

Capitola to 1959

# Capitola Has New-Type Night Spot

By Don Becker

Herb Caen, a more than slightly renowned gossipist-descriptionist, who turns out a daily column for a San Francisco paper, got off a nice little blurb about Capitola in his column last month.

Said Herb, not exactly, but in effect: "Capitola is fast becoming the Paris of the west coast.

This wasn't a paid political announcement. Caen actually was in Capitola just prior to publishing the Capitola comment. Like Hemingway: He was there. He saw it. He lived it. He wrote it. This rather obliquely leads us into the subject. If Capitola is fast becoming the Paris of the west coast, it naturally follows that it must be changing.

The only real change that has taken place in Capitola recently, aside from the flame leveling of the Saba, is the opening of the "Coffee Cabaret."

That's the place Columnist Caen had in mind when he was

Parisizing Capitola. Harvey Boyd, once a Sentinel staffer, but now working on the same San Francisco sheet as Caen, says "Herb really digs the place." Whether Caen digs the place or not is really not important, of course, but what is significant is that lots of people have been literally knocking down the Coffee Cabaret's doors on weekends since its opening.

Capitola may not be the Paris of the west coast, but the Coffee Cabaret certainly lends a new night-time atmosphere to the Begonia Capitol of the world.

That the Coffee Cabaret is still open is a surprise to some early critics of the idea.

The Coffee Cabaret sells no liquor. Just coffee — all kinds — and pies and sandwiches.

"A nightclub with no booze," many said. "It can't possibly succeed."

Owner Bob Denning said: "Liquor would ruin the place.

"This is a place where young people can come and not have to worry about false ID's," said Denning. "It is a place where people can come and hear music after 2 o'clock in the morning.

"This is a new idea and we think it is a good idea."

Denning, who is from Los Angeles and is in partnership with Roy Davenport, is quick to point out the coffee routine is not his idea.

Somebody else got the idea, but Denning was one of the few to

believe that the idea could be parlayed into a successful business. The pair were scoffed at when they told people what they were planning to do.

Even Capitola City Clerk Ray Abicht, who issued the business license, said he wasn't quite sure the thing would work.

Last Saturday night, more than 500 persons wangled their way into the place. Many were turned away because the cabaret, which is located in the old Circle Drug store building on the Esplanade, could not hold another soul. Everyone was drinking coffee, talking, dancing, sitting and watching, somehow amusing themselves.

"We close when everyone goes home," says Denning, who probably will admit he has seen more sunrises since coming here than in his entire previous 26 years.

The crowd that attends the cabaret, varies with the hour. During the early hours of the evening,

the younger set is on hand, while an older group fills the place after 2 a.m.

Music is continuous. Combos, assorted musicians just sort of drift in, ask to play. The audience normally listens.

Perhaps the biggest attraction of the cabaret is Doris James. She weighs 405 pounds. She says she just lost 250 pounds. She sings sitting in a powerfully reinforced chair. She's a wisecracker who makes a good show at being hard boiled.

Off early showings, it appeared the cabaret was going to become a little Bohemia. It hasn't. Naturally a seemingly large size number of intellectual types appear there, but they are almost always outnumbered by the run of average citizenry.

Crowds at the cabaret figure to get bigger and bigger with this the beginning of the tourist season. The cabaret opens nightly at 8 o'clock except Mondays.



## Just Coffee Packs 'Em In



Coffee, all kinds, has been packing in crowds at the newly-opened "Coffee Cabaret" in Capitola. Last weekend, crowds reached turnaway proportions. The cabaret, located on the Esplanade on the beach in Capitola, opens nightly except Monday at 8 o'clock and closes "when everybody goes home." Above, dancers crowd the floor of the rennovated drug store while below, Doris James, easily the biggets attraction at the cabaret, sits singing on her specially reinforced chair. An unusual idea, the cabaret sells no liquor.