



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

A beer bottle damaged memorial display.

Vandal mars display of Vietnam memorial

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SANTA CRUZ — An intoxicated man who claimed to be a veteran threw a beer bottle at a panel of the Moving Wall Vietnam Memorial on display here early Thursday, shattering plexiglass that bore the names of service men and women who died in Vietnam.

As far as local organizers knew, the incident was the first time a vandal has attacked the wall on its nationwide tour.

The wall, a 250-foot-long duplicate of the memorial in Washington, D.C., bears the names of more than 58,000 service men and women who died in Vietnam. It's now on display on the San Lorenzo River benchlands behind the County Center.

A complaint was forwarded to the District Attorney's Office by the Santa Cruz Police Department asking for the vandal's arrest. According to witnesses, the man — whose street name is reported as One-eyed Jim — threw the bottle at the wall at approximately 4:30 a.m. and threatened the veteran standing guard with a knife.

A Police Department official said

that the man was well-known to local law enforcement agencies.

Hundreds of visitors were drawn to the wall Thursday.

A couple whose son had died in Vietnam drove from San Luis Obispo and took a picture of the vet's dog, now 23, in front of his master's name.

A bouquet of roses only yards from the vandalized wall contained a letter from a woman who had borne her first child on the day her brother was killed. The letter was filled with family news. A nephew is now named after the dead veteran.

School children were led from panel to panel, their eyes wide at the number of names. One child began crying.

"It's been the most rewarding experience I've had in a long time," said Harry Dean, one of the exhibit's organizers. "There've been lots of tears. Lots of tears."

Local organizers have decided to double the guard on the wall. They will be hosting a benefit dinner Sunday at the Poet & Patriot Irish Pub in hopes of raising funds to replace the panel.

The memorial will be on exhibit through Sunday.