

Groundbreaking, Santa Cruz style UCSC Growth

Ritual mourns the passing of UCSC hillside

By TOM LONG
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — It was a UCSC kind of afternoon.

The sun was still shining as the fog began to roll in off the bay, and more than 50 people were standing in a circle, holding hands and performing a "ritual of rebirth" to apologize to a hill for a building about to be forced upon it.

A poem had already been recited by a student apologizing to all the skunks, opossums, cows, deer and sunbathers who were destined to be inconvenienced by the new UC Santa Cruz Student Center.

A speech had already been made in praise of the center's planned Third World Lounge, where "people of color" will be able to "network."

All that was left was the ritual intended to cap off the official groundbreaking ceremony.

A man with a video camera stood inside the circle, taping it for posterity. Students, professors, alumni, bureaucrats and visitors joined hands. A hole had been dug in the center of the circle.

Rick Zinman, a graduate student involved in the planning of the student center, had told those gathered that the ritual would reflect "the sense of human and ecological responsibility we feel for this ground."

"The theme here is ambivalence," Zinman said. "We understand that destruction and creation are two sides of the same coin."

Being destroyed is perhaps the last five-wow! view of Monterey Bay from the UCSC campus. The student center will sit smack dab atop what is called The Great Meadow, a formerly untouched area across from the school's Performing Arts complex.

Speaking through a microphone, Allucquere Stone, a graduate student in History of Consciousness, told the group that standing in a circle at such events was a tra-

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Photos by Bill Lovejoy

Above, Kyle Arndt and Tim Reed join hands with Chancellor Stevens to get their collective mojo working; at left, Joscelyn Herzberg and Allucquere Stone plant the "seeds of renewal."



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— Rick Zinman, graduate student

Ritual/ UCSC hillside 'reborn'

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dion that went back thousands of years.

She asked everyone to think of himself as "being here... breathing... breathing our own energy..."

She suggested everyone breathe that energy "into the center of our bodies... down to our arms, forming a chain."

Once all were linked together with their own energy, Stone asked participants to ask themselves, "Why have I come? Why have you come? What did you bring with you?"

"See that thing clearly," Stone suggested. "See before you that ending, that sorrow, that pain."

Then she suggested everybody bury all negative thoughts in the ground that was being ritually re-

birthed.

Chancellor Robert Stevens, red tie loosened and dangling, didn't have the look of a man carrying too many negative thoughts. Neither did some others. So Stone helped out by bringing up images of heretics, gays, scholars and scientists who have burned for their ideas.

Those were suggestions bound to work for an academic crowd.

"Let's put our thoughts into the earth and the center of the circle," Stone said next.

Then Stone and an aide planted a tree in the middle of the circle, while a man and a woman in the circle thumped slowly on hand-held drums.

Things suddenly took an upbeat turn. Stone talked of "lovers we have yet to meet, careers we have yet to start," and everybody in the circle received a handful of seed.

"We want these seeds to bring our hopes up with them," Stone said. So everybody waited for Stone's cue and then tossed the seeds onto the ground inside the circle.

The breaking of the ground had been lamented; the new building had been welcomed. All was right with the universe, the circle was broken and hugs were exchanged.

A few hundred yards from the circle, ground had already been plowed and leveled. Two bulldozers sat silently, as if lying in wait.

But it will probably be a while before they get around to leveling the ground where all the bad energy was buried and where the seeds of renewal were planted.

That's because the student center is being built a few hundred yards from the consecrated circle.

Oh, well. Close enough.