

Pacific Garden Mall

Finished in the nick of time

11-9-91

Palomar Inn opens as construction ends

By KAREN CLARK
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — It was a race against time on both sides of the ceremonial red ribbon during the Palomar Inn's grand reopening Friday morning.

Outside, construction crews hustled to finish the final strip of paving in the Palomar block of Pacific Avenue — with their noise being drowned out by a mariachi band.

Inside the building, safety concerns from the city Planning Department weren't corrected until mid-way through the string of speeches — and 15 minutes before a crowd of guests with warm asphalt on their shoes came through the door.

"Everybody's real proud of the fact we got it all done," said Mike Egge, construction supervisor of the Pacific Avenue underbelly reconstruction, as he waited for the last truckload of asphalt to be delivered just before the 11 a.m. ceremony at the door of the Palomar.

Egge said the asphalt, which must be at least 350 degrees to pave, "was keeping us warm" during the morning project.

■ *St. George Hotel owner will buy Old County Bank property — Page A2*

Crews worked all night to get the final pipes laid and the road

paved in time for the reopening ceremony. "I never thought I'd be so happy to see a piece of asphalt," said Duncan Scollon, who owns Togo's restaurant on Pacific Avenue.

Togo's twice was flooded in October when old pipes being replaced by the crews burst open in a torrent of water.

A strip of the temporary paving in front of Togo's and Changes will be torn up again briefly to put in a drainage pipe, said Egge.

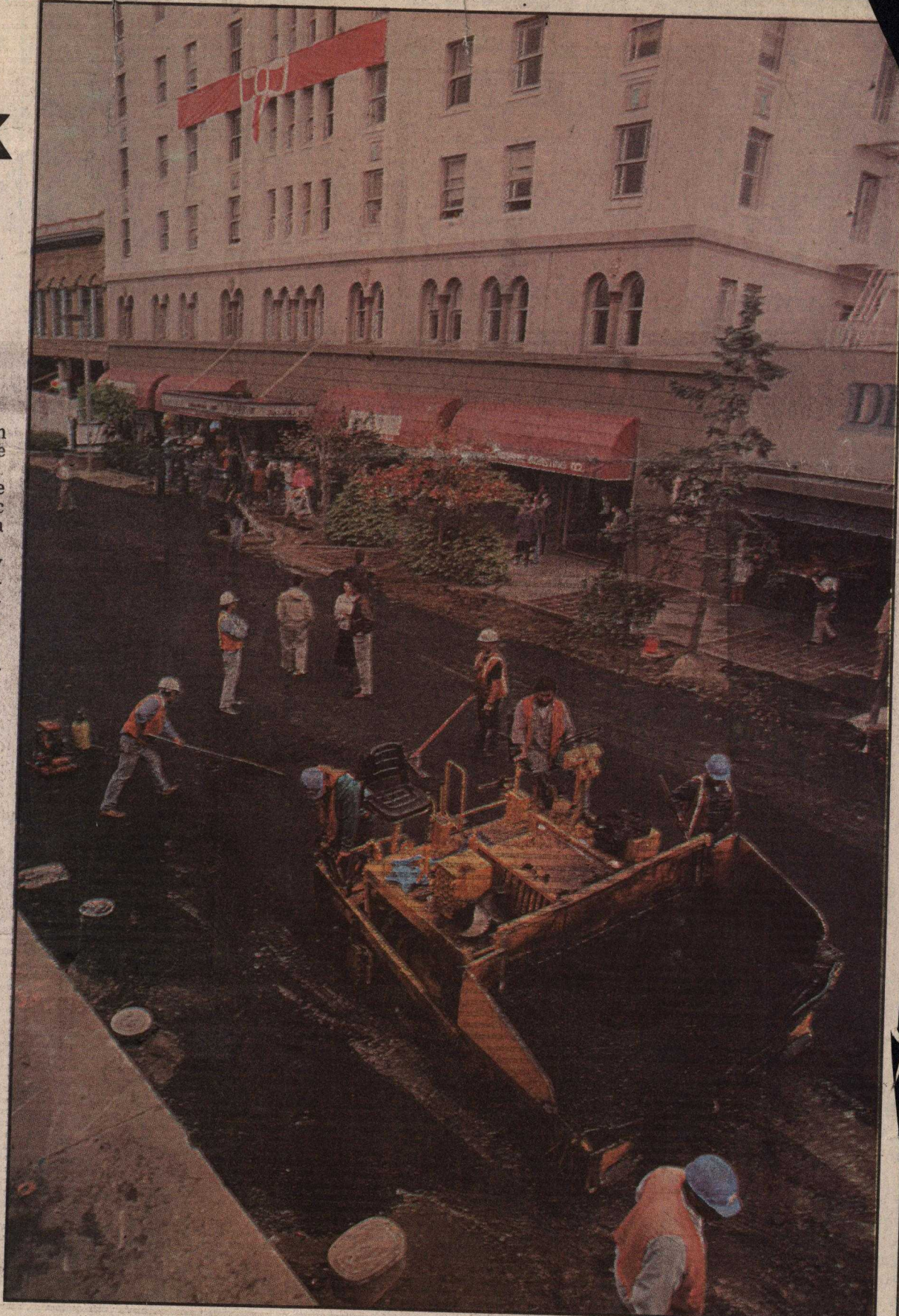
Crews found that the grading done throughout the night Thursday left a low spot in that part of the road, which would cause problems.

Egge also said that although plans had been to finish Pacific Avenue up through Church Street by Monday, the time line now called for the work to be done by Wednesday afternoon.

While construction crews played a race against time, Dick Stubendorf, the city's chief building official, was working with the El Palomar restaurant to fix safety concerns.

"There were last-minute exiting problems," said

Please see PALOMAR — A3



Crews smooth out asphalt on Pacific Avenue during the Palomar Inn's grand reopening.

Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Palomar

Continued from Page A1

Stubendorf about the need to clear passage ways before the crowd would be allowed inside.

The kitchen also wasn't finished, said Stubendorf, and that forced El Palomar to cater the lunch from its restaurant on Washington Street.

"It's safe, it's just not done," said Stubendorf after the crowd was seated.

He expected the restaurant to finish the last-minute items by Wednesday, when it would be allowed to open to the public.

While all the scurrying was going on in the background, Vice Mayor Don Lane was praising the reopening as a boon to downtown.

"These are incredible obstacles we've had to overcome," said Lane. "It's coming to fruition piece by piece, and today represents a large piece of that."

He said the reopening of the Palomar Inn, along with the other shops that are doing business nearby, represent "the image of the new downtown" with a mixture of retail, restaurants and housing.

Palomar owner David Kimmel of Burlingame spent about \$2 million to repair the earthquake-damaged hotel, which reopened to residents in June.

"Everybody said we couldn't do it, but we did," said Kimmel. "There were a lot of times when we were ready to give up, but the system can work, and does work."

In addition to senior residents and El Palomar restaurant, other businesses located in the hotel are Ace Hardware, Bunny's Shoes, The Hat Co. and Pacific Trading Co.

The Visitor's Council, Fingles Jewelers and the Santa Cruz Coffee Roasting Co. also will be in the hotel. The coffee place is expected to open in January.

The Palomar was built in 1929 by prominent architect William Henry Weeks.



Guests celebrated the reopening of the El Palomar restaurant in Jose's Cantina, above, after building owner David Kimmel, left, ended a string of official speeches by inviting the crowd inside.

Dan Coyro/Sentinel photos