

EARTHQUAKE '89 - City of Santa Cruz

The gift of patronage

Shoppers with a mission jam Santa Cruz tent mall

By Aleta Watson
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Shoppers breathed new life into downtown Santa Cruz as they flocked Friday to the opening of tent stores on the edge of the quake-ravaged Pacific Garden Mall.

For the first time since the Loma Prieta earthquake destroyed or damaged most of the picturesque mall last month, the majority of downtown stores were open for business. Santa Cruz residents and tourists alike celebrated by jamming the sidewalks and

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crowding the huge plastic tents that now house nearly three dozen shops displaced by the devastation.

For many people, it was an opportunity to see for themselves the dramatic changes in the downtown shopping district. They pressed against the

chain-link fences still barricading much of the mall and stared at the boarded-up windows, the cracked walls and the gaping holes where quaint brick and masonry buildings once stood.

But the mood was upbeat as local shoppers vowed to do their bit to bring their beloved mall back to life.

"I have made a decision," said Jan Foy of Santa Cruz as she carried a shopping bag down Pacific Avenue. "I'm going to buy as much as I can

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Some shoppers stopped snapping up bargains long enough to snap pictures of the tent mall.

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Shoppers fill Santa Cruz's tent pavilion

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today just to support the downtown merchants. It's been a disaster for everyone."

Her sentiments were echoed again and again among the shoppers.

"I've told my mother, 'If it's not on the mall, you're not getting it,'" said Casey Certis-Milby of Santa Cruz, browsing at a bead shop in a building temporarily donated by Bank of America at Pacific and Soquel avenues. "I'm going to do all my shopping downtown this year."

Crowds came early

At Lily Wong's gift shop, there were crowds in the aisles and lines at the cash registers even before the opening ceremonies began for the Phoenix Pavilions, seven giant tents erected on city-owned parking lots along Cedar Street, behind the mall.

By noon, Ed Urban of Santa Cruz and his family had to squeeze past other customers to pick out Christmas stockings from a colorful display.

"I'm going to buy, you bet," Urban said. "I'm going to support my community. These guys have been through a lot and so have we, losing them."

Earlier, Lily Wong's owner Margaret Wilson had turned eager customers away from her tent before the 10 a.m. opening, explaining that she didn't have any money in her registers yet. All about her were shelves full of Christmas decorations, ornaments, jewelry and

clothing that had been installed during the previous three days.

"We did it," Wilson said, "but we did it with the volunteer help of about 30 people a day, people I'd never seen before. Normally, it would take a month."

Musicians return

Among the early arrivals were Randi Iniquez and Richard Rogers, street musicians who have been playing up and down the mall for four years. They staked out a dry place among the rain puddles in front of Lily Wong's.

"We'd come back in the snow," Rogers said as he put down the pair's guitars and fiddles.

"We had to come back," Iniquez said.

"I couldn't sleep last night thinking about this," she said. "This feels like Christmas."

Down the street, book lovers pressed into the tent housing Book Shop Santa Cruz, a local institution known as much for its browsers as its shoppers. But these people were spending money, lining up nearly two dozen deep to buy books. The shop ran out of bags within its first hour.

Owner Neal Coonerty was pleased but not surprised.

"This is a book town," he said, smiling. "I think people have broken off from their habit for 40 days, and now they're back, trying to make up for it."

Rebirth celebrated

While shoppers poured into the tents, business leaders and city officials celebrated the rebirth of



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Karen Zelin, a volunteer with the downtown association, gives shopper Cassie Sprenger directions

downtown commerce with a ribbon-cutting ceremony during which San Jose Mayor Tom McEnery presented \$85,000 in checks to Santa Cruz organizations.

"We all know that Santa Cruz is going to come back in a big way,"

McEnery told the crowd. "We're proud of your resilience."

Moments later, McEnery and Santa Cruz Councilwoman Jane Yokoyama were in the Sockshop picking out a pair of navy blue

socks as her reciprocal gift to him. "They're conservative socks, but at least he said he'd wear them that way," she said. "I wanted to get him something a little crazy."

Yokoyama was proud of the turnout for the first day of down-

town shopping since the quake. "I think it isn't just the shopping they're here for," Yokoyama said. "It's coming down and seeing their old friends and neighbors in the stores. The community spirit is out, and it's really great."