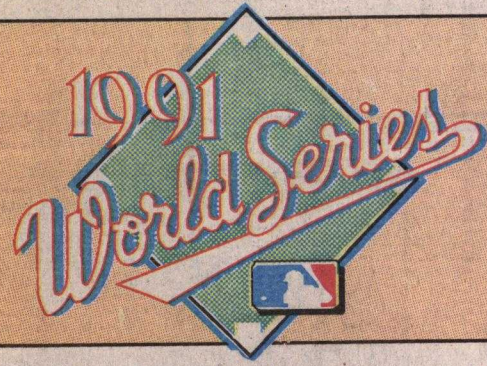


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John Larry Granger leads Santa Cruz Symphony into its 34th season

Bay Living Spotlight



Twins face Braves in Series

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## Earthquake - Watsonville Rebuilding Leaving the tears behind

### Watsonville festivities mark quake

By KEITH MURAOKA  
Sentinel staff writer

WATSONVILLE — Mourners at funerals in New Orleans often strut away from the grave in a dance called the Second Line, the intent being to bury grief with the dead.

Well, there was little mourning Thursday afternoon in downtown Watsonville as thousands of revelers appeared to put the earthquake of 1989 to rest.

The second anniversary of the 7.1 temblor was met with Second Line-like giddiness in Watsonville during the afternoon-long celebration, which featured a continuous parade through the streets to new and soon-to-open buildings. Billed "Reflections and Futures," the event showcased how far Watsonville has come since the earthquake.

No fewer than six dedication ceremonies were conducted, including a prayer gathering in Watsonville Town Plaza at 5:04 p.m. — the exact time of the 1989 earthquake — and the reopening of Ford's department store, which was heavily damaged in the quake.



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Watsonville's Main Street was packed as people celebrated the town's rebuilding and the reopening of Ford's.

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# Festivities

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Main Street was packed wall-to-wall with humanity as anxious shoppers awaited Ford's reopening. At one point during speeches, the crowd began chanting, "Open, open, open." Cheers, smiles and more than a few lumps in throats were raised when the doors were finally thrown open at 5:33 p.m. and thousands of rose petals were tossed from the store's second-story roof to the crowd below.

Despite the massive crowd, Watsonville Police Sgt. Chuck Carter reported no problems. He described the crowd as "nice and mellow."

Among those in the crowd were relatives of Elida Ledesma Ortega, the only person to die in Watsonville during the quake when bricks from a bakery fell on her.

Ortega's mother, Anita Ledesma, choked back tears and said, "I'm proud that people are remembering those who died."

Johnny Parra, one of Ortega's four children, said his mother's death "turned my life around."

"When my mother died I was a drug addict and an alcoholic," Parra added. "I turned myself around. Her death made me realize just how precious life is."

Larry Rusanowski of Santa Cruz made the trek southward to take in the event. "I think they got it all over Santa Cruz," Rusanowski said. "Watsonville really went to work right after the earthquake and put rebuilding first."

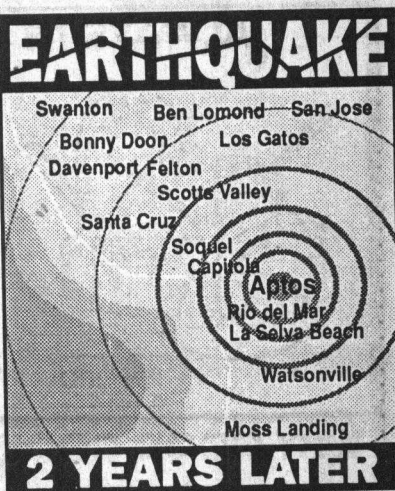
Watsonville Mayor Todd McFarren, who participated in many of the day's dedications, said, "I'm just really happy. Not too many people thought we would be this far along (in our rebuilding efforts)."

According to McFarren, work has either been started or is completed on 49 of the 56 buildings downtown that were destroyed or damaged. Also, 90 percent of the 800 homes that were damaged have been repaired.

Vice Mayor Oscar Rios said of the rebuilding, "This is concrete proof that Watsonville is back. For us to get where we are in such a short period merits the efforts of the whole city."

To be sure, Watsonville put its best foot forward for the media horde that covered the event. Besides media from throughout Monterey and the San Francisco bay areas, crews from CNN, USA Today and The Associated Press attended.

The continuous parade was led by 12-year Watsonville Councilwoman Betty Murphy, who served as grand marshal. Murphy was mayor at the time of the earthquake. An all-city band, which included musicians from all of Watsonville's junior highs, high schools and the community-based Watsonville Band, provided music. Other parade participants included representatives from the American Red Cross, PG&E, Pacific Bell, Visiting Nurse Association, Salud Para La Gente community health



clinic, the California Conservation Corps, California Department of Forestry and the Second Harvest Food Bank.

The parade paused at many of the day's events, which started at 2:15 p.m.

- Watsonville's almost-complete 22,000-square-foot post office across from City Hall on Main Street was dedicated. Assistant Postmaster General Karen Uemoto from Washington, D.C., said the new post office will be put in service in two weeks.

- A 7-foot-high brick earthquake monument at City Hall was unveiled by members of Agri-Culture, a Watsonville non-profit group that promotes the local agricultural industry.

Tot Tatarsky, one of the fountain's designers, explained that the tiled scenes depict buildings that were lost in the earthquake, as well as the rebuilding efforts afterward.

- The under-construction Herrera building and the newly-remodeled Fox Theatre were honored as symbols of Watsonville's recovery. Raymond Herrera drew laughter when he explained that leases were still available for the three retail stores on the ground floor, while six residential units will be upstairs.

- Gold-painted shovels were used at ground-breaking ceremonies for Watsonville's \$3.8-million, 208-space, three-story parking garage at West Beach and Rodriguez streets. The first multistory parking garage in the city will also include 3,700 square feet of commercial space on the ground floor. It is expected to be complete in September 1992.

- El Pajaro Community Development Corp., at the former site of the Odd Fellows Building at Union and East Beach streets, was honored for its plans to build a small-business incubator to help people start their own shops and restaurants.

- The Rev. Mike Miller of St. Patrick's Catholic Church, which remains fenced off awaiting a \$2.5 million rebuilding project, led ecumenical ceremonies at the Watsonville Town Plaza. Many in the crowd held hands and sang "Amazing Grace" as bells tolled at 5:04 p.m.