

SC mayor's advertising debut riles some wharf restaurateurs

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By JOAN RAYMOND

Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — Socialist Mayor Michael Rotkin is lending his image to a capitalist venture.

Rotkin — who built a political career on being the city's first socialist mayor in 1981 — was photographed for one of the most expensive restaurants in town. The ad, for which Rotkin wasn't paid, is scheduled to run in The Sentinel a week from today.

That's Rotkin — the one with the professorial beard and toothy grin, modeling in the for the Sea Cloud Restaurant and Social Club, a Municipal Wharf establishment.

He's lifting up his sunglasses, lest anyone not recognize the mayor under those cool shades.

The Sea Cloud is the restaurant with the gourmet prices that has hosted occasional banquets for the mayor, city council and city staff members at taxpayers' expense.

Taxpayers have paid \$29 a person for the mayor and city officials to wine and dine at the Sea Cloud during recess from council meetings at City Hall. The dinners, accompanied by glasses of Chardonnay, led two city residents to tag Rotkin with the label "Chardonnay Socialist."

A Sentinel article in August about the dinners got the wheels turning inside the brain of Larry April, an advertising agent from Advertising

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Mayor

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Concepts and Copy, who handles the Sea Cloud account jointly with the Mya Kramer Design agency.

"We started joking about doing an ad with all the council members," recalled April. In the end, Rotkin was selected.

Not one to shy from publicity, Rotkin didn't hesitate about appearing before the camera's lens on the restaurant's behalf, said restaurant owner Lou Caviglia, a longtime acquaintance of Rotkin's.

"He was exuberant about doing it," Caviglia commented.

Not so excited about the prospect was Councilwoman Mardi Wormhoudt, he said.

"You should have seen the look on her face when I asked her if she wanted to do one."

Rotkin dishes out some serious political rhetoric at council meetings, but he's delved into some zany ventures from time to time.

He once appeared with a guitar on the cover of Good Times newspaper and wrote a favorable review for a rock band called Thin Ice.

When asked why he modeled on Sea Cloud's behalf, Rotkin said simply, "Why not? It's a good restaurant."

After some hesitation, he cooked up a couple of puns: "I thought it would provide food for thought. Where's the beef?"

"The beef" can be found at a restaurant directly downstairs from the Sea Cloud, called the Hungry Pelican. It can also be found at another wharf establishment called Malio's.

Hungry Pelican co-owner Dan Robinson said he "certainly" objects to the Rotkin ad "unless he plans on quitting his job as mayor."

"It doesn't seem that the mayor of a town should be doing that sort of thing — appearing in an ad for one restaurant."

Robinson said he would like it if the council would select his restaurant for a taxpayer-supported dinner. "They should spread the wealth," he said.

Malio's manager, Tom Bosch, said he is "surprised" by the mayor appearing in the Sea Cloud ad.

"I guess it's OK, but it might be showing a little favoritism," he said.

Bosch said he hasn't noticed Rotkin in Malio's. "I haven't spoken with the mayor. I haven't seen hide nor hair of him."

But Bob "Big Boy" Stagnaro, operator of Gilda's Coffee Shop on the wharf, had no beef.

"It doesn't bother me. Rotkin comes in and patronizes our establishment. I'm sure he would be willing to do it for us too. I've never asked him. Most of what we do is

family. But I'm sure he would," said Stagnaro.

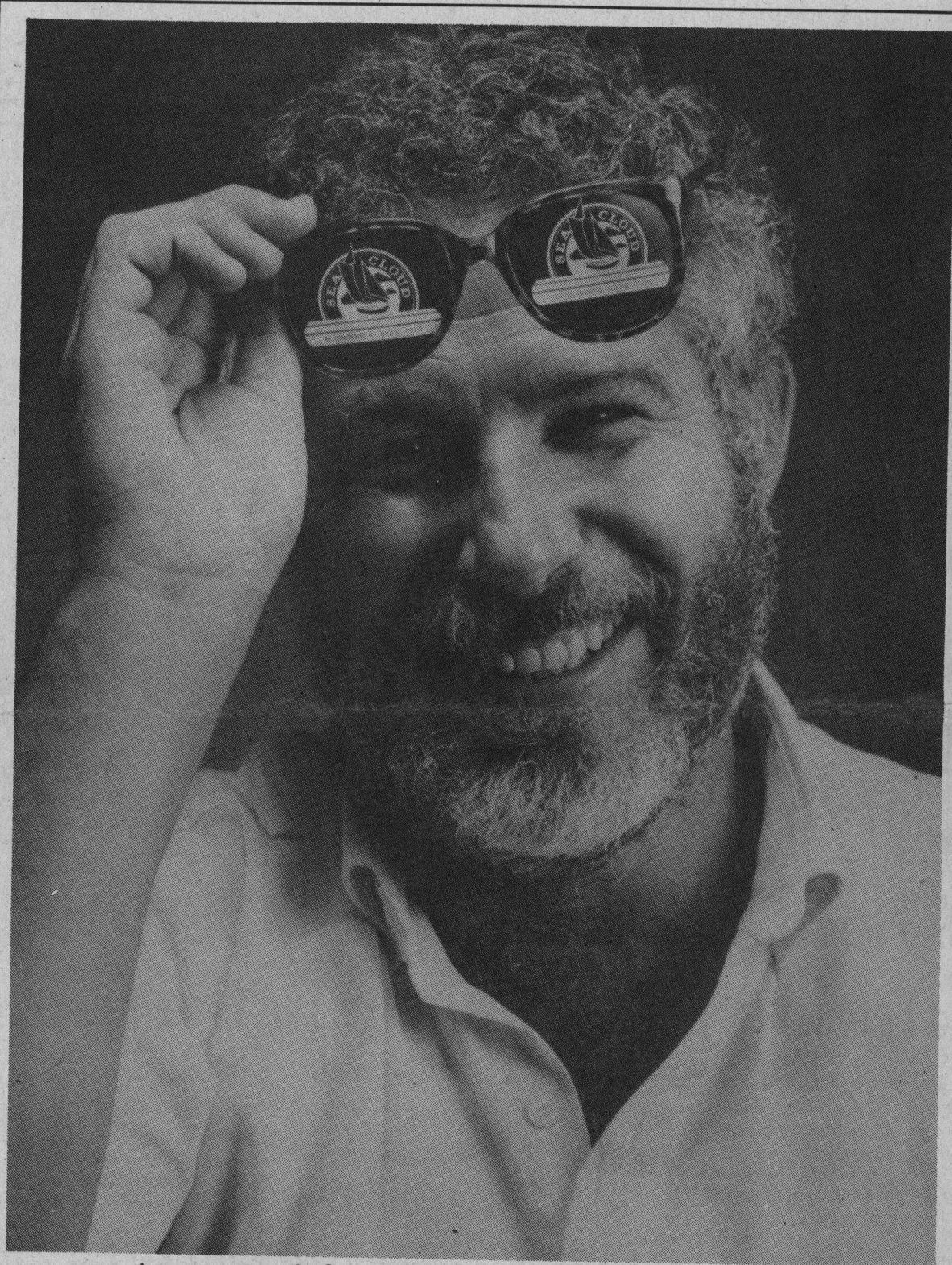
Councilman John Laird said Rotkin's appearance in the ad is consistent with the mayor's sense of humor.

But, Laird said if he had been

asked to appear in the advertisement, he would have been "very careful. I'd think twice. I'd wait and see what the terms were." Laird said he has never appeared in an advertisement.

Noting Councilman Arnold Levine

had once appeared in an ad for a Capitola restaurant, Laird said, "At least Rotkin's appearing in an ad for a restaurant that pays sales tax to the city." The city council is also the landlord for the Sea Cloud and all other wharf businesses.



A meal is like a work of art. It deserves a great frame.



Sea Cloud Restaurant & Social Club, On the Wharf in Santa Cruz, 458-9393

This advertisement has some wharf restaurateurs upset.