

County Center Meets The Press

By Wallace Wood
Sentinel Staff Writer

Standing raw and strong, the new county governmental center was introduced to the press and county staff members Friday afternoon.

The great, gray structure, which sometimes is called Santa Cruz' "Gray Elephant," is impressively big and dolefully plain without its furniture.

Since construction began two years ago, it has become a conversational bone for most persons that pass by Ocean or Water streets.

"When are they going to paint it?" was a frequent question a few months ago. Then the answer came: "Never."

So it is that a reputation will come free with the \$6.7-million structure. It is a reputation for raw concrete, inside and out, on floors and roof. The texture, and spirit penetrates even the dull rugs and stark mechanical elements in full view.

Some like it. District Attorney Peter Chang commented, "Anybody that says this is a bad building has rocks in his head."

Supervisor Robert Burton says, "In six months, I have found a total of seven people that like it. I've stopped counting the ones that don't."

"When I go back east, I find I am chiefly known for this building," admits Architect Burton Rockwell.

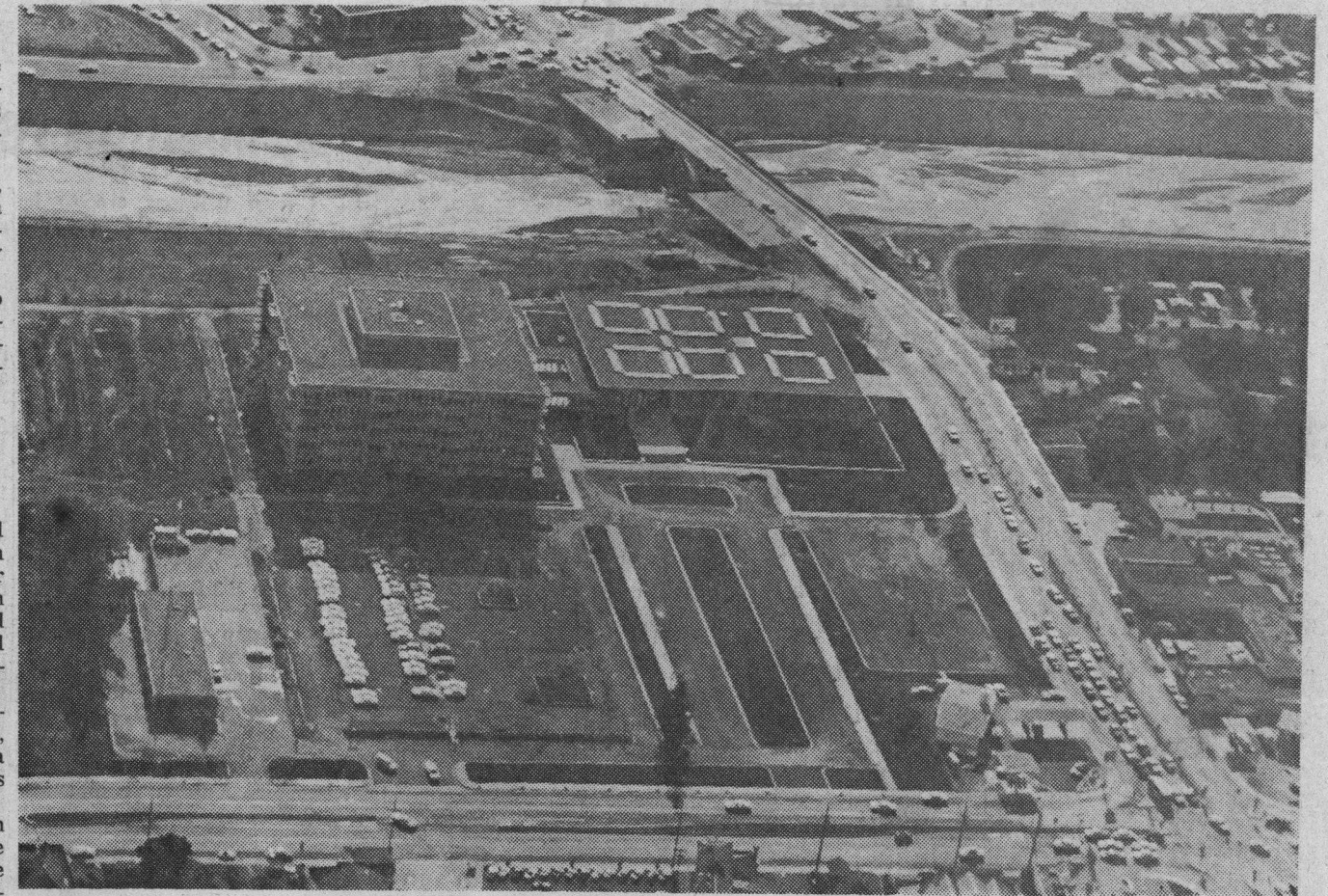
Friday's tours are the next-to-last step before final acceptance by the county. One last look Tuesday by the five-man board of supervisors, and the building will belong to the local government—if they like it. Even if they don't, only slight delays are expected.

On September 14, moving for the nine county offices now scattered here and there will begin. By October 14, just before the official dedication ceremonies, the courts building will be occupied. Some woodwork still has to be done there.

While the county will save about \$35,000 in rentals and unknown amounts in better department efficiency, the new structure won't save taxpayers much in actual cash, County Administrator Officer Carl Millar says.

"We won't save money on the operation of the building itself. The savings will come from better efficiency," Miller declared. For example, the utilities bill will amount to about \$100,000 per year, he noted. A staff of janitors and mechanical experts will cost another \$25,000 or more each year.

The construction of the build-



For those who fly in airplanes, this is how the new \$6.7-million county governmental center looks to birds. Ocean Street is at bottom of picture, Water Street at right and

the San Lorenzo River at top of photo. The five-story building at left is for offices and the courts are in one-story building to the right of it.

County Administrative Officer Carl Millar, left, and architect Burton Rockwell stand five stories above the street on the roof of the new county center. Rockwell de-

clared he has had good cooperation with county officials during construction, and joked that his greatest achievement was "remaining friends with Mr. Millar here."

well, but there was no fan noise in the building from the two fans in operation.

● The Centrex telephone system that is part of the civil defense basement complex is larger than the downtown Santa Cruz switching system. County officials said it could handle hundreds of calls, but could not give exact figures.

● Construction cost was about \$25 per square foot. Additional costs make the total cost of the 217,000-square-foot office building and 36,000-square-foot courthouse about \$28 per foot.

● Movable partitions of two types make it possible to alter interior walls. The basic design of the office building, with 16 "towers" of four columns each, make a mixture of very wide and reasonably small offices

and work areas available. All partitions are light green.

● The civil defense center, which the federal government paid about \$400,000 to equip, is made so that it can be completely sealed off during an emergency and can house 400 persons for an indefinite period.

● When the county departments move, only the sheriff's, probation, hospital, health, and sealer of weights and measures offices will remain out of the new building. Eventually, the welfare department may move its quarters.

"People may find it looks brutal, but we think they'll come to like it," Rockwell said. "We don't make a building to startle people, but to have them like it in ten years from now—or 20."

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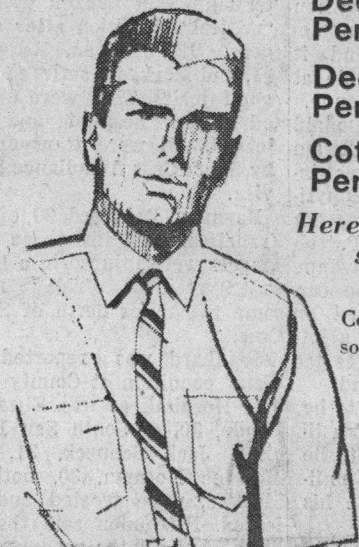
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Architect Burton Rockwell points out features of the ceiling to a group of newsmen

Friday afternoon inside the county complex.

The CAO's Tempest In A Teapot

The barring of reporters during a tour of the new \$6.7-million governmental center by some county officials Friday morning has proved to be a tempest in a teapot.

First of all, there appeared to be no significant decisions to

come out of the tour by Supervisors Robert Burton and Vincent Locatelli, Public Works Director Warren Harrison, Contractor Werner Jasper and his attorneys, Eugene Adams and Dennis Kehoe, and several county and architectural staff

members.

Secondly, reporters and other departmental personnel spent the afternoon trooping all through the new complex, poking into the innermost reaches of the massive cement structures. If anything was hidden, it was very well hidden, indeed.

So County Administrative Officer Carl Millar's decision to keep the four newsmen out of the building during the morning tour remains something of a mystery. It was an assertion of his authority as CAO to keep the "staff" meeting private, since he said no one asked him to keep the press out.

Supervisor Russ McCallie made it clear Friday night that "anytime I go through that courthouse, the press is always welcome to come with me." McCallie did not go on the tour.

The entire board of supervisors is expected to take one last look at the center Tuesday before officially accepting it from Jasper.

—W.W.

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savings and extra expenses. Nine-foot doors that reach from floor to ceiling are more costly than regular ones, and such doors are liberally spaced at department entrances. The 1800 lighting fixtures are specially designed to fit the spaces in the open ceiling, where air ducts and piping can be seen in spartan simplicity. Each solid oak cabinet cost \$800, but the specially loomed rug, ordered a year in advance, only cost \$6.50 per yard. The windows have specially curved corners, and fit in bronze frames.

Rockwell claims the main idea behind the building's design was "not to have anything extraneous for effect alone, but what was necessary was treated with its effect in mind."

The massive buttresses jutting out from each column occasionally support equally massive sun screens, for instance. The amount of extra concrete it took to create them was not calculated.

"We wanted persons to understand something of the way the building is structured," Rockwell explained in defending the raw concrete, buttresses, and open ceiling and ductwork.

Virtually all the cement comes from the Pacific Cement and Aggregates plant in Davenport, with the light exterior wall panels made from Felton sands.

For the statistics-minded reader, here are a few facts about the new county center:

- Some 8432 pre-cast wall sections were carried by 443 truck loads of about 60 tons apiece to be placed in the building between 14,280 cubic yards of poured-in-place concrete. Only three panels were broken or cracked when they arrived here.

- Each floor encloses 40,000 feet in the five-story office and about three-fourths of an acre is usable space. The rest is contained in the central corridor for elevators, stairs or mechanical equipment.

- Six fan units in the roof "penthouse" are used to draw in and exhaust air from the office and courthouse. Each 100-horsepower electric motor in the four supply fans puts 220,000 cubic feet of air per minute into the building. The draft is enormous down the supply air

KEY WEST

Key West derives its name from the Spanish "Cayo" (Key) and "Hueso" (Bones) — not from its geographic location according to National Airlines. The nation's southern-most city once was used as a battleground by prehistoric Indians whose bones were found scattered around the island.

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