

✓ **Earthquake still looms large**

Lives shaken

Earthquake

Lives shaken to the core

EDITOR'S NOTE — It was six months ago today that Santa Cruz County and much of Northern California was shaken by the earthquake. Lives were lost, buildings destroyed and emotions shaken. For some, the impact is still being felt. In stories on Pages A4 and A9, the Sentinel profiles some of those whose lives were changed, and how, despite the quake, the economy in much of Northern California remains strong.

By **TOM LONG**
Sentinel staff writer

Take a drive down 41st Avenue in Capitola and everything looks fine. Walk through the redwoods near UC Santa Cruz and all is serene. The beauty and potential of Santa Cruz County are easy to find.

But in downtown Santa Cruz or Watsonville, it's a very different story.

It has been six months since an earthquake measuring 7.1 on the Richter Scale ravaged this area.

More than 140,000 tons of refuse caused by the quake have been hauled to area dumps. That's 28 million pounds of rotten vegetables and fallen walls, crushed toys and splintered china; dreams and work and memories turned to rubble.

More than 15,000 people in Santa Cruz County have been treated for quake-related anxiety since October. Tens of millions of dollars from the federal and state governments and charitable agencies have been distributed to help quake victims get housing, food and clothing.

It still hasn't been enough. The disaster isn't over.

It probably won't be over for years.

"At a superficial level, the disaster appears to be over. People can drive to work and children can go to school and markets are open and people can play softball at a park," says San Lorenzo Valley Supervisor Fred Keeley.

"But on a deeper level, the disaster continues," Keeley says.

The signs are everywhere. Downtown Santa Cruz is pitted with craters where buildings used to stand. Entire blocks in Watsonville have been leveled. Houses throughout the county are propped up by stilts or supports while workers strengthen their foundations and walls.

Some 300 businesses crumbled as a result of the quake. Those losses are just part of the estimated \$350 million in damage Santa Cruz County suffered.

More than 250 of the 1,000 pets who were lost in the quake are still missing. Hundreds of people who still leap at the rumble caused by a passing truck or burst suddenly into tears at loud noises continue to be treated for stress related to the quake.

"People in general, people who didn't have much damage, could go back to normal life after the quake," says Libby Wilson, whose Soquel home was rocked off its foundation. "But if you had to deal with insurance companies or the county or a lot of damage, your life was not settled while the rest of the world was going on."

"The stress didn't show up in our family until just a few weeks ago," says Carol Taylor, who is struggling with her husband, Dan, to put their life back together. "I'm 44 years old and I'm starting my life over again. What is this?"

"This was not my idea of an earthquake," says

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Disaster/ Effects continue on a deeper level

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Jennifer Milre, one of hundreds of people throughout the county who are still waiting to either return to damaged homes or find new ones. "I mean, in California we've always been so casual about earthquakes — they were always just a fact of life."

That casual attitude disappeared forever at 5:04 p.m. on a muggy day last October.

"Everything changed Oct. 17," says Margaret Hoyt, who is struggl-

ing to keep her pre-quake dream of owning a business alive.

And while many have returned to their normal, daily routines, for thousands of others the aftershocks go on.

"Everybody I talk to has a disaster story," says Margaret's husband, Erich.

Those stories involve geological shifts and bureaucratic screw-ups. They are about housing and lawsuits and engineering reports. They

are tales of frustration and fear and heroism.

But what they are mostly about is people. Six months later, the earthquake remains the central fact in the lives of thousands of people in this county, people like the Hoyts and the Taylors, the Wilsons and the Milres.

It may well be years before an issue of the Sentinel is published that does not contain at least one quake-related story. Today's stories

are about a few of those still dealing with disaster, some in small ways, some struggling to survive.

More than 6,000 aftershocks from the October earthquake have been recorded so far. No one can count the number of emotional aftershocks that have hit the people of this county during the same period, or imagine their intensity.

Time may heal all wounds, but six months has not been enough time for Santa Cruz County.