

MIRACLE WORKER LIVES AGAIN



The Rev. Alex Robinson, who's back in business in the new location of his Miracle Worker Barber Shop on Soquel Avenue, cuts Derek Jones' hair. Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

One-of-a-kind religious barbershop back in business

By DAN WHITE

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SANTA CRUZ — Will the Miracle never cease?

The Miracle Worker Barber Shop has risen again at a new location, after losing its lease and facing closure.

"God made it happen," said the Rev. Alex Robinson, who offers sermons along with buzz cuts at his new location at 1006 Soquel Ave., across the street from One Double Oh Seven Club and Smoking Parlor.

"I'm going to have a grand opening with a fish fry, but I haven't gotten around to it yet."

Friday at 11 a.m., Robinson stood proudly in his relocated store, wearing his trademark banded white fedora, black vest and dress shoes. On a shelf were bottles of Barbicide disinfectant, Wahl clipper oil and Clubman after-shave lotion. He was grinning and teasing a customer, saying the young man's social life was bound to improve.

"That'll get you a date," he said,

turning the man around to face the mirror. "Now she can't say 'no.'"

He laughed as he brushed some stray hairs from the customer's bib.

The man was so thrilled by the flattop fade that he insisted on having a picture taken with Robinson inside the store.

The relocated store doesn't even have a sign out front yet, but all of Robinson's old customers have followed him across town. He's booked so solid, he swears he'll stay put in the new location for 20 or 30 years.

"I'll cut hair when I'm 95," he said. "I feel like I'm doing something that's needed."

That's especially true during holidays, he said.

"A lot of guys go to church but once a year for Easter, so I'm gonna cut their hair. In fact I just cut a guy's hair, and he's going to be in a dramatization of the crucifixion down in Watsonville. He's going to play the part of Judas."

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Barber

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A waning miracle?

Last month Robinson, 58, an ordained minister in the Apostolic Church, found out he would have to clear out of his store on 316 Pacific Ave. because a neighboring electric scooter and bike company was expanding into his rented space.

Losing the store would mean moving out of Santa Cruz and retiring to his second home in Stockton, where he likes to relax on the Delta and hook some catfish off his private dock.

But Robinson did not allow himself to worry about the future, even though he's lived in Santa Cruz for almost 40 years and raised two boys, now 28 and 26. His wife, Juanita, teaches second grade at Bayview Elementary School.

Faced with potential closure, Robinson kept his cool, weighed his options, and asked God what he had to say about it.

"I thought I was going to end up leaving Santa Cruz because I couldn't find another spot," he said. "I thought of setting up a mobile barber shop. Get me a van, convert it into a barbershop. Put a chair right in the center of the van. Run it off 12-volt batteries, charge 'em every day."

While Robinson was weighing the van option, his customers were worried. Some wondered if they would have to go to San Jose or Seaside to find anything

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SANDY TUCKER,
LONGTIME CLIENT

remotely similar to the Miracle Worker.

Sandy Tucker, 53, had been visiting Robinson's shop since it opened in 1991 at its original location on Errett Circle.

"Alex is the best man for hair that I've ever run across," said Tucker, who has thinning kinky hair. "If he can do something with this hair, dude ... He was working on my hair when I had hair."

The prospect of going to a corporate barbershop horrified Tucker.

"They can't deal with my hair," he said. "They were experimenting on me. I was their guinea pig."

He said his haircuts at the Miracle Worker were "the first times I didn't have to wear a hat on my head for two weeks after getting a haircut."

A new chance

But Robinson and his customers came out all right in the



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

The Rev. Alex Robinson works in the new location of his Miracle Worker Barber Shop on Soquel Avenue on Friday morning.

end. Instead of having to drive around on a barbershop-on-wheels, Robinson got an offer he couldn't refuse.

Representatives of Pacific Sun Properties learned of Robinson's fate and stepped forward with an offer of a \$500-a-month lease for a smaller place in a brand-new Soquel Avenue building.

That's far less than the \$825 Robinson paid on the lower end of Pacific Avenue.

"They told me, 'I got an ideal place for you,'" said Robinson,

smiling. "I said to myself, 'OK. God's still in the miracle-working business. God will open the door for you.' When I needed a place, God led me to it.

"Now I guess I'm gonna have to stick around," he said. "I didn't mind losing the lease, 'cause every time something happens, it happens for the best. I do love God. I do love him. If he hadn't found me another spot, it was time to move on."

The one drawback to his new success is a tight schedule. He's

concerned that all this business could make it more difficult for him to go fishing.

But he's trying his best to make time, and he's thinking of "easing in" a barber or two into the new store to give him more free time.

"Last weekend up in Stockton I hooked two catfish, 8 and 10 pounds apiece," he said. "I guess God felt bad about me not being able to go fishing."

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