

11/12/94



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Two local veterans measure words spoken by Supervisor Gary Patton in front of the veterans building.

## Rededication of veterans building doesn't pass without some debate

By CHUCK HILDEBRAND  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — The Veterans Memorial Building had some people mad — and in that sense, this Veterans Day was like a lot of other days.

Even so, the comradeship among the veterans there Friday was a reminder that to those who have served, Veterans Day is not like other days.

Control of the building on Front Street has been the source of angry debate between the county and veterans' groups for years. And even the passing of the 62-year-old building's deed from the county to a nonprofit veterans' group Friday had some people grumbling during and after the ceremony.

One of the members of the board of trustees of the new group is Mardi Wormhoudt, who as Santa Cruz mayor five years ago refused to allow a U.S. Navy ship to visit Santa Cruz.

Gary Patton, outgoing chairman of

'They go up and talk about war when all they did was run away from war.'

— *Surby Guardino, local veteran*

the Board of Supervisors, and Santa Cruz Mayor Scott Kennedy spoke at the rededication of the building. Patton once was a conscientious objector, and Kennedy works for the Resource Center for Nonviolence.

"I'm outraged that they came down and made a speech about war and veterans," said Santa Cruz resident Surby Guardino, who served in the Pacific the-

■ *Veterans Day celebrated in Watsonville — Page A2*

ater as a seaman during World War II. "They go up and talk about war when all they did was run away from war."

Rhonda Waldron was upset that none of the speakers mentioned her father, George Waldron, during the ceremony.

Waldron, who served in World War II and was a longtime advocate for veterans, died June 26. His daughter said it was he, not Patton, who is most responsible for getting the Veterans Building out of county hands and into the hands of the nonprofit group.

"I feel like that was a mockery," Rhonda Waldron said. "That building belongs to the taxpayers. They missed the whole point. He (Patton) was taking credit for what my father did."

Please see VETERANS — BACK PAGE

## Veterans building

Continued from Page A1

Vietnam War veteran Jim Bindi, however, called Patton a friend of veterans because of his work involving the building and said it was entirely appropriate that Patton spoke at the ceremony.

In any case, Bindi said he was there not because it was the Veterans Building but because it was Veterans Day. Servicemen from both World Wars, the Korean War and the Vietnam War were present, and while their appearances differed as much as their ages, they bantered readily.

"It's certainly a special day for all of us," said Bindi, a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 5888, which is headquartered in the building.

"No matter what, I always take the time to come here (on Veterans Day) because you feel a real comfort, a real comradeship with this special band of people who went through similar experiences.

"It's a day to reconnect."

Henry Meserve, head of the VFW post, said the fact the building is back in veterans' hands is important because it is a safe haven for many veterans who have had difficulty since leaving the military.

"The (Parks and Recreation Department, which had run the building) was so positively unsympathetic and unwilling to work with us," he said. "It's a real positive to have this as a veterans' building again."