

CCF Gays RP 3/8/91 p-9

# Noren rejects gay complaints

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Santa Cruz County Sheriff Al Noren is sticking by his guns in the latest controversy between his department and gay/lesbian community in Santa Cruz.

The controversy erupted Wednesday when the San Jose Mercury published excerpts from an inter-office memo from Noren to County Supervisor Gary Patton. The memo, written by Noren in response to a citizen complaint forwarded by Patton to Noren, referred to gay activists as "vicious and devious."

The complainant, according to Patton, said the deputy stopped him because he was gay.

Noren's response basically concluded that the deputy was acting reasonably when he stopped a man walking through a deserted

parking lot at midnight in the Commercial Way area of Live Oak, near Dominican Santa Cruz Hospital.

The deputy, Noren said, questioned the man as to why he was there, ran a warrant check and then released him.

Noren's memo incited a storm of protest from gays and lesbians, who have been upset with the Sheriff's Office ever since the department conducted a series of raids last September at the Vista Point rest stop on Highway 1 between Aptos and Watsonville. Those raids resulted in the arrests of several men at the rest stop.

Noren's latest comments fueled the controversy.

Former Santa Cruz City Councilman John Laird, now director of the Santa Cruz AIDS Project, said this morning that he wants to see

if the gay community can meet with the department's designated liaison officer with the gay community — Chief Deputy Brad Arbsland. "This is a good time to see if it (the liaison process) will work," Laird said.

Noren said that he's not backing down.

"I called them the way I see them," Noren said. "To me, it is a non-issue issue."

Patton yesterday said he's urged Noren to institute "sensitivity training" within the department.

Noren said that he's not planning any changes in the department's training programs.

"The whole department just went through sensitivity training in the latter part of last year," Noren said.