

Local nurse arraigned on felony drug charges

p. 9

A local registered nurse appeared in Santa Cruz County Municipal Court yesterday to answer to six felony charges of drug possession.

Assistant District Attorney Mike Bartram said that Patti Ann Schauss, 38, was arrested by county Narcotics Enforcement Team agents Jan. 14 with co-defendant Michael Alan Ward at a townhouse near La Selva Beach.

They each face six felony charges of possessing cocaine, hashish, Demerol, morphine, mescaline and psilocybin mushrooms. Schauss faces an additional misdemeanor charge of being under the influence of cocaine.

Neither Schauss nor Ward entered a plea yesterday, and their arraignment was put off until next Thursday so that Schauss could get an attorney.

Dominican Santa Cruz Hospital issued a written statement today saying that Schauss was hired there 10 years ago as a full-time employee and for the last two years had been working on a "per-diem" basis, meaning she was on

call to work at Dominican or other local hospitals as needed.

"She met all conditions for employment at the time and received 'satisfactory and above' performance reviews," the hospital said.

Dominican said that it has informed Schauss that it will not schedule her to work again until the case is resolved, since a registered nurse is responsible for distributing drugs to patients as part of her routine work.

Bartram said investigators are "following up carefully" on questions stemming from Schauss's connection to the hospital.

Prosecutors are also waiting to hear whether Schauss has any other criminal charges pending against her, Bartram said.

Roger Hite, chief operating officer at Dominican, said in the statement that the hospital "regrets that Ms. Schauss is facing such serious charges," and that he hoped the media would refer to her as a "local person" rather than a "nurse" or a "Dominican nurse."