

# UP FRONT

## Five Years Later . . .

### Santa Cruz is still recovering from the earthquake

*Earthquake 1989 - City of Santa Cruz*

**A**CCORDING TO BUDDHIST philosophy, nothing in life is more constant than change, and nowhere is that adage truer than in downtown Santa Cruz. Anyone who happened to be strolling the Pacific Garden Mall five years ago on October 17, 1989, at precisely 5:04 p.m. watched as the Loma Prieta earthquake destroyed it in little more than an instant.

A moment that left its indelible mark, the earthquake is remembered as a turning point in the lives of many Santa Cruzans. To the entrepreneurs whose businesses were ruined, it was a challenge to rebuild. Although many gave up and left town, a remarkable number of stores have been resurrected with new or remodeled facilities, and in some cases, new locations. Bookshop Santa Cruz abandoned its courtyard site and unreinforced masonry walls for its new location in what was the old St. George Hotel across from the post office on Front Street. The post office is still there, but the legendary Cooper House is gone forever, mourned by the woeful presence of a gaping hole.

Shandrydan was one of the first to move into its new location at 107 Walnut Ave. (from Cooper Street), and the new Logos building is ten times grander than what it was before. Camouflage survived — and moved across the street, and Paper Vison dropped Plaza Books (which was unfortunately located to the new Logos) and upgraded its incredible collection of greeting cards. The Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Co. had

outgrown its closet-sized space next to World Savings anyway and is a welcome addition to the more sophisticated El Palomar complex.

The Redevelopment Agency, which has been monitoring the rebuilding process downtown, has an inventory of all the buildings demolished since the earthquake and a status report on new and replacement construction. Of 29 buildings with almost 500,000 square feet of demolished space, nearly 150,000 square feet of retail floor space, 60,000 square feet of office space and 84,000 square feet of residential floor area has been restored — better than half of what went down five years ago.

"Considering that the long-range recovery process was initially given

ten years," says Linda Steinau of the Downtown Association, "we're ahead of the game after only five years." She says that 147 new businesses have started since the quake and that 46 pre-existing businesses have reopened after their temporary residency in the tent pavilions on Cedar Street. "There are more than 500 stores, restaurants, and professional service businesses existing in downtown Santa Cruz today," quotes a Downtown Association report, which also cites that nine buildings needed extensive repair and 13 were completely rebuilt.

But there are still some obvious large (+20,000 square-foot) holes downtown that look like Baghdad after the Persian Gulf War. In addition

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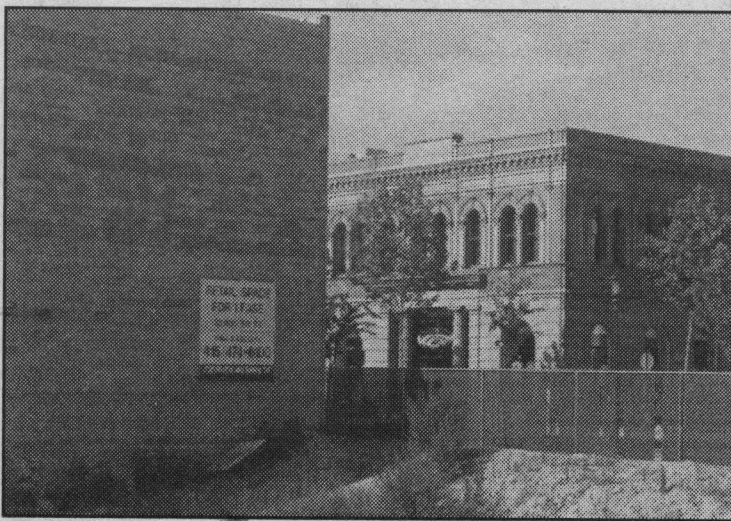


**Then: Everyone remembers what happened on Oct. 17, 1989.**

to the Cooper House's vacant lot, the site of the old Ford's building is a popular hangout with street people and the future of the old Trust building location is still up in the air. Construction on the new cinema complex on Church Street is in full swing, and the soil in the parking lot behind the old Bank of America is being decontaminated so that it can be sold along with the building. A two-story building is currently going up on the Pera property, on the corner of Soquel and Pacific.

In the meantime, the new downtown struggles with its identity both as an upscale shopping destination and a unique place where colorful characters and artistic individuals can feel at home. In many ways, Santa Cruz' off-beat eccentricity is what made the old Pacific Garden Mall an interesting destination in the first place.

— Virginia Lee



**Now: There are still a few holes to fill on Pacific Avenue.**