

SANTA CRUZ SENTINAL
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County Crime Decreases

Crime in the unincorporated areas of the county dropped to its lowest level in seven years last year, Sheriff Al Noren announced today.

In a year that saw 400 people arrested for a sit-in at UCSC, a man confess to an 11-year-old murder and a hostage incident in Bonny Doon, the crime rate dropped by a total of 8.6 percent.

Rape, burglary, and larceny dropped in the county area during 1977. But assaults and robberies increased, according to Noren's statistics.

The number of murders in 1977 remained unchanged.

A look at the statistics prepared by the Sheriff's Department showed there were six murders in the county, 35 rapes and 70 robberies during 1977.

Assaults, which totaled 335, showed an increase of 69 percent over 1976. That was the largest category for increase in the yearly report of crime, according to statistics.

Burglaries in the county dropped by 8.8 percent, said Noren.

And, more than \$4 million worth of illegal drugs were confiscated by narcotics officers.

The year saw the arrest of 400 UCSC students who were protesting university investments in South Africa, the discovery of four Bonny Doon residents with 2,000 pounds of marijuana, and a Chicago man who confessed to the murder of a college coed 11 years after he body was found in the Santa Cruz Mountains.

One man was shot by a Santa Clara County narcotics officer during a drug raid in the mountains and a Seacliff man escaped from jail and killed his wife and three children in San Jose before he was found hiding in the Aptos hills.

Some 446 incidents of violent crime occurred in the county last year. Personal crime totaled 3,470 incidents.

The total number of reported crimes was 3,916 in 1977 as compared to 4,284 in 1976.

Noren said today he was "happy to report that the Sheriff's Office has made great strides in providing better and more professional service to the citizens of Santa Cruz County."