

*'This guy's screaming, 'I'm gonna die,'  
and he had his hands blow off.'*

# Bomb maims lawyer



Crime + Criminals 1990-1999

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## Package explodes in office on Eastside

By ROBERT GAMMON  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — A well-known Santa Cruz divorce lawyer had one hand blown off and another severely maimed Monday when a Christmas package exploded in his Seabright office, authorities said.

Attorney Jack Jacobson had picked up the green paper-wrapped package from his front stoop and had taken it into his second-floor office on Soquel Drive when the device detonated in his hands, said Chief Deputy District Attorney Dave Genochio.

The packaged explosive, probably a pipe bomb, was the first in at least 25 years in Santa Cruz, said police Lt. Joe Haebe.

The bomb must have been delivered by hand and put on Jacobson's doorstep at 1134-B Soquel Drive, because the Postal Service and other delivery services do not send packages wrapped just in gift paper, authorities noted.

As Jacobson was writhing in pain on the deck in front of his office, which he has occupied since 1990, he mumbled a few names, possibly of the person behind the package bomb, Haebe said.

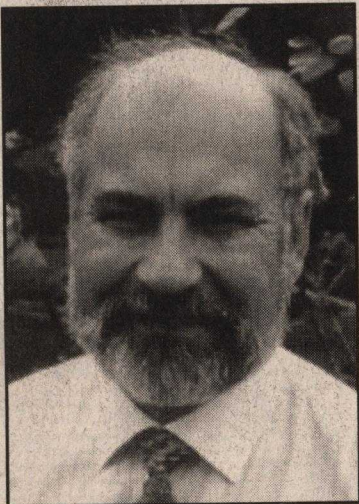
Authorities said they have no specific suspects in the case. But a check of Santa Cruz County court records revealed that at least eight sealed search warrants had been issued Monday.

Sealed search warrants are relatively uncommon in Santa Cruz County, but the District Attorney's Office would not confirm that the warrants were related to the bombing.

A deliveryman who heard the blast when he was in the downstairs restaurant, The Crepe Place, shortly before 11 a.m. said he saw Jacobson stagger from his office.

"I never saw anything like that in my life," said Joe Cunha, 26, a driver for Air Unlimited. "This guy's screaming, 'I'm gonna die,' and he had his hands blow off."

Somehow after the explosion, Jacobson, bleeding profusely, managed to get out of his office and was pacing on the deck when an off-duty Santa Cruz firefighter



Jack Jacobson was born in Poland and his parents escaped the Holocaust. He is part of a commune-style community, known as the Agricultural Land Conservancy, and loves classic cars.

## Friends, colleagues shocked by attack

Bomb victim described as 'a fun guy to know'

By BOB LINNEMAN  
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — News of the explosion that injured attorney Jack Jacobson spread quickly through legal circles Monday.

Colleagues, friends and associates were shocked that the 50-year-old family law attorney was targeted by what authorities believe was a pipe bomb. Such an attack is believed to be unprecedented in Santa Cruz County.

While many were stunned, colleagues acknowledged an inherent danger in a divorce lawyer's profession, where emotions often run high.

"Every lawyer has enemies," said a Jacobson friend and colleague who asked not to be identified.

Around the area, Jacobson is active in non-profit organizations. He's been on the board of directors of Future Families Inc., an Aptos organization that helps abused children, and Food and Nutrition Services for many years. That organization funds such programs as Meals on Wheels, Adelante and Lifeline, among others.

"He's an incredibly dedicated member of the board," said Capitola Mayor Bob Garcia, who serves on the Food and Nutrition board with Jacobson. "He was part of it before I joined in 1982. He's been a real asset. He's always been ready to do whatever is needed to help people. As long as he's been in Santa Cruz, he's

At top, a bomb squad member clad in protective gear approaches the entrance to the office where a lawyer was maimed in Monday's bomb attack. Above, law-enforcement authorities confer on the street outside the blast site.

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Shmuel Thaler/  
Sentinel photos



# Bomb

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came to his rescue and told him to lie down, Haebe said.

The force of the blast gutted his office and blew out a window. Blood everywhere, Jacobson moaned in agony on the deck as paramedics bandaged his wounds and carried him down the stairs to the waiting ambulance.

The attorney's cries of pain could be heard 50 feet away.

Jacobson, who told police that he is 50 years old, also received numerous shrapnel wounds to his abdomen, chest and face. He was taken by helicopter to Stanford Medical Center for surgery.

His wounds — his right hand was gone, along with much of his left — were not believed to be life-threatening, Haebe said.

Jacobson was alone at the time of the explosion and no one else was injured.

Within 30 minutes of the blast, police had cordoned off Soquel Avenue between Seabright Avenue and Cayuga Street. Then detectives began processing the crime scene until they realized that Jacobson

had other gift packages in his office.

"We saw blood everywhere and then we saw the packages and got out until the bomb guys could come in and check the place," Santa Cruz police Detective Rick Martinez said.

Investigators immediately pulled back and waited for the Santa Cruz County Sheriff's Department Bomb Squad, and more than eight businesses in the area were closed during the investigation. From about 1:15 p.m. to about 1:35 p.m., two bomb specialists, dressed in protective gear, scoured Jacobson's office for more explosives.

They found none and then cleared the area for the FBI and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, which became the lead agency in the case.

The crime scene also caused severe traffic problems in the area, backing up traffic on nearby streets for blocks.

The bombing prompted the District Attorney's Office to begin checking all packages, especially Christmas presents, at the Ocean Street county building.

Friends and colleagues of Jacobson were astounded at what happened to Jacobson, who has been practicing law in Santa Cruz for more than 20 years. They described Jacobson as a likable man who had no enemies in personal life.

"He's not the kind of guy who would have enemies — except through his business," said Gary Bascou, a good friend who shares property with Jacobson on Happy Valley Road.

Hermia Kaplan, another attorney who used to have an office across from Jacobson's former office on Pacific Avenue, said he was sure that the bombing must have been the result of one of Jacobson's cases.

"I'm outraged that something like this could have happened," she said.

David Thiermann, a friend of Jacobson's who walked by after the explosion said that ironically he recently had a conversation with Jacobson that being a lawyer must be a "dangerous job."

Jacobson replied that sometimes it is, Thiermann said.

## Jacobson

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been devoted to helping people out."

Added Celia Organista of Adelante: "He's been a hard worker, someone we could count on," she said.

Organista was shocked to learn of the bombing.

"It reminds me there is cruelty in the world," she said. "But it's always far away and people you don't know. It doesn't usually impact your little world. In reality, lunatics can impact your world, too."

Jacobson was born in Poland and his parents escaped the Holocaust during World War II, said Gary Bascou, a neighbor and longtime friend. Jacobson grew up in San Diego, earning his law degree

at the University of San Diego.

Jacobson has been married twice and has two teen-age sons in the area and another son in the Sacramento area, Bascou said.

He's known for his love of classic cars — he drives a 1948 Chevrolet convertible, and he is part of a commune-style planned community, known as the Agricultural Land Conservancy, which surrounds Branciforte Creek.

In addition, Jacobson, who enjoys sailing, set up the Santa Cruz Community Legal Clinic in the 1970s to help low-income families with basic legal needs.

As an attorney, Jacobson is said to be intense and a strong advocate for his clients. He did mostly divorce cases but did handle some personal injury and child custody cases, according to colleagues.

"He's kind of intense, kind of a neat guy," said one colleague, who also wished to remain anonymous. "He's a fun guy to know."

Added an old friend from junior high school, who re-connected with Jacobson seven years ago:

"When I was going through my divorce, I didn't have much money, and he did a really good job for me," said Marshall Dvorson, a motor route carrier for the Sentinel who went to school with Jacobson. "He was a super nice guy in junior high. ... Everybody liked him."

In his advertisement in the Yellow Pages, Jacobson lists an award from the Good Times weekly newspaper, noting he was voted best local attorney in 1989.

*Sentinel staff writer Robert Gammon contributed to this report.*