

Earthquakes - Ten yrs. later LOMA PRIETA QUAKE

Quake monument neglected in ceremonies

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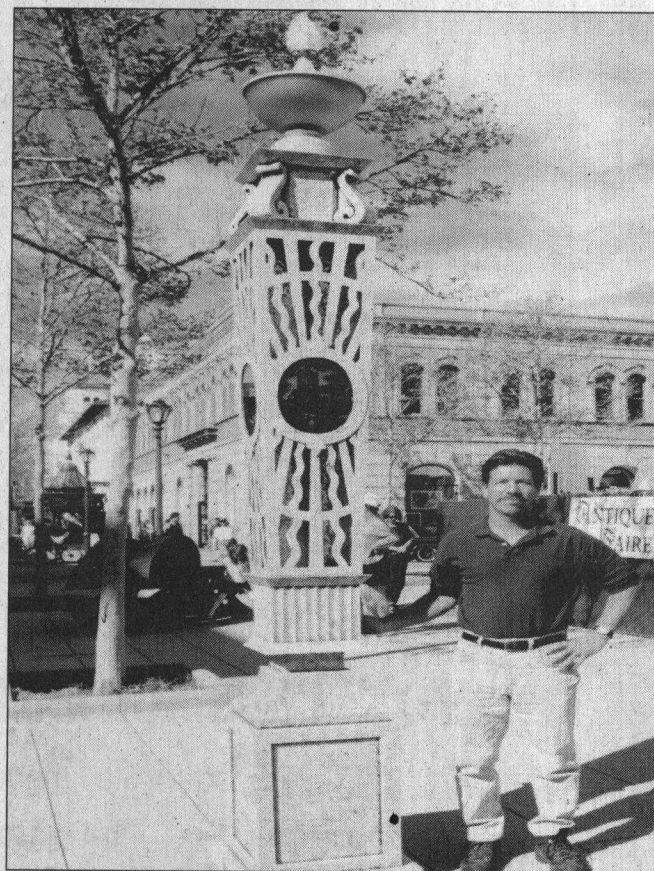
SANTA CRUZ—Thirteen years after the installment of the Loma Prieta earthquake monument located on Pacific Avenue and Cooper Street the 'Eternal Flame Beacon' still shines.

Its missing panels that once featured the faces of people who died in the 1989 natural disaster, leaving a blank canvas for passersby to fill with their own memories of the tragic event. Images of the Hihan and the Odd Fellows buildings still glow at night.

Bob Carpentier was a sheet metal worker with George H. Wilson, Mechanical Inc. when he fabricated the tower that took him hundreds of hours to create. He prepared to drive for three hours from the Sacramento area where he retired to see the monument, but when he heard that no special events were taking place there for the 20th anniversary ceremonies happening downtown this weekend, he decided against it.

"It's not completely presentable in terms of what a monument should be," Carpentier said. "Only two panels are intact out of four."

Ross Gibson, the designer of the monument on Pacific and Cooper, said once his creation was installed it became the property of the city arts program, and if any plans were to revolve around his creation it would be up to them, as would any



CONTRIBUTED

Fabricator Bob Carpentier stands next to the 'Eternal Flame Beacon' Loma Prieta earthquake memorial after it was installed on Pacific Avenue in 1996.

maintenance of the structure.

Each panel costs about \$750 to make, making them difficult to replace, Gibson said. The monument was a \$15,000 project completed in 1996 and funded by the county Arts Commission and community fundraising. Today, maintenance has been put on hold.

"The memorial was

intended to be part of a walking tour downtown, since we were not going to replace the actual landmarks lost we wanted to be able to remember the quality of buildings that were at one time there," Gibson said. "Although I'm disappointed the panels have been broken, especially now that the anniversary has arrived, it is an earthquake

memorial. It doesn't have to be perfect. It helps remind us what was lost."

There are several ceremonies and activities this weekend, including the tolling of the Town Clock at 5:04 p.m. today and the Downtown Gala held afterward, but none include the monument.

Event coordinator Tina Shall said the post office on Front Street and the Rittenhouse Building were chosen as locations for the quake's anniversary ceremonies because there is more space for crowds and are easy to find.

"There is a lot of good symbolism for the earthquake at the post office steps," Shall said. "It was where downtown reopened and from my understanding serves as a reflection of being in the same place 20 years later at the federal building where everyone was coming together."

Despite all of the anniversary ceremonies not including the monument, Carpentier has offered his services to help with repair work for the monument whenever maintenance gets back on track.

"There are repairs that need to be done and I offered to do the sheet metal part of it when everyone is on the same page," Carpentier said. "I was honored to work on a project of such profound importance, and I welcomed the challenge of its elaborate architecture. It exists there for a purpose."