

Dwn
Town

BUSINESS TO BUSINESS NETWORK

Santa Cruz Edition November 26/December 3, 1986 \$3.500 Mailed



Network photo

Hell no, we won't go

Santa Cruz street people use the Pacific Garden Mall as the stage for their struggle to obtain shelter from the city.

Banning street people

Businesses on the Pacific Garden Mall fight to keep street people away from their storefronts

By Robert Sward

"Street people? Damn those S.O.B.s," say some merchants on the Pacific Garden Mall. Others—with a younger clientele—respond, "Everybody has a right to do what they want." Many merchants on the Pacific Garden Mall say they've "had it up to here" with street people who are using the Mall as a camp ground.

But what does a merchant do when a street person walks into his (or her) restaurant, heads in the direction of the cash register and dips into the saucer containing the day's "tip" money? This happened recently

to David Johnstone, co-owner of the Transatlantic Cafe. "We politely, but firmly, asked him to return the money to the saucer and leave. And he did. Other times we've called the police, but there's not a whole lot they can do. They have advised us to make a citizen's arrest and try to make it stick."

What do you do when 25 homeless people—transients, de-institutionalized mental patients, "legitimate" homeless people without work, high school dropouts and voluntary bombed drug

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Street people

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users—camp in front of your place of business on a Saturday afternoon, deal drugs, intimidate shoppers by asking for handouts and, on occasion, harass women?

"I call the police," replies one worried business owner who asked not to be identified. "It's illegal to panhandle and deal drugs. We have customers who come into our store

*'I like the Mall
but I don't like
climbing over
peoples' bodies.'*

and say, 'I'm not going to shop here anymore. It's too scary. I like the Mall and the planter boxes and shade trees, but I don't like climbing over peoples' bodies.'"

Some shop owners on Pacific Garden Mall have taken to hosing down the sidewalk in front of their shops to discourage groups of transients from "camping" in front of their place of business. But transients like Doug ("Phoenix") Beattie say street people cluster together in packs when they fear harassment by the police. Most merchants, however, say they believe the police have acted fairly.

Carla Mansfield, for example, owner of the House and Garden Shop, says, "I think the police are very good here. I haven't seen them mistreat anyone."



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On the street where you live

Street people of Santa Cruz retreat to the clock tower on Pacific Garden Mall to regroup and plan their next move in their fight for housing.

Police Officer Gary McConnell says the recent confrontations are isolated incidents intended to publicize the plight of Santa Cruz' homeless population. "They're angry about not getting a shelter built before the rains. The media," he says, "has blown the confrontations out of proportion. It's a high profile situation to get publicity. The street people are doing very minor things and using the police to draw attention to their situation."

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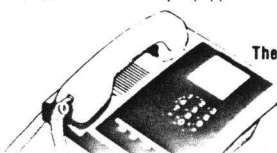
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Street people

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"It's a social problem, not a criminal problem," says McConnell who patrols the Mall. "We're not arresting anybody for being homeless, but we do arrest for drugs or alcohol-related incidents. Police arrests are no higher now than they were a month ago."

"Mainly, we issue warnings and then enforce those warnings if they are ignored," says Police Officer Chuck Varner.

Store owners count themselves lucky if they have both a rear and a front entrance to their shops. A rear entrance means customers can enter shops from a parking lot behind the Mall and not have to "climb over bodies."

"A pleasant shopping district needs pleasant atmosphere. If not, you might as well close your doors. Your customers will go elsewhere—whether you do or not," says Hal Morris, owner of Plaza Books. "But we're at the opposite end of the Mall from

where the street people now congregate. We're not so bothered by the problem. And our younger customers don't seem to mind.

"Ten years ago merchants objected because they saw people who were somehow 'different.' It was essentially a little problem. But now, with

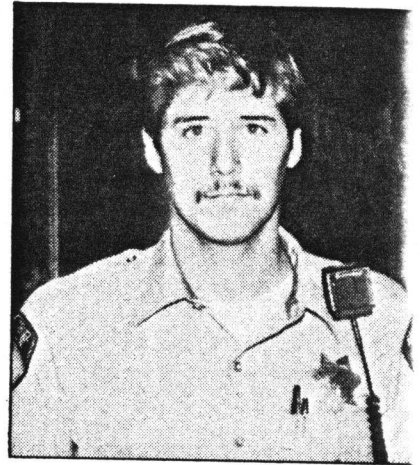
'The anti-social element has increased on the Mall making it more uncomfortable for customers.'

Ronald Reagan, the number of homeless people has increased and we are seeing a proportionately larger number of drug dealers and criminals. The anti-social element has increased on the Mall making it more uncomfortable for customers.

"It's become a real problem on the Mall, particularly for merchants who depend on older, wealthier shoppers," says Morris. "Business is good on the Pacific Mall though I do hear people saying they don't come down here anymore. But Plaza Books appeals to both young and old...I try to work both markets and the truth is, I hear more complaints about parking than I do about street people."

Most new stores on the Mall are set up to cater to younger people—UCSC and Cabrillo College students, for example—who are not bothered by street people. Older shoppers, however, are tending to head for 41st Avenue in Capitola and Malls where they are less likely to be accosted by panhandlers ("Hey, man, you got 25 cents for a cup of coffee? I need to score some dinner...").

With over 3,000,000 people homeless in America—and an
(See next page)



On the beat

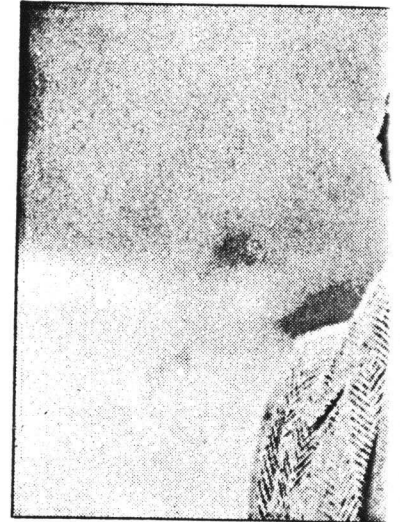
Police officers Chuck Varner and [unclear] using the media to advertise th



Network photo

Red alert

Pacific Garden Mall merchant Carla Mansfield says she has not seen the police mistreat any street people.



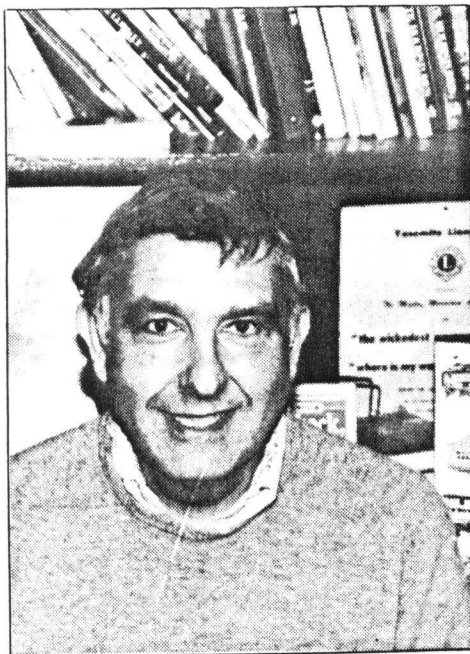
**"I own a
condo on
and my own
But I don't**

I lease with INCENTIVE.

For my life-style, leasing makes more sense than buying. I want a new car, but didn't want to tie up my money in a major down payment.

Street people

(Continued from previous page)
estimated 1,000 homeless in Santa Cruz County—some merchants see the recent confrontations on the Mall as symptomatic of a national social



Network photo

Man of letters

Hal Morris of Plaza Books says older customers in particular object to street people.

problem involving the dissolution of the middle class.

"The playout of Reagan's policies is homelessness—and no way to provide

*'You can't solve
a social problem
like this by
throwing money
at it.'*

for those people who have been made homeless," says Hal Morris. "You can't solve a social problem like that by throwing money at it, but there will be no solution until the government's priorities change.

*'We may have to
beg for the money,
but we spend that
money here.'*

"The money that went to ship arms to Iran recently might have been used



Network photo

Sunshine

This Santa Cruz street person, known as Sunshine, says that all the street people want is a safe place to sleep at night.

here to see a whole lot of homeless people through the winter," he adds.

"Listen, we're actually good for business," says a street person who calls himself "Mr. Happy Blankets." "We're a tourist attraction. We may have to beg for the money, but we spend that money here."

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