



Highway 1 bridges collapsed across the Struve Slough in Watsonville during the October 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

# Twenty Years Ago ...

*Earthquake - 10 yrs later...*  
By Noel Smith

**I**t was Tuesday, October 17 1989 about 5 p.m. I was at my desk at our condo in Soquel working on my Macintosh SE. Also on the desk was a 13" TV that was tuned into the opening moments of the cross-bay World Series game between the San Francisco Giants and the Oakland Athletics. My wife was upstairs in her artist's studio.

All hell broke loose. First, a medium jolt hit causing that split second hesitation of the universe waiting to see if that was all. It wasn't. A series of shakes that seemed more like a battering ram slamming against the house began, determined to break the universe into little pieces. Everything on the walls began falling. Glasses dishes and cups began flying out of the cupboards adding to the din as they crashed to the floor. The computer and TV were jumping up and down on the desk as the

headed for the edge.

My wife didn't hesitate. She managed to keep from falling as she ran down the stairs and out the door yelling for me to follow. I kept waiting for the world to stop. I noticed that our grandfather clock was starting to fall over. I put my arms around it to hold it up. Then my brain finally got back into gear as I thought, "You're going to look pretty silly when they dig you out of the rubble holding onto this clock." I made it out the door just as the quake shuddered to a halt.

We stood outside with our neighbors. We were all in shock not knowing what the next second might bring. A series of strong aftershocks began to be felt at unpredictable intervals. My senses became so attuned to the feel of the earth moving even the slightest bit that it was about two years before I stopped being aware when trucks or buses were driving by. To this day when there is an earth-

*Aptos Times 10/15/89*

quake, I can tell you whether it was a 3.5 or a 4.0 temblor.

Someone said we needed to turn off the gas. A person who knew where the shutoff valves were located in our complex ran off with a couple of others to get them turned off. Our next-door neighbor needed to go to the bathroom. We assured her that it would be all right, as things seemed to have settled down. She went inside. A couple of minutes later there was another of the seemingly endless series of aftershocks. About ten seconds later she came running out the front door screaming with her slacks still around her ankles.

The sun was low in the west and reflecting off a second story window. When I looked at the sun's reflection, I could see it was in constant motion like a bell that has been struck but is still vibrating long after the sound has stopped.

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## 'UCSC Celebrates Pixar'

**U**C Santa Cruz Celebrates Pixar" — a week of lectures and film screenings featuring guest film and digital media specialists from Pixar Animation Studios and UCSC—will take place October 20-23, in downtown Santa Cruz and on the UCSC campus.

The celebration is in honor of a visit by Ed Catmull—the Academy Award-winning president of Pixar ...

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# Loma Prieta Earthquake 20th Anniversary Commemorations

It's been twenty years since the Loma Prieta earthquake ripped through our homes, cities and lives. We need to remind those outside Santa Cruz County that even though the damage was widespread and particularly horrific in San Francisco and Oakland, the epicenter of the earthquake was just outside the village of Aptos, Santa Cruz County. Several events have been scheduled to commemorate the 20th anniversary.

**Cabrillo College, Aptos  
Schilling Forum on  
the Track of the Quake**

Friday, October 16, 7:00 p.m.

An evening Symposium on the science, history and future of earthquakes in

## Ground Zero was in the Aptos 95003 Zip Code Area

Santa Cruz County. The History Dude will be master of ceremonies for an exciting evening that will include Professor Gary Griggs, Sandy Lydon, former SC County Supervisor Robley Levy and a representative from FutureQuakes.

Adults \$25.00 in advance, \$30.00 at the door; Students \$10.00 Part of the funds will be donated to the Friends of Santa Cruz State Parks.

**Aptos Village Park and  
the Forest of Nisene Marks  
"Dangers in Paradise"**

Saturday, Oct. 17, 10:00 a.m.

"Dangers in Paradise" is a comprehensive disaster-preparedness fair. Featuring music, games, educational programs Free. For more information: [www.dangersinparadise.org](http://www.dangersinparadise.org).

### Treck to the Center

The History Dude, Gary Griggs and other luminaries will lead a hike to the epicenter area where at 5:04 PM there will be a ceremony to honor the victims of the Loma Prieta Earthquake. Free For more information: [www.sandylydon.com](http://www.sandylydon.com). ■

"Loma Prieta" from pg 1

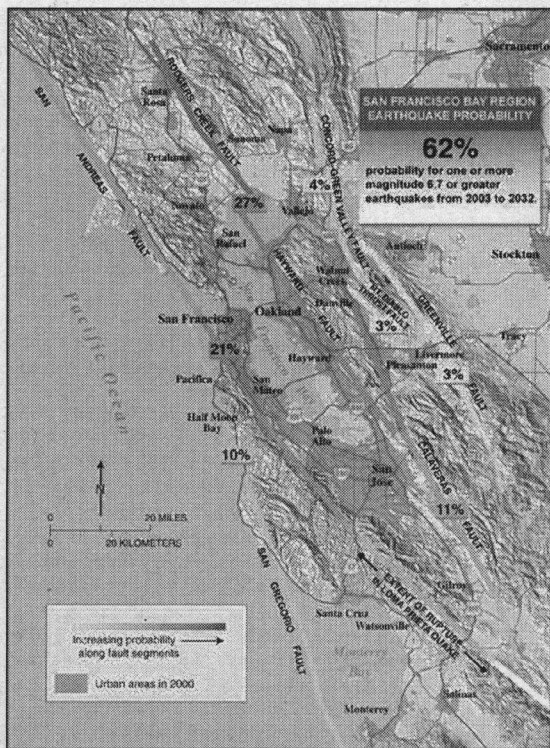
People wanted to know what was going on so they turned on the radios in their cars. I realized that the little TV on my desk could work from the 12 volts of a car's cigarette lighter. I went back inside and found both the computer and TV right on the edge of the desk. The grandfather clock was lying on its side, broken. Books and records were strewn about the living room. The kitchen floor was covered with glass and pottery, much of it in pieces. I went into

our garage which was lined with storage shelves. It looked as if someone had thrown everything onto the floor and then used a giant Mix Master.

Upstairs, all the countertops and tops of the furniture were empty with all that had been on them thrown onto the floor. Every clothes pole in every closet with everything that had been hanging from them lay in a heap. It was an amazing sight.

I got the TV, took it outside, attached it to the 12 volts in our van, opened the side door and turned it on. People brought their lawn chairs and sat watching the images of the damage and confusion. They replayed those first moments in Candlestick Park when the earth began moving. We saw the missing section of the Bay Bridge, the wonder of seeing the Nimitz Freeway destroyed, the fires and damage in the Marina district. But what had happened in Santa Cruz? We had KSCO radio but it was hard to get reliable reports those first few hours and there were no pictures on TV of local damage.

No water, gas was turned off, electricity was out... but the phones (landlines and cell phones) worked. Of course, no one could get through. Miraculously, my son called me from Ft. Stephens Georgia to see how we were and then informed the rest of the family.



**There is a 62% probability that at least one earthquake of magnitude 6.7 or greater will occur on a known or unknown San Francisco Bay region fault before 2032.**

My wife's son and daughter-in-law came over because a major natural gas line ran through their neighborhood in Santa Cruz and they were being encouraged to leave. We stood there wondering what to do next when my wife remembered that she had put a pot roast with carrots and potatoes in our slow cooker oven about noon before the earthquake. We opened the oven and found... a perfectly cooked dinner!

We scrounged plates, dinnerware, and some candles. There we were, the four of us in our dining room with no lights on the evening of October 17, the day of the Loma Prieta Earthquake, having a candle-lit family dinner. ■

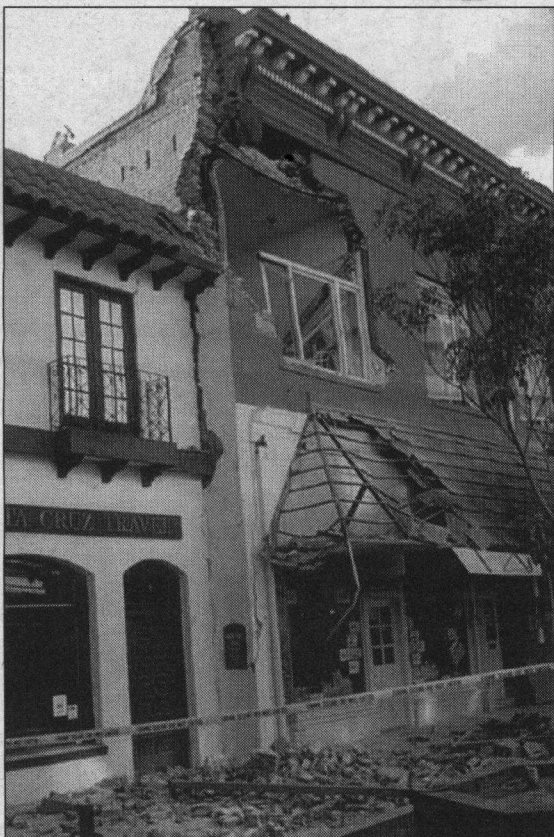


Photo Credit: USGS

**Many businesses in Santa Cruz were destroyed in the Loma Prieta earthquake**