

CF BUS. DISTRICT

# Don-The-Hamburger-Man's One Man Show

By PAUL BEATTY  
Sentinel Staff Writer

If you haven't met Don-the-hamburger-man on the wharf in Santa Cruz, you may be in a new minority of citizens.

It seems everybody at some time has bought a hot dog or burger from Don and gotten a taste of his crazy humor and homely advice while the burger grills and the coffee is poured.

Don tells a matronly woman as she orders milk, "I haven't tasted milk since I was a child. My father made wine, you know. I guess, I haven't tasted milk in 73 years, since my mother nursed me."

She turns from his stand, the trauma of Don to be with her a long time, and tells her matronly friend, "He says he hasn't tasted milk since his mother nursed him."

Don mixes it up readily with a construction worker repairing the wharf. The construction worker orders a Coke and tells him, "These aren't big enough."

Don replies, "We have bigger ones."

Puzzled worker: "You said you didn't yesterday."

Don, happily, "They'll be in tomorrow."

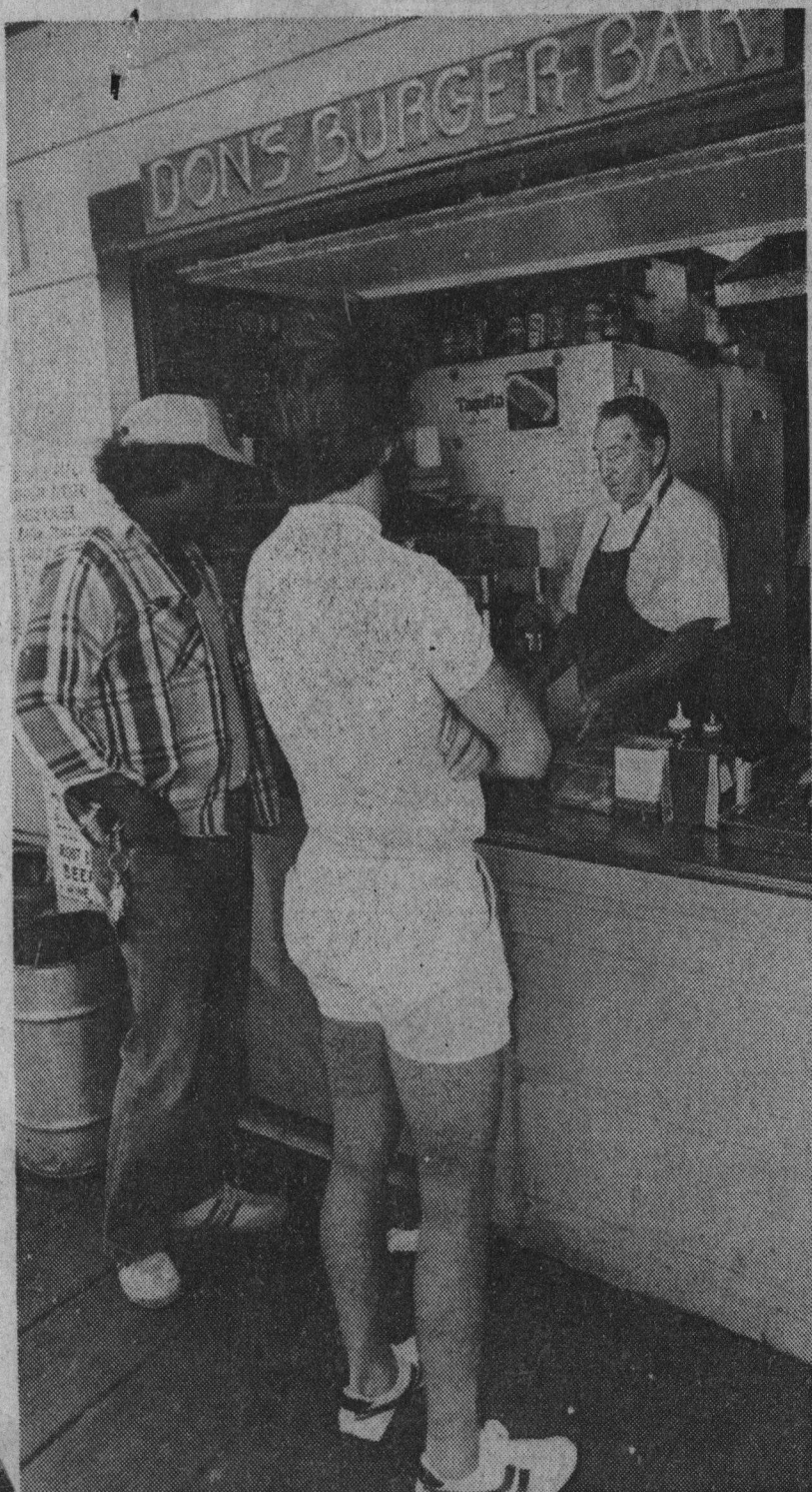
The worker turns away laughing in spite of himself, tossing back, "You, jerk."

Then, one of the guys who hangs around the stand mentions baseball and before he can get much of an argument going, Don demands he put up \$100 on the team he's talking about. The guy tells him, "I left my wallet home."

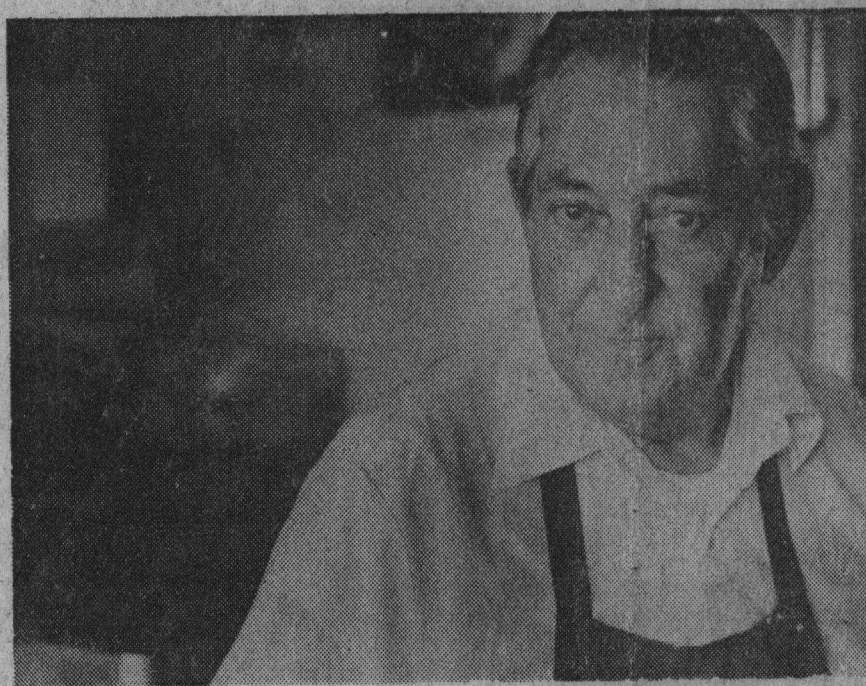
By then, Don is talking to a burly truck driver who who is trying to deliver potato chips while Don is demanding he arm wrestle.

Behind the fun, the fair exchange of street wit, is a man who says he does it all because "I love every minute of it . . . I've been here 19 years and I love every minute of it."

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Don-the-hamburger-man tends to business.



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

A hint of a smile from Don-the-hamburger man.

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He'll also quickly assure you, "And, the weather's been great the last 10 years."

Don's hamburger days on the wharf may be numbered, and as the old story goes, he may be a victim of progress at the end of this year.

Santa Cruz city is remodeling the wharf to make it bring in more money and Don's stand and four other businesses running southward from him are comprise the remodeling project.

He could chose to stay in a new building, "but that would mean I would have to equip it and that would be costly.

"I may just retire, or I may . . . I haven't made up my mind," he says.

He says that he has no fight with the city, but he and his friends have expressed some differences of opinion with the city about the remodeling project.

Some have said it will change the downhome flavor of the wharf and the two story commercial buildings shouldn't be part of any plans.

Don's friend on the wharf, Ruben Fausto, says, "I hope he decides to stay . . . I hope he changes his mind and comes back."

Fausto does a few things for Don, running to town, spending some time talking when things are slow and just being his friend.

"I was a cook at UC, but I couldn't do what Don does. People remember him and you can't beat his prices."

Fausto easily takes a position against the remodeling plans, saying the city will "ruin the wharf with two story buildings."

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Don doesn't want the fight, saying, "I've always gotten along with city officials" and that the "years have been too good" to end with a fight.

He remembers some strange incidents at the wharf, the beaching of the Shamrock and a friend driving his car off the edge of the wharf, and he remembers a lot of happy people in the 12 to 14 hours every day he works.

He doesn't remember how many customers he's served in the 19 years.

"You can't look back," he says, "you can't look back.

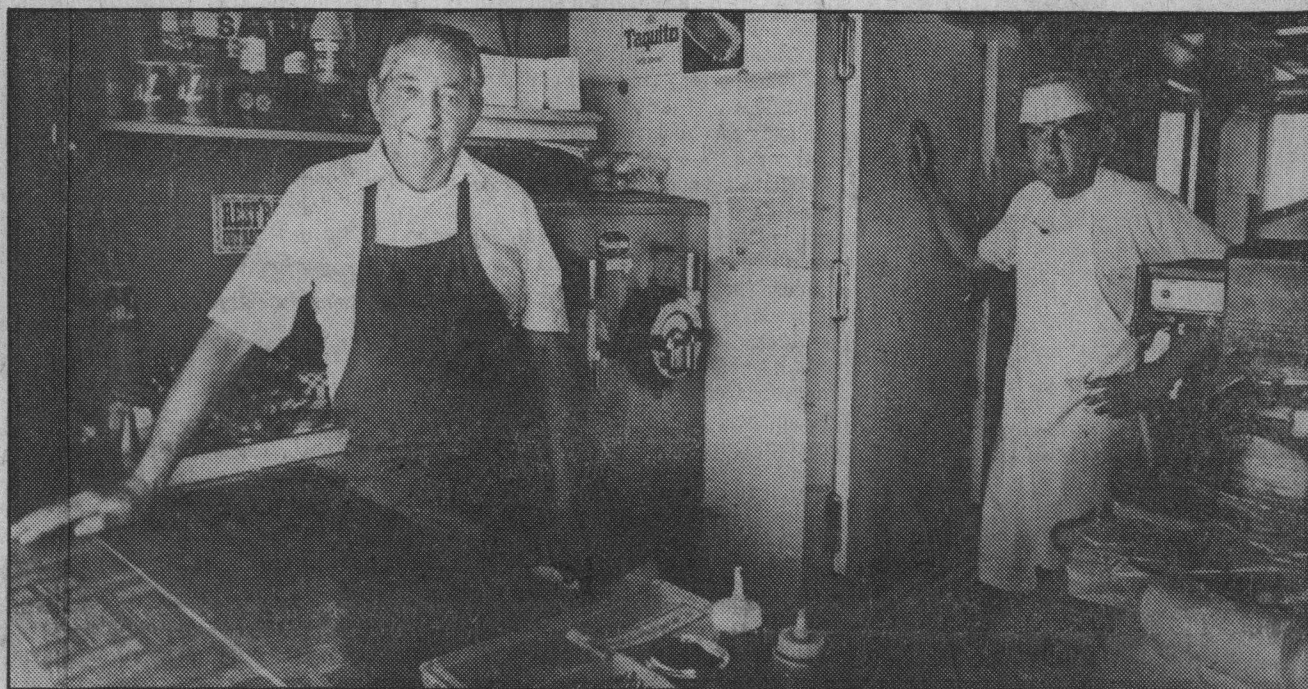
"Hey," he says then, "you know a friend of mine says there's a sex pill you can buy — guaranteed."

A friend: "But, Don, do you need it."

"Well not now," he answers, "but some day I might."



*Don the hamburger man surveys his kingdom*



*Don and Tom Carter take a minute out from their work.*

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