time to remember when we were thrown together. We made the best of it and survived."

## He waited for a house to explode

THE AIR was thick with smoke, flames and the smell of natural gas as firefighter Russ Long and his two partners held hoses on the burning house.

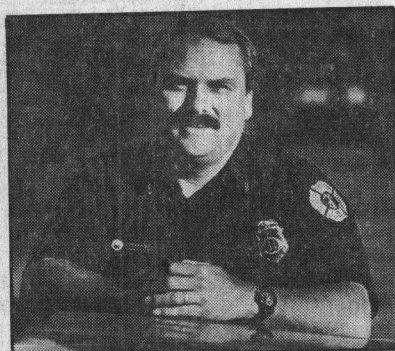
"It's an eerie feeling when you're fighting a fire and all you can smell is gas," he says, five years later. "I still remember that smell."

Long and his crew had rushed to the blaze just minutes after the ground stopped shaking, and they didn't have the manpower, the water or the equipment to put it out.

As neighbors and passerbys helped, Long "worked his butt off" to keep the fire from spreading into the rest of the Myrtle Street neighborhood.

He worried that people could be trapped in the house. He wondered if he was at the heart of the emergency, and if not, how bad it was. And most of all, Long worried about his wife and son.

For hours the three men, and numerous neighbors, fought the fire. The whole time, Long expected to hear another home explode. And the whole time, he waited for the message that came



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

Russ Long lost his house, but not his family.

late in the night:

His wife and son were safe, his home was wrecked.

"God was I relieved," he says today. "Just knowing they were OK gave me such an adrenaline rush I was able to work the whole night through."

Long doesn't think his reaction to an earthquake today would be any different than it was five years ago.

There are still only 11 firefighters on duty in the city at any time.

The department's three engines would still be called to more than 200 emergencies in three days.

And he would still worry, desperately, about his wife and son.

"If there were just some system for us to find out about our families..." he says.