

Homeless Activist Defends Woman and Child

from page four

fundraising dinner was held with Congressman Sam Farr as the main guest.

About 75 demonstrators shouted slogans, sang songs, carried signs, and passed out literature to the guests as they arrived. The men in tuxedos and women in evening gowns had to tread over paper "body parts" and chalked slogans as they arrived at the banquet. One woman, Shayna Lazaravetch, was playing the recorded sounds of bombs dropping in Belgrade while protesters chanted, "Sam Farr, you have a hole in your cranium. You support depleted uranium."

At 7:16 p.m., several police officers spilled out a side door and Officer Dave LaFaver grabbed the boombox out of Shayna's arms without warning and violently twisted her thumb. Officers immediately arrested Kuo-Ling Liao, an 18-year-old UCSC student, and carted her off. The crowd followed the officers to the waiting police paddywagon, surrounded the vehicle, and demanded to know why Kuo-Ling had been arrested.

One woman clutching a small child stood in front of the police van with eight other people and refused to move until the officers explained why Kuo-Ling had been arrested. Officer LaFaver then approached the woman with the child,

ignoring several men who also were blocking the van, and proceeded to wrench her arm until she screamed in pain. Another officer attempted to pry the child out of her arms.

The police dragged her along the side of the van while she screamed and shouted, "You're hurting me!" As Officer LaFaver dragged her in front of *Street Spirit* vendor Steve Argue, he intervened.

"I could see LaFaver was brutalizing her, squeezing her hand so violently it was turning purple. I did what any grown man who has any dignity or humanity would have done," Argue stated.

The mother and child were able to escape due to Argue's physical intervention. Argue does not deny throwing a punch which allowed the mother and her child to escape the abuse of LaFaver. Nor does he apologize for it.

"I used the force necessary to end the torture and terror LaFaver was causing the mother and her child," he said.

Argue then ran around the corner, where he was tackled by LaFaver and pepper-sprayed in the eyes. LaFaver then, according to Argue, pried his mouth open and pepper-sprayed him down his throat.

According to witnesses, he was beaten by LaFaver with a billy club while lying on the ground in a fetal position. Officer Bayani and Sgt. McMahon joined

LaFaver by kicking and punching Argue while he was lying on the ground.

Argue was taken into police custody and denied medical treatment for nearly an hour despite the repeated requests of the other four people arrested. One of those arrested, Nasseem Zerriffi, desperately asked an officer to douse Steve Argue's eyes with water, since Argue could barely breathe and Zerriffi knew people have died from being pepper-sprayed.

The officer looked at Zerriffi and said, "Wah, wah, wah! He'll be fine." Zerriffi had unwittingly asked Officer LaFaver for help — the same officer who beat Argue, then charged him with felony assault on a peace officer and resisting arrest.

Argue was jailed and kept in isolation for six days despite the comments of jail officials that he was being treated "the same as any other prisoner." This was Argue's second trip to the Santa Cruz County Jail in a little over six months. He had been arrested for selling *Street Spirit* last November and jailed for four days until all charges were dropped. It is legal to sell a street newspaper in Santa Cruz.

Argue was required to provide a list of people he wanted to visit him in jail, but jail officials refused repeatedly to provide him with a piece of paper to make such a list, so he received no visitors.

Judge Robert Atack refused to lower the \$20,000 bail despite the recommendation of his own pre-trial services to release

Argue on his own recognizance due to his lack of prior offenses. On May 27, supporters bailed Argue out of jail.

At the preliminary hearing on June 7, Officer LaFaver testified he had been struck twice by the mother with the child and that he had attempted to arrest her for battery on a peace officer, a more serious charge than obstructing a police van. No such incidents appeared on the videotape. The woman's screams, however, are quite audible.

At that hearing, Atack expelled three of Argue's supporters from the courtroom; one was led off in chains for smiling.

Kuo-Ling, originally arrested on an infraction for disturbing the peace, later found her charges upgraded to a misdemeanor — most likely to justify, after the fact, that officers took her into custody rather than simply citing her on location.

News of the "Santa Cruz 5" has spread internationally. E-mails arrive daily from all across the nation and from other countries. In France, 800 people demonstrated outside the U.S. Embassy demanding they free Steve Argue. Argue faces up to four years in prison for assault and battery on a peace officer and resisting arrest. Officer LaFaver is still patrolling the streets of Santa Cruz at public expense.

To help out, please contact the Steve Argue Defense Committee at (831) 425-4467. For a copy of the videotape, make requests by e-mail at Wmnofstl@cruzio.com