

# Riot punctuates a wild Fourth of July holiday

By MARK BERGSTROM

Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — It was almost 8:30 on the Fourth of July when the police radio crackled: "Sailors being chased by men with hatchets and picks on the beach near the Ideal restaurant."

Officer Dianne Conner had come on duty at 8. Even though experience said anything was possible on the Fourth of July, she couldn't quite believe the call. She headed for Beach Street, where 100,000 or so people were either exploding or watching fireworks as darkness fell.

A crowd of hundreds, mostly in dress white uniforms, crowded the entrance to the hillside parking lot next to Beach Liquors. Near the top, Officer Tom Watson and wharf patrolman Ed Cunningham struggled to calm a soldier, whose uniform was covered in blood from head to toe.

"Get out of the way," Conner yelled at a woman guzzling beer as Conner tried to swing her patrol car through the pressing crowd at the narrow driveway to the parking lot.

A group of sailors from the visiting Navy ship USS Cade Cod was moving in on Watson and Cunningham as Conner jammed on the brakes and jumped from her car. Watson grabbed his microphone and shouted "940-Able." Officer needs help.

The sailor, covered in blood, broke loose momentarily and lashed out at Conner, knocking her to the ground. She regained her footing and, with Officer Steve Carr, grabbed the sailor.

It was a riot.

Everywhere in the city, officers dropped what they were doing and raced to the call which all officers dread: An officer is in danger. In seconds Beach Street was bathed in a red and blue swirl of lights

from arriving police cars. The yelps of sirens drowned out the firecrackers.

A half dozen officers and Lt. Mike Dunbaugh and Sgt. Tom Vlassis ran up the driveway.

Order quickly was restored and the sailors backed down the hill.

One sailor was carted off to jail. Conner put the bloodied sailor in the back seat of

Please see back of section

## Wild Fourth of July

Continued from Page A1

her patrol car and drove him to Community Hospital. He told her he didn't know he was shoving a police officer. He was scared, he said. He told how all of a sudden, a group of men, one with a hatchet, another with a pick had gone after him on Beach Street. He was hit in the arm with the pick and he ran. First down to the beach near the Ideal. Then up into the parking lot. His attackers fled when the police started arriving. He didn't know why sailors ended up clashing with police.

The sailor was put on the empty bed in emergency room. Doctors and nurses went from bed to bed; stitching here, taking a blood pressure there.

One strange, swimsuit-clad woman got up and walked out. A hospital security guard was sent after her.

A nurse tried to find a relative to come pick up an elderly woman who had been waiting for hours. And, an ambulance crew radioed in to say it was on its way with two victims from an auto accident near Davenport.

Conner stood amid the background of well-organized chaos, writing her report. There was blood on her badge. Wasn't that was the title of the book Detective Harris was writing on the TV cop show Barney Miller?

"In my six years on the force, this was the first 940-Able (officer in trouble) I've heard. And I was in the middle of it," she said.

The ambulance pulled up and two young men, one of them seriously injured when he was pounded into the steering wheel of the car he was driving, were wheeled in. Hospital teams quickly and quietly began the examinations and treatment.

The ambulance driver complained that cars were double parked for miles along Highway 1 beaches. Drunks stumbled into

the roadway.

Sheriff's Sgt. Joe Reyes described the scene on the north coast as "out of control." Capitola Police Lt. Vince Riccabona described the scene in his town as crowded but orderly.

Beaches along East Cliff Drive and at Rio del Mar were jammed, too, despite the fog that hugged the coastline all day. At night, the beach areas looked like war zones under the rockets' red glare.

Dominican Hospital reported treating three victims of fireworks injuries, including 19-year-old Chris Stowell of Sunnyvale. Deputies said Stowell suffered a serious eye injury when some kind of firework exploded in his face on the Esplanade at Rio del Mar just after 10 p.m. Because of the mob and confusion at the beach, deputies and firefighters were unable to determine just what had happened.

Some 3,000 persons viewed the only legal fireworks — at the county fairgrounds. The show ended in a massive traffic jam, said Sgt. Reyes.

Santa Cruz Police knew they were in for a night when Officer Andy Crain came into the office at the end of his day watch and told Sgt. Vlassis and those going on swing shift that traffic was still bumper-to-bumper coming into town.

Mike Dunbaugh abandoned his watch commander's office to join his officers out on the street.

He got a good indication of the size of the crowd about 6 o'clock when, answering a call of public urination on the wall of Togo's sandwich shop on Riverside Avenue, he saw a sign in the window: "Sorry, closed. Out of bread."

Police said the city returned to normal about 2 this morning. But, at 6 a.m., sheriff's deputies still were chasing a reveller on the beach in the mid-county area.