



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel file

Seven 'healing balloons' were released past the Santa Cruz Town Clock days after the quake, each balloon representing a person killed in the county.

The quake's tragic legacy includes loss of human life

Earthquake - 1989 - Santa Cruz City

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THEY WERE IN harm's way, and became victims of the Loma Prieta earthquake.

Six Santa Cruz County residents died as a result of the earthquake, as did a Napa man visiting the area.

- Shawn McCormick, 21, died when a brick wall tumbled down on the Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Company on the Pacific Garden Mall. A big, blond guy who was known for cracking bad jokes, being a devoted father, and refusing to let bad moods pass unbroken, McCormick was in the company's administrative offices, learning to use a computer and keep company records.

- Dale DeBenedetti, 27, was killed in a bizarre accident on Highway 1 in Capitola when three horses spooked by the earthquake hit his pickup truck. DeBenedetti was on his way home to his wife of two years and his baby daughter in Aptos. He had gone to his workplace in Scotts Valley to pick up tools so he could fix the family's water heater, which was leaking as a result of the earthquake.

- Elida Ledesma Ortega, 44, died as she threw her body over her grandson to protect him from bricks that fell from the Bake Rite Bakery in Watsonville. Born of farmworker parents, she worked in the fields before going to school and becoming a nurse's assistant and office clerk. She reared three children from her first marriage, then remarried and began raising her grandson.

- Robin Ortiz, 22, died when a brick wall collapsed on her in the Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Company. It took two days for rescue workers to recover her body from the rubble. A former UC Santa Cruz student, she was a wholesale-accounts manager for the company. She was a lesbian, a vegetarian, drove a motorcycle and volunteered with the Santa Cruz AIDS Project.

She was on the way to the hospital to have dinner with her sick husband when she decided to stop at Ford's to buy some slacks.

- Kay Trieman, 75, died when Ford's Department Store on the Pacific Garden Mall caved in on her. A grandmother of four, she was on the way to the hospital to have dinner with her sick husband when she decided to stop at Ford's to buy some slacks. A saleswoman was checking whether the pants were available when the earthquake buried Trieman in the rubble.

- John Anderson, 33, died in a torrent of bricks when the wall of a San Francisco building collapsed. Anderson had moved to Boulder Creek less than two years earlier to take a position as a senior editor at MacUser Magazine in Foster City. A nationally known writer, he liked to build and fly kites. He moved to Boulder Creek because the area reminded him of the Adirondack Mountains, where he vacationed as a youth.

- Gary Phillip West, 41, was standing next to a sea cave on Bonny Doon Beach when an 80-foot section of cliff collapsed, burying and killing him instantly.

West was a Napa resident visiting the county. Friends and family at first did not even think to look for him, assuming he was helping people at a shelter. The search for West did not begin until five days after the quake, when his car was found near the beach. The next day, workers dug his body out from the landslide.