

5:04 p.m.

Residents across the Bay Area pause to reflect on event that changed their lives forever

Earthquake 10yrs and later



KAREN T. BORCHERS — MERCURY NEWS

Bruce Engelhardt of Santa Cruz attaches his letter Sunday to the makeshift quake memorial fence outside the Santa Cruz Museum.

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✓ BY GLENDA CHUI, LISA FERNANDEZ, ALAN GATHRIGHT AND JOSHUA KWAN
Mercury News Staff Writers

Ethel Harrison used a moment of silence for victims of the Loma Prieta earthquake to think of her son, killed at the age of 21 by falling bricks.

At the same instant, 200 Santa Cruz Mountains dwellers celebrated their neighborhood's resurrection. They drank toasts and conjured up a quake's rumble by stomping their feet on the wooden floor of their new community center, finally rebuilt a decade after the 6.9 quake irreparably damaged the original.

And on San Francisco's Marina Green, rescuers and survivors recalled how a big city came together as if it were a small town.

Across the Bay Area on Sunday, people paused at exactly 5:04 p.m. to mark the 10th anniversary of an earthquake that ended 62 lives and changed thousands of others.

They remembered things big and small: the collapse of the Bay Bridge and an Oakland freeway and numerous buildings, including the Santa Cruz coffeehouse whose crumbling walls killed Harrison's son. The

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Attending the Santa Cruz memorial was Ethel Harrison, whose son was killed by the quake.

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■ Online coverage of the Loma Prieta quake's anniversary:
www.mercurycenter.com/local/loma_prieta/

THE LOMA PRIETA EARTHQUAKE OCTOBER 17, 1989

Crowds pause, recall quake

■ REFLECT

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destruction of neighborhood landmarks. The fright that drove some people out of the area in search of safer ground.

At the same time, they could not forget the neighborliness that sprang from the quake's ruins. The people who stayed despite losing everything. The clarity that disaster sometimes brings.

"It was frightening, but it changed my life," said Charles Robinson, 62, who was driving across the San Francisco-Oakland Bay Bridge when the quake sent a section of the roadway crashing to the lower deck below. "I became more aware of what really mattered in my life, what it was all about. I will never be the same."

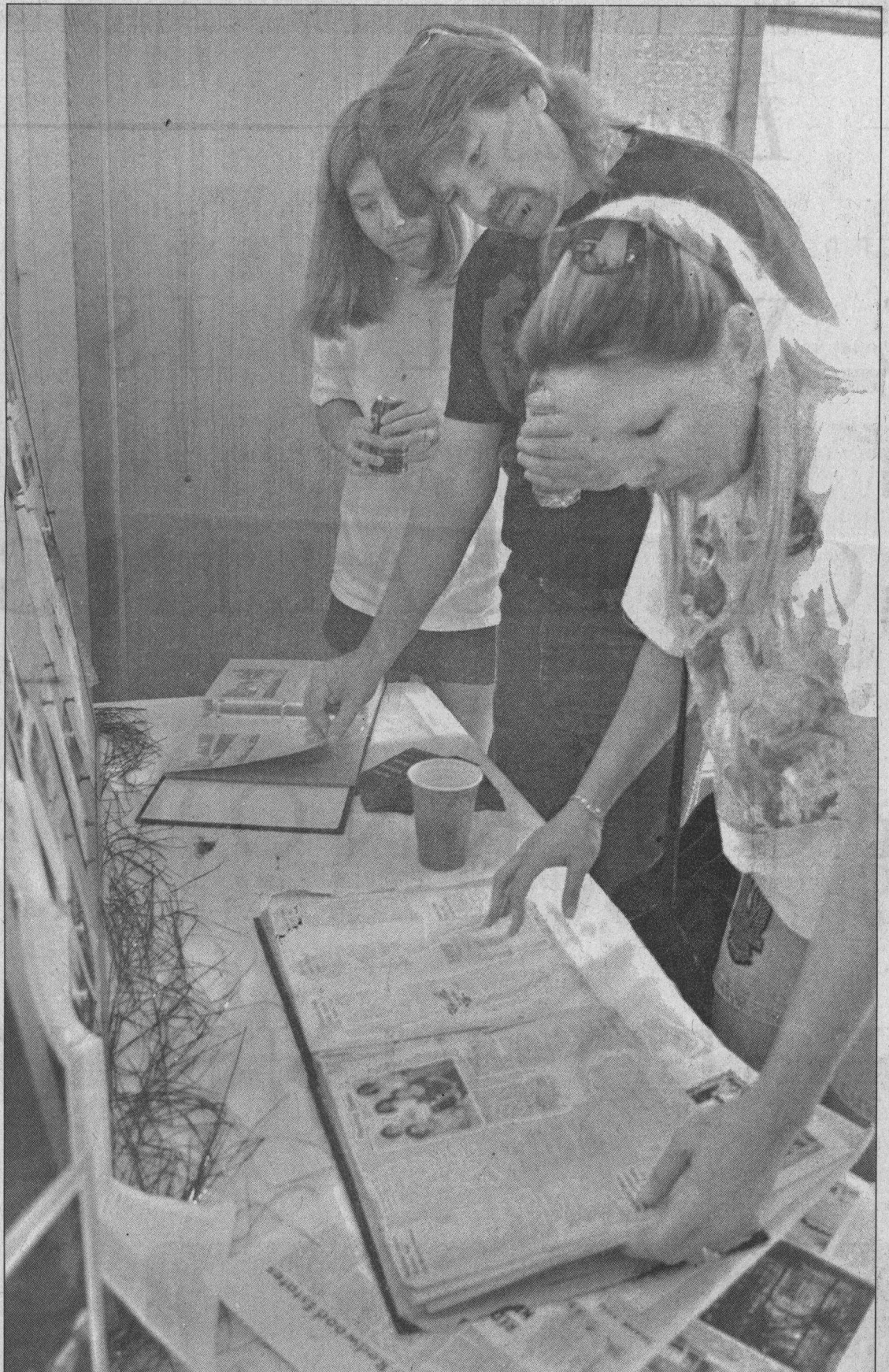
In downtown Santa Cruz, former Mayor Mardi Wornhoudt asked a memorial crowd of 200 people to "take a moment to simply enjoy this glorious day. A moment to remember to tell someone you love that you do. A moment to appreciate what you have in your life, and to do it in honor of those people whose lives did not go on."

Wants to save lives

Harrison was there with her two daughters and six grandchildren, determined to use the anniversary not to dwell on the death of her son, Shawn McCormick, but to save lives.

"I dearly loved my son, and I miss him terribly," said Harrison, who staffed a table full of earthquake-preparedness materials.

"There's nothing we can do to bring him back, but there's a lot



PHOTOGRAPHS BY KAREN T. BORCHERS — MERCURY NEWS

Katy Schmidt, front, George Sanfilippo and Denielle Sanfilippo view scrapbooks Sunday at the dedication of Redwood Estates Pavilion.

avoid meeting that fate in a disaster. So we're here today to help save some lives. We want people to be prepared."

Lively jazz filled the air as people posted poems and brightly colored notes tied with ribbon to a section of chain link fence topped with barbed wire. The fence evoked the pall that hung over the downtown for years after the quake, with merchants operating out of temporary tents on streets pocked with vacant lots surrounded by construction fencing.

'You'll be forever'

"Hey, Shawn. I can still feel you around," wrote Terri Turner, McCormick's sister. "The last thing you did when we last saw each other was kiss me and say, 'I love you.' You'll be forever 21."

In Redwood Estates — not far from the earthquake's epicenter in the Santa Cruz Mountains — 200 people dedicated a new community center, built on the site of the original.

The Pavilion had been a place for people to meet and be seen. Dozens of weddings and dances had seared the building into people's hearts. But while the old structure appeared intact after the quake, authorities deemed it unsafe. For eight years, the neighborhood badgered the Federal Emergency Management Agency for money to rebuild it.

As people shook the new building with their stomping, Bruce Vandraiss, who has lived in the community for nearly 25 years, pretended to hold up a cross-beam to keep the building from falling down.

The 'Miracle Child'

Ten years ago, he was clinging to an exposed pipe and grabbing onto his wife as their house slid down a hill. They escaped injury, but if their son had been in his room he surely would have died, Vandraiss said. Instead, Barry, known around town as the "Miracle Child," survived because his parents had forgotten to pick him up from day care.

"My friend and I were playing a block game where you try to build the highest stack," Barry recalled. "Neither of us won. The earthquake finished it."

After the quake, the National Guard and Red Cross had set up camp next to the old building. People took showers in makeshift stalls, entire families showing together.



Evan Praskin, 12, returns a volleyball Sunday at the Redwood Estates party celebrating the newly rebuilt community center. Evan says he remembers the quake, which damaged his house nearby.



At the pavilion party, Win Parker, whose house slid down a hill, hugs Marion Trumbull, who lost the side of her house in the quake.

People slept in tents and cars and in a fire department barn. The Red Cross, with church volunteers from Modesto and Los Gatos, cooked 175 lunches and dinners every day, not far from where a barbecue pit churned out hot dogs and hamburgers on Sunday.

One of those volunteers was Mick Mills, now 76, who flew in for the dedication from Montana.

"The most important thing I did was give people hugs," Mills said. "Maybe it was their way of gathering some strength to endure."

In San Francisco, hundreds gathered in the Marina district,

where collapsing apartments and fire killed four people.

"People automatically pitched in and helped. I guess that's the human condition," said Mike Gammino, 42 of Palo Alto, whose family lives in the Marina.

After the shaking stopped, Gammino drove back roads from Palo Alto to San Francisco to see what he could do. He wound up helping for five days, staying with relatives whose homes were undamaged. But there was no water, no lights. He remembers a pizza parlor giving out free slices and the Red Cross handing out bottles of water and food to evacuees.

Vivid image

But perhaps his most vivid memory is of shoveling the liquefied sandy soil on which the Marina is built — and whose weakness caused much of the damage. "It made me think of what shoveling snow would be like," he said.

Since then, Gammino takes time out at 5:04 p.m. on Oct. 17 each year to remember the most critical days of his life.

"A lot of people got hurt," he said. But "people who have lived here their whole lives, this doesn't faze them."

Mercury News wire services contributed to this report.