

# Meter-feeding clown serious about fighting citation

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When it comes to fighting City Hall, Mr. Twister isn't clowning around.

Well, OK, he is. But seriously, folks, the Santa Cruz clown cited this week for plugging people's expired parking meters to spare them \$12 tickets is facing the charge with pie-in-the-face aplomb.

Mr. Twister, who is Cory McDonald underneath the face paint and red-ball nose, has hired local lawyer Benjamin Rice to fight the \$13 infraction. Together, they are launching a campaign to scuttle the city's law against putting change in other people's parking meters. A news con-

ference is being scheduled for 10 a.m. Monday on Pacific Avenue.

"He's going to be asking the public to help out and asking the city of Santa Cruz to get rid of this unfriendly law," Rice said as the clown honked a horn in agreement.

Rice acknowledges the case is a bit of a departure from his criminal defense and civil rights work.

"It's a new area of expertise for me — clown law," Rice said. Still, he's confident Mr. Twister will prevail in court, even if that means appealing to the highest court in the land.

"The case looks tremen-  
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JUDITH CALSON — MERCURY NEWS

Cory McDonald feeds an expired parking meter in Santa Cruz.

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## Parking-meter clown seeks support

### ■ CLOWN

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dous," Rice said. "The law does not say anything about clowns feeding meters."

Mr. Twister and his lawyer say they are planning bumper stickers with the clown's image that will say, "Mr. Twister Feed My Meter," supposedly giving him the permission he needs to legally continue his deeds. A "Free Mr. Twister" postcard campaign is also in the works, Rice said.

Santa Cruz Mayor Katherine Beiers agreed the obscure law may be due for an overhaul.

"From what I understand, the intent (of the law) was to prevent harassment of the meter people," Beiers said. "If

this is backfiring, we ought to review it."

Many shoppers and even some merchants apparently feel that way, and have handed Mr. Twister coins to continue his work. After a media circus came to town Tuesday to report on Mr. Twister's plight, clowns from around the country have called to express their solidarity, Rice said.

"I feel like it spreads goodness," said Lulu the Clown, also known as Lee Ann McNally, a 13-year veteran of the clown profession in Santa Cruz. "I just think it's funny that so much energy is going into chasing this clown. It seems kind of silly."

But not everyone is so amused. City parking officials

say McDonald is using the cute clown image to champion forgetful drivers at the expense of hard-working parking officers who are just doing their already unpopular jobs. They note that free parking is plentiful in downtown Santa Cruz.

"It creates morale problems," said Matt Farrell, the city's parking programs manager. "Parking meters aren't very popular with people to begin with. The thing that's hard for the deputies is there's a sense of obstructing them and keeping them from doing their job. They have some professional pride, and it really hurts them."

At least one fellow clown agrees, and says Mr. Twister is making them look bad.