

He wants SC to stop the ringing in his ears

Town Clock
By KAREN CLARK
Sentinel staff writer

SANTA CRUZ — In 1929, two of the city's most prominent hotel operators asked that the Town Clock's bell in the old Odd Fellows Building be silenced because its hourly ringing was driving away customers.

The bell was duly silenced, and it didn't ring again until 1976, when the restored clock was rebuilt at its present-day location at the head of Pacific Avenue.

Some things just never change.

For nearly a year, School Street resident Terry Barling has been lobbying the city's Parks and Recreation Department to reconfigure the Town Clock's innards so the hourly gonging takes a respite overnight.

"It gongs every hour on the hour," said Barling, who has resorted to earplugs and a sound wall over the past 20 years to mute the noise. "It's like having Big Ben in your living room."

Official recommends silence for Town Clock gong at night

Just as their counterparts did 67 years ago, current city officials may take pity on a handful of sleepless in Santa Cruz.

Jim Lang, director of the Parks and Recreation Department, plans to recommend that the City Council include up to \$4,500 in next year's budget to still the gong during the late-night and early-morning hours.

"It was really a surprise when it came to me that it was a problem," said Lang, noting that no one else in the neighborhood has complained.

The council will consider the proposal during its budget hearings in June. Lang said its fate depends on whether competition is tight for city dollars.

"Is it really a \$4,000 problem?" Lang said, adding that it's a question the council will have to decide. "It will have to compete with everything else."

Barling said he has been annoyed with the overnight gonging since the Town Clock was rebuilt at Pacific Avenue and Water Street 20 years ago. But Barling said the problem was exacerbated by repairs made in the wake of the Nov. 14 fire that damaged the structure.

"It seemed to be louder ... much worse," said Barling.

Dennis Hogan, superintendent of central maintenance for the city, said he consulted local expert Gene Corriden of Circadian

10-17-96
Clock in Soquel, who came up with a solution to the nightly noise.

"He talked with a clock guy back East and came up with a way to deactivate the hammer," said Hogan.

Corriden said the new device, along with the nearly two weeks of labor to do the job, is estimated to cost nearly \$4,300.

That alternative is much more feasible than manually turning off the gong every evening and then restarting it in the morning, said Hogan.

Lang said city workers haven't been able to figure out why the gong would be louder after the \$65,000 in repairs were completed in the wake of last winter's fire. It could be, he said, that Barling simply grew used to the quiet for the few months while the clock was out of commission.

Barling said he was prepared to turn in a petition with the names of other people

Please see TOWN CLOCK — BACK PAGE

Borden was a victim of ...

Town Clock

Continued from Page A1

upset with the nightly noise, but relented when city officials were so receptive to trying to help him.

"I think the Town Clock is a great deal because it's been here for years," said Barling. "But I was hoping they could figure out some way it wouldn't gong all night long."

The original Town Clock sat atop the Odd Fellows Building on Pacific Avenue at the end of

Church Street from 1874 until 1965. The clock, whose bell hadn't sounded since complaints from the Hotel Palomar and St. George Mission Inn hit City Hall in 1929, was removed in 1965 during a remodeling effort and stored in various locations.

A campaign to resurrect the almost-forgotten relic began in 1974, and the project was completed on July 4, 1976.