

# This man's money buys love for others

Montecito resident Milton Schmerzler continues to be the "angel of mercy" for the Jessie Hopkins Hinchee Foundation, operator of a Goleta group home for severely handicapped, non-ambulatory children.

With the pilot home observing its third anniversary this October, Schmerzler reports the loving environment it offers is helping these retarded children make significant gains in their development.

Schmerzler said the foundation is gratified enough by the successes of its first home that it's planning to develop more in this area. He estimated there are an additional 30 children on the South Coast with handicaps of similar severity.

Schmerzler finds that keeping six children in the Goleta home is costing less than half what it would to keep them in a state institution. However, fundraising is a major challenge for the Goleta facility, with Supplemental Security Income and federal revenue sharing covering only about two-thirds of the home's operating expenses. The home doesn't require parents of the benefitting children to contribute anything.

It's in the area of funding that Schmerzler has played a key role in the project. The retired founder of Santa Barbara Locksmiths and a Santa Barbara resident since 1948, Schmerzler bought the Goleta house himself for the foundation upon its formation. He then "sold" the house to the foundation for \$75,000 less than what he paid for it, himself paid for \$30,000 worth of remodeling, and now is making the mortgage payments (to himself) himself! On top of this, Schmerzler participates in fundraising as a member of the foundation

board, and "I've had to make a couple of contributions from time to time to meet deficits," he said.

Though this is obviously a project close to his heart, with the group home concept apparently new for dealing with such youngsters, Schmerzler himself was blessed with three healthy, normal children. He's thankful for that, he said.

The whole idea behind this project is to provide the handicapped children a loving, family environment in which to live and be cared for, and which is within reasonable distance of their parents and other loved ones. Otherwise, families would have to place such children in homes and institutions too far away for maintaining regular contact.

Schmerzler got in touch with this need when he was studying law in Ventura, something he undertook to occupy himself after the crushing blow of his first wife's death. In law school he met a classmate, Leslie Sinclair Nixon, whose own daughter was of this severely handicapped type. Nixon had recently remarried into a family with three children and she was no longer able to keep her teenaged daughter, Jessica Sinclair, at home. Leslie had tried a home in Pasadena, where the girl "nearly died," and then a place in Cambria, which Leslie exhausted herself driving to and from on weekends.

Hearing of her troubles, Schmerzler suggested that a local home be formed for such children.

He said it took about a year to make the necessary preparations to occupy the home. While the remodeling converted the garage

to three bedrooms for the resident handicapped children, Schmerzler said a large part of the delay was caused by the need for a setback variance for the garage conversion.

Complicating things was a petition drive among neighborhood residents circulating misconceptions about what the home was for. Despite the hubbub, the home has ended up with an extremely low profile, with its children non-ambulatory.

The home also is occupied by several members of its staff, including director Christine Sullivan, whom Schmerzler commended for "her dedication to the job she is doing at the home." There also is an assistant director, three other fulltime employees, and four part-time employees. These fragile, multiply-handicapped children — weighty as they become older — require a substantial amount of care, Schmerzler pointed out.

He finds that visitors are impressed with the cleanliness and genuine home-like atmosphere of the residence.

The children can be secure in the knowledge that they need never leave. The house is licensed for both children and adults, Schmerzler said, though the life span of these individuals is substantially shorter than normal.

Schmerzler said children have been transferred from institutions and blossomed in their learning in the loving environment. "They understand a lot more than people think," he said.

Schmerzler indicated the name, "Jessie Hopkins Hinchee Foundation," itself reflects love and devotion. Hinchee, the late mother of Nixon, raised her five children after her husband died in a coal mining accident in Kentucky. Hinchee died six months before the foundation was founded.

Schmerzler is helping plan for a third annual barbecue benefitting the foundation scheduled for 2 to 5 p.m. Sunday, October 14 at Dos Pueblos Ranch. (See accompanying article for details.) Fund raising for the cause has taken various forms, including sponsorship of a patio party at the Santa Barbara National Horse Show, a Christmas card sale, rummage sale, give-away of a Ford Mustang prototype acquired from Anne Francis, and give-away of a 1940 Ford deluxe opera coupe donated by Schmerzler.

## Barbecue to benefit Hinchee Foundation

A third annual barbecue benefitting the Jessie Hopkins Hinchee Foundation has been scheduled for 2 to 5 p.m. Sunday, October 14 at Dos Pueblos Ranch, seven miles north of Goleta.

The barbecue is among fundraisers supporting the foundation's board and care home for severely handicapped children. According to barbecue organizer and foundation board member Milton

person going to help defray foundation expenses.

Musical entertainment will be provided, and there also will be a no host bar.

The event will be held at the beach barbecue area of Dos Pueblos Ranch, which can be reached by taking Highway 101 to the Dos Pueblos Canyon turnoff. Signs direct will one from there. Barbecue tickets are available in advance



MILTON SCHMERZLER

and Memorial Day. This followed eight years of active duty in U.S. Army intelligence, which led to his commanding the Army intelligence reserve unit in Santa Barbara.

Schmerzler also served for 10 years on the city of Santa Barbara police and fire commission.

Before the military, he learned the locksmith business in New York City, working there for famous locksmith Charles Courtenay.

It was about the time of his first marriage that he came west to California, and almost moved into Westwood Village, except that an acquaintance urged him to give Santa Barbara a look first. "The minute I saw (it) I knew it was the place," Schmerzler said. When he retired from locksmithing three years ago, he built a luxury sailboat for world sailing which his schedule hasn't permitted.

A month ago he married Lorraine Goodnight, resident of Montecito since 1970.

Those who helped start the foundation and have been among its leaders include Dr. and Mrs. Richard Mansmann; Don Cunningham of Tri-Counties Regional Center; nurse Barbara Hall; Myrna Gaskin; and Linda Ad-