

THE NIGHT OF THE BOMBING

On March 20, the night the bombing of Iraq started, several homeless and non-homeless people gathered at the Town Clock with candles, signs, and drums. The Vigil Against Two Wars simply became the 24-Hour Vigil for Peace. The news of the bombing was sobering. Even the police attitude seemed to change. Vigilers stayed and slept around the base of the Town Clock, breaking both the Sleeping Ban and the law against being in a "park" after closing hours. (The Santa Cruz City Council declared the clock area a park in 1991 to disperse earlier round-the-clock protesters).

Yet on Friday morning at 8:00 a.m. a SCPD officer gently kicked people awake and announced "No sleeping after 8 a.m." While this order from the woman in blue might make common sense, it is not the law. The law forbids sleeping between the hours of 11 p.m. and 8:30 a.m. anywhere outdoors or in a vehicle.

In late March, Homeless Services Center worker Linda Bradley announced, "The Armory is closed for the weekend," leaving space for fewer than 60 of Santa Cruz's 1500-2000 homeless people. "It closes for good on April 15th." Bradley also put out the call for more churches to sign up to be part of the ISSP shelter program since a lot of churches have dropped off lately. "We really need more churches to sign up," she said.

WINDSHIELDS SMASHED

Some who sleep in their own legally parked vehicles have faced windshield smashings and heavy vandalism in the last week, according to two reports from the Lighthouse Field area. One homeless woman at the vigil told HUFF: "I come here, not only because I oppose the war, but because I feel safer here, even with the occasional hoots and jeers from the pro-war people."

Olivia Brownrabbit, a Native American vigil organizer, was assaulted by a man who witnesses described as "deranged." He attacked her as she swept with a broom and knocked her down on the sidewalk. The assault resulted in a trip to Dominican Hospital for 11 stitches. Lt. Patty Sapone of the SCPD, in the course of taking the report of the assault and supervising the arrest of the suspect, announced that, "If people are sleeping here again tonight, they will be ticketed."

"This is what they do every time we call them," remarked Shelsea Hodge. "They turn on the victims. They target us."

FLOWERS FOR PEACE

Dopey set up some madrone branches with yarn strung between them. Over the yarn he hung bunches of wisteria and roses. As he and other vigilers hung more flowers, yarn, and branches, the Running Peace Fence was built. Not only was it a delight to see, it wafted a floral fragrance as a backdrop to the Collateral Damage statue monument which vigilers had decorated with candles and flowers as well.

Officer Tomacelli did not agree. "It's an illegal structure," she said, and insisted it be removed "because you can't have a structure on public property without a permit." As a non-commercial display, Dopey's Running Peace Fence did not conform to the display size limitations set forth by city ordinance. "But it's art!" Dopey wailed. Tomacelli returned with Officer Phelps and two other CSO officers to demand the yarn-covered flowers be removed.

HUFF activists noted that "No display of flowers without a permit" needed to be added to the other forbidden activities the police had already insisted on, such as the "No tarot card reading without a permit" enforced by Officer Brandt, who issued a \$162 citation to Jason Paschal, a black homeless man who Brandt observed receiving a dollar after giving a tarot card reading.

Within the last year, Paschal had been targeted for possessing hypodermic needles (he's a diabetic) and asking for a donation (panhandling within three feet of a person), and was forced to move his "spiritual reading" off the concrete water-pipe box onto a table of his own making (no non-commercial displays on public property).

The vigil continued to create a "liberated zone" in spite of gentrification laws against blowing bubbles, playing hacky-sack, tossing a frisbee, playing hopscotch, or bouncing a ball. Olivia Brownrabbit's modus operandi was "to kill 'em with kindness," she said, "though when I first came down and started taking police badge numbers, 'cause they were harassing the kids, police took my property four times in three hours, saying it was 'unattended.' On the eight-block walk to and from the police station, I met lots of supporters."

April 2003

At presstime, Santa Cruz police had announced the concrete triangle around the town clock, a traditional vigiling place, was a park that would be closed from 1 a.m. to 6 a.m. Police moved the protesters to the sidewalk and presented five vigilers with \$162 camping tickets for being asleep. In Baghdad, a fresh round of bombs fell.



"Stop the Madness (Bush) No War"

Photographic illustration by Tiffany Sankary