

LOMA PRIETA EARTHQUAKE

Santa Cruz spirit shines at commemoration

By WALLACE BAINE

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SANTA CRUZ — Linking the word “celebration” with the commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the Loma Prieta earthquake is a bit awkward, perhaps. But Saturday night was the kind of celebration that could only happen in Santa Cruz.

While one downtown block was closed off for a Burning Man “decompression” party, another downtown block was the scene of a swank gala marking the anniversary. On Pacific Avenue, day-glo wigs and glittered bodies existed cheek-by-jowl with suits and cocktail dresses and neither group took much notice of the other.

Roughly 300 people gathered at the palatial Rittenhouse building at Church Street and Pacific Avenue on Saturday to celebrate



PHIL CARTER/SENTINEL

Guests view old photographs of the Pacific Garden Mall at the downtown gala hosted by the Downtown Association of Santa Cruz on Saturday night.

Santa Cruz's comeback from the quake, just hours after the chiming of the Town Clock to mark 5:04 p.m.

Don McCaslin and his jazz group Warmth played live on the top floor of the Rittenhouse building in front of a projected blow-up

photo of the Cooper House. Warmth performed every day out in front of the Cooper House before Loma Prieta. McCaslin, who still performs regularly with the group, led the band through swinging jazz standards where the order of the day

was to evoke Oct. 17, 1989.

Outside on Locust Street, live music pulsed through the night as a mini-Burning Man celebration attracted hundreds of people, those dressed in “playa” clothes getting a discount on entry. From the marbled terraces atop the Rittenhouse building, Pacific Avenue was a colorful streak of outrageous outfits, a dress rehearsal for Halloween. One reveler, breathing in the warm October air and gazing out on a vista of downtown few have seen cried, “Are we in New Orleans, or what?”

Jazz singer Lori Rivera stood on the terrace and captured the feel of the enormous white edifice, one of downtown's newest office buildings. Rivera struck a pose as to break into song on the terrace and looked down upon Pacific Avenue. “Can you imagine, ‘Don’t Cry for Me, Argentina?’” she said. “I’m so there.”