

Brothel owner pleads guilty

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Massage parlor
said to serve
upscale clients

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SANTA CRUZ — The owner of a now-closed Soquel massage parlor was sentenced Thursday to serve 25 days in jail, three years probation and 100 hours of community service for maintaining a house of prostitution.

Valerie Knight, 49, owned Soquel Lomee, which was shut down after a raid by deputies Jan. 10.

Municipal Court Judge Tom Kelly handed down the sentence after Knight's attorney, Mitchell Page, pleaded guilty to the misdemeanor charge on her behalf. The judge said Knight could serve her jail term in a work-release program.

He also banned Knight from operating any massage parlor business.

Bill Grace, a 74-year-old conservative **Knight** political activist who co-owned the property with Knight — but not the business — faces the same charge of maintaining a house of prostitution. He has pleaded innocent. His pre-trial hearing will be in three weeks.



Authorities say the Swedish massage parlor at 2541 S. Rodeo Gulch Road catered to upscale clientele.

Detectives began to monitor the activities in the nondescript cinder-block building last fall after a deputy spotted six men come and go in half-hour increments. The same deputy had investigated the same location for prostitution in 1987. Knight and Grace were warned by authorities back then to stop using the business — then called Aquarius — as a brothel.

The latest investigation included 20 hours of surveillance and interviews with confidential informants and regular patrons. During the January raid, deputies cited 15 men, including a retiring San Jose police officer, a nurse, a firefighter, a lawyer and a pharmacist, for soliciting prostitution.

The massage parlor has since been closed, and the property has been sold to a software business.