

All quiet at 5:04

Earthquake - 10 yrs

Santa Cruz, Watsonville remember Loma Prieta

By **ROBIN MUSITELLI**
and **CHRISTA MARTIN**
Sentinel staff writers

SANTA CRUZ — They united in solemn remembrance and celebration of the 15 seconds that changed their lives.

A mother whose son was killed. The hero who carried people from crumbled buildings. Officials who presided over the devastation and the rebuilding of cities.

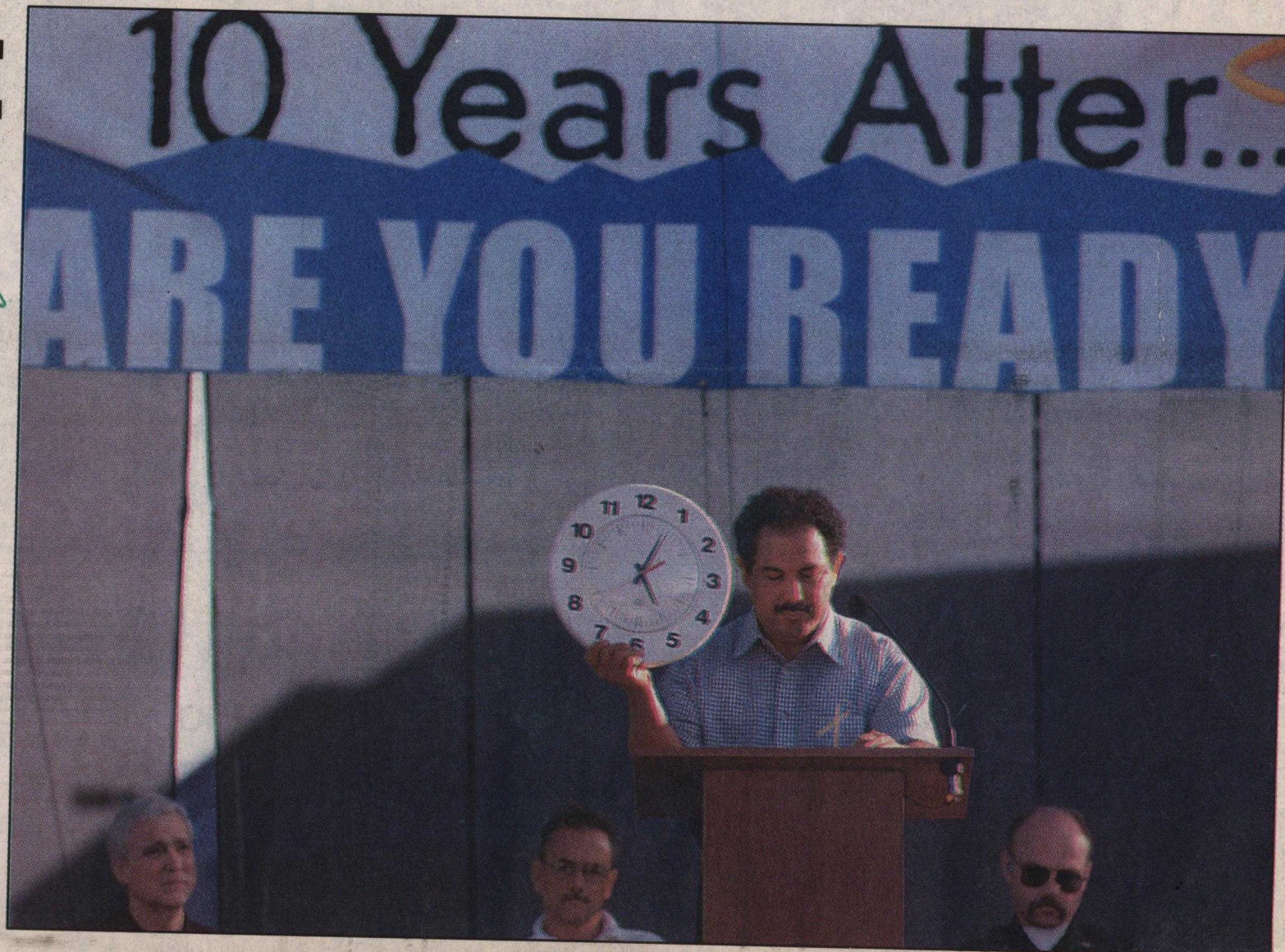
In the words of then-Santa Cruz mayor Mardi Wormhoudt, it was but a sigh in time. It was the sigh of the Loma Prieta earthquake, 10 years ago, at 5:04 p.m. on Oct. 17.

Santa Cruz marked the historical event Sunday afternoon with a mix of tears and laughter.

About 100 people gathered at the McPherson Center for a city-organized remembrance. They wrote their memories and thoughts and then posted them on a cyclone fence "earthquake memory wall." They listened to Warmth, the venerable jazz group that played for years in front of the old Cooper House, a beloved landmark that was demolished after the quake. They looked at photos, shared stories, and held hands.

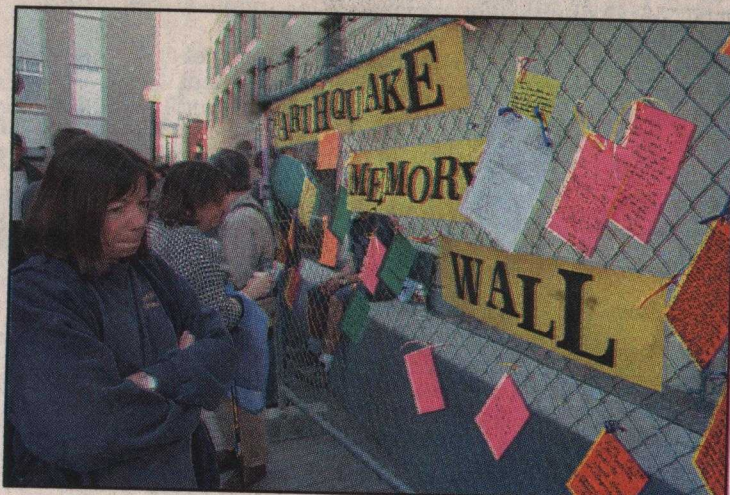
In Watsonville, Mayor Oscar Rios held a clock in his hands, while a crowd of about 50 looked on silently. It was 5:04 p.m. exactly.

A man on the roof of Watsonville Community Hospital,



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

Watsonville Mayor Oscar Rios pauses for a moment of silence at 5:04 p.m. Sunday during a ceremony at Watsonville Community Hospital, 10 years — to the minute — after the Loma Prieta quake shook the county to its core.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Natalie Goff of Santa Cruz reads a message to victims at Sunday's ceremony.

Former Ford's employees reunite on anniversary

By **APRIL JOHNSON**
Sentinel staff writer

APTOS

"YOU DREAM ABOUT it for a long time afterwards ... all that dust and the sound of things breaking..."

Alice Crawford's words seemed to come from deep inside of her as she remembered the destruction at Ford's department store during the 1989 Loma Prieta earthquake.

Crawford and about 200 other former Ford's employees gathered Sunday at Aptos Village Park to re-

member the store and reflect on the event that set into motion the eventual demise of California's oldest department store.

On that day, the ceiling at the Cathcart Street and Pacific Avenue store collapsed, killing customer Kay Trieman. Crawford's best friend, Edith Dominguez, nearly lost her leg to a pile of bricks. The damage to the building was so severe it had to be razed.

For many employees, the day of the earthquake was the last time

Please see **FORD'S** — BACK PAGE

5:04

Continued from Page A1

where the gathering took place, played a song on his bagpipe.

"How many get chicken when we feel something?" Rios asked. "Will it ever go away?"

He recounted the Watsonville earthquake story, telling of the parks and plaza full of campers and of the 800 homes that were knocked from their foundations.

"It is unfortunate that this is the kind of tragedy that pulls us together," Rios said.

Jim Williams attended the Santa Cruz commemoration "for completion."

A decade ago, Williams was the man who carried a badly injured Edith Dominguez from the rubble of Ford's department store. Dominguez has since died; Williams has moved to Marin.

He doesn't think he's a hero. "Your shoulders get moving and you want to help people," Williams said. "It's peaceful. You're on automatic."

Ten years ago, Shawn McCormick and Robin Ortiz were

'I tried all day long not to cry. I just was thinking how much I miss him.'

— Terri Turner, whose brother, Shawn McCormick, died in the quake

killed when the Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Co. building collapsed. Flowers were left for Ortiz on the cyclone fence that surrounds the still-vacant hole where the building was.

McCormick's mother and family gathered at the McPherson center. His sister, Terri Turner, dabbed at tears Sunday as her brother was remembered.

"I tried all day long not to cry," she said. "I just was thinking how much I miss him."

The devastation of the earthquake was recalled, but so were the cherished memories of neighbors, strangers and families coming together, helping each other clean up shattered homes and of the outpouring of compassion from the rest of the world.

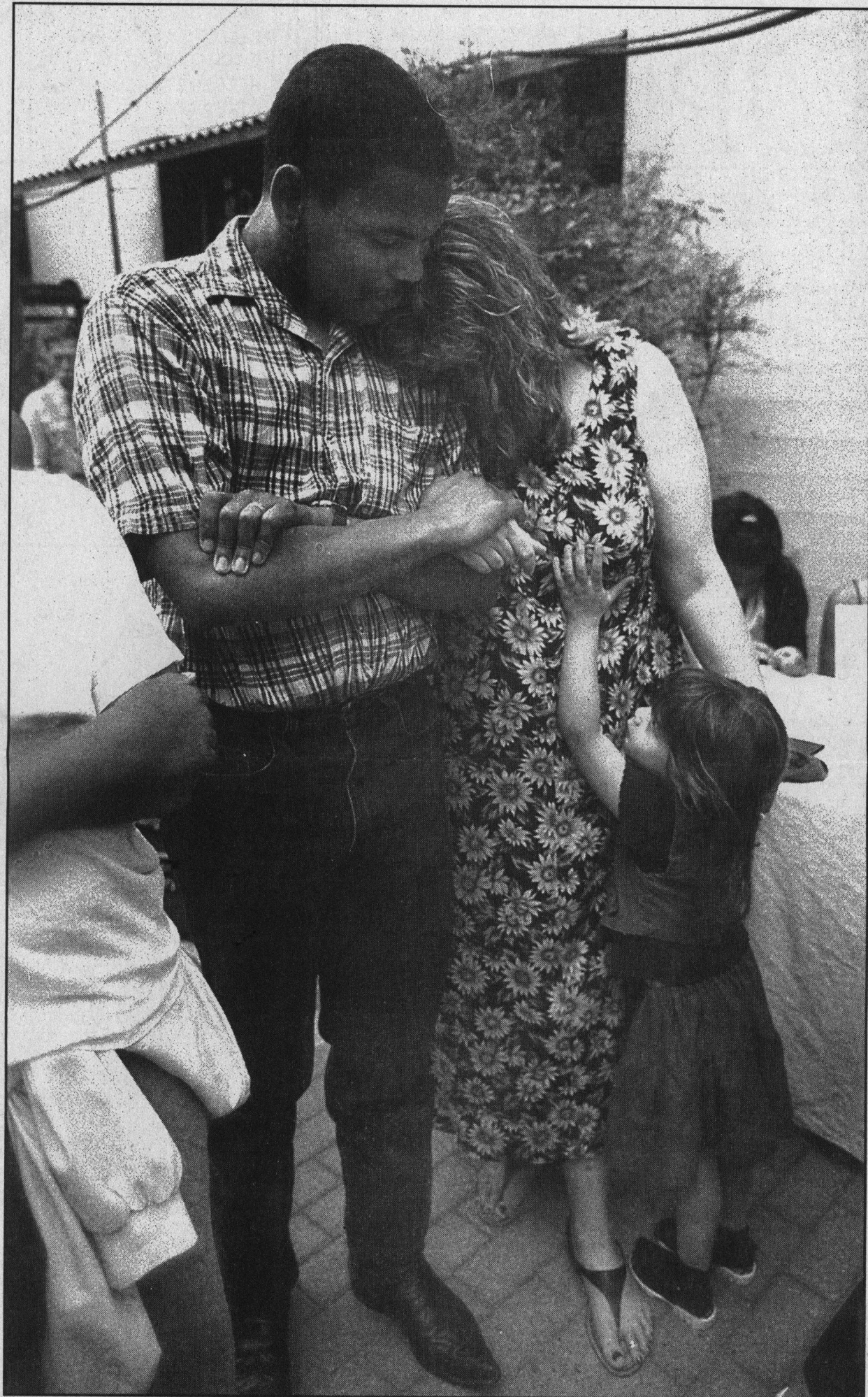
Larry Gilliam of the Red Cross recalled Halloween parties and Thanksgiving dinners held in the 10 shelters that the Red Cross operated in the months after the quake.

"In serving others we found that we healed ourselves," Gilliam said.

In Watsonville, the emphasis was on disaster preparedness. About 500 people attended Watsonville Community Hospital's 'Ten Years After ... Are You Ready?' Sunday afternoon.

Heroes were recognized, memories were discussed and preparedness was in the air.

Representatives from the Watsonville Fire Department, American Red Cross and the Alcohol



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Terri Turner, sister of Shawn McCormick, who was killed in the Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Co. during the earthquake, is comforted by her husband Nicholas Turner and daughter Briona Sunday during the moment of silence in Santa Cruz.

Drug and Treatment Center provided emergency and general information.

The \$15,000 investment was funded by the hospital, McMinn said.

The Senior Circle — a club for

those over 70 years of age — shared information about the Companion Service. It is a personal emergency response system that allows seniors to contact medical professionals when a disaster or emergency strikes.

Rios challenged the audience to be prepared if another big one comes.

"Earthquakes are going to happen as long as we live here," Rios said. "How well prepared are we?"

Ford's

Continued from Page A1

the would ever set foot in a Ford's store in Watsonville, Santa Cruz or Salinas. Following the quake, all three stores were condemned along with the Ford's data processing center in Watsonville.

The day the wrecking crews demolished the remains of the Watsonville store, Oma Munger watched and felt as though she was losing a member of her family.

"I couldn't go back to the spot where the store had been for a long time," said the 80-year-old former domestics worker with tears in her eyes. "It was my home away from home," she said.

A sign above the registration table said it all, "Welcome Ford's Family."

"It is because of what we have all lived through together. We really are a family," Gloria Garner said, her eyes also moist.

"That is just the way it is."

Carol Romero organized the Ford's reunion because she said she felt like it was something she needed to do.

"I don't know why the store was so important to all of us but it was," said Romero.

"Maybe because we were there when the company was building itself up and we were there when the buildings literally came down," said Romero.

Hugs and smiles were in abundance at the park as old friends and co-workers greeted each other, some for the first time since the closure of the rebuilt Watsonville store in 1994.

The Santa Cruz store was never rebuilt despite years of plans. The site remained vacant until 1998 when construction finally began on what is now the University Town Center.

Overall, Ford's never recovered from the earthquake. One year after rebuilding the Watsonville store, the chain went out of business, closing all of its remaining stores. In Watsonville, a Gottschalks department store moved into the building.

Munger and her friend Mozelle Winter both went to the Gottschalks on Sunday to try to find something of the old store in the new one.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Shirley Swenson greets Mozelle Winters in the foreground as Nevenk Radich embraces Oma Munger at the Ford's reunion Sunday.

"I found where my department was," said Munger. "But it wasn't the same."

Winter, who worked in the lingerie department, shook her head sadly.

"I couldn't even find my department," she said.

Romero commented that finding all of the former employees for the reunion

had not been easy since a lot of them had moved out of the area in the last decade.

"Couldn't you have just gone to the (Ford's) office and gotten a list," asked Munger before she caught herself.

"Oh yeah, we haven't had an office in ten years," she laughed.