

He keeps an eye on mall

Millsap wears a lot of hats at Salinas' Northridge Mall

By **CHRISTOPHER ORTIZ**
Business 101

QUESTION: What do you like most about your job?

ANSWER: Well, I think what I like most is the diversity. I get to do everything from walk the property and talk to the tenants every day, to working with the national people, the national chains as well as the mom-and-pop centers for whom this is their only store. They live here, they've lived here their whole lives, and this is their sole means of income — I like that part of it. There are so many different facets of the business, so it's not like a department store where you're enclosed in four walls — you really get out.

The property is 97 acres so it's about a million square feet in the retail space. But then not only that, but the diversity of getting into the community.

Q: What are some of challenges?

A: Working with the budget restraints that we have. We plan to paint the exterior of the mall the first of next year We would have liked to have done that earlier but due to budget factors, we had to wait for the first of next year.

And just some of the issues in Salinas that we deal with, the kids and just trying to keep it a safe place — and it is a safe place. We pride ourselves on it; we've done a lot of stuff to make it safer. But you're always going to have things that come up any time you're in a public place. So those are some of the issues we face on a day-to-day basis.

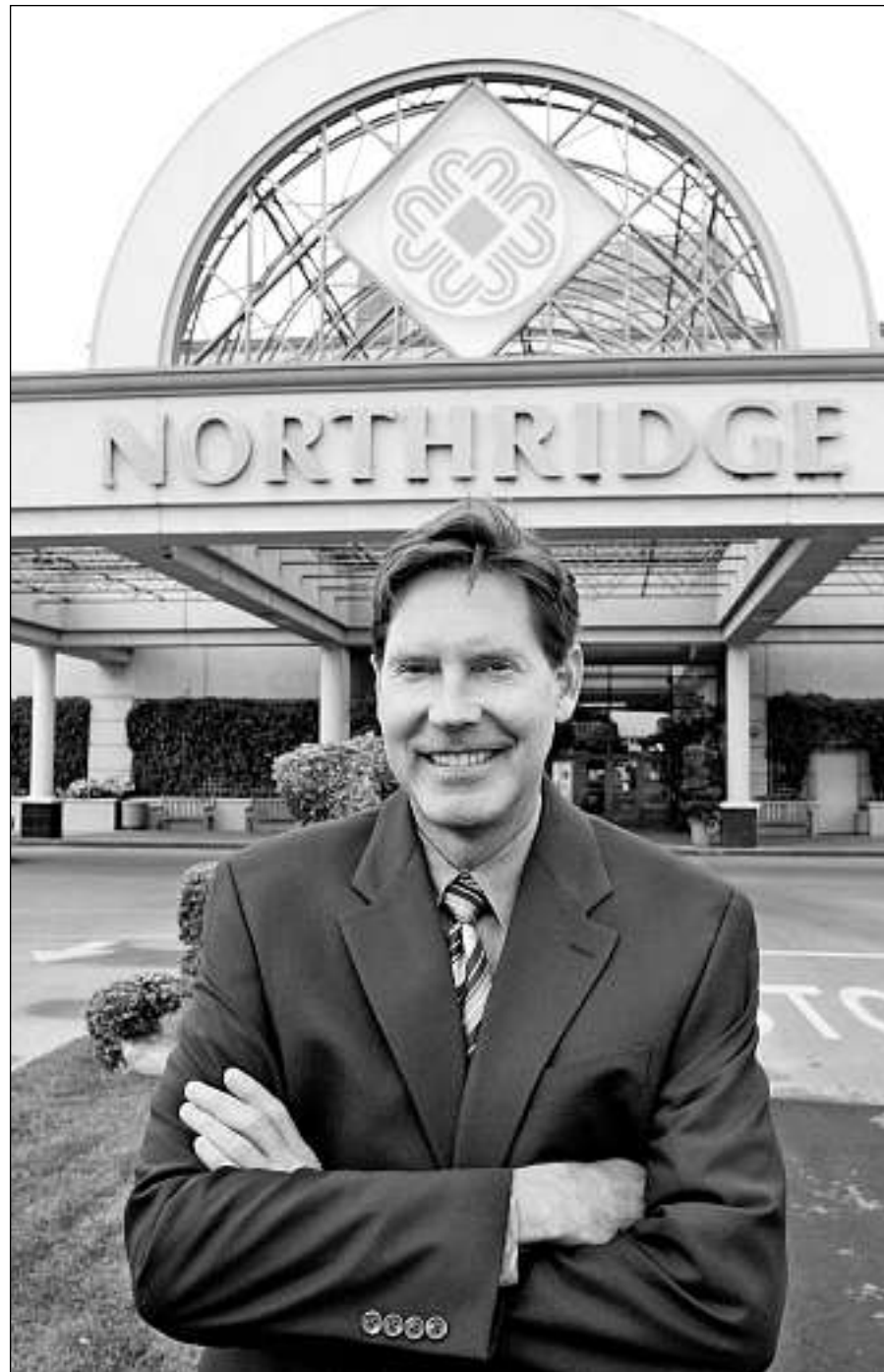
Q: What is a typical day for you?

A: A typical day is pretty difficult to describe. Generally, we work a lot on the computer ... walking the property a couple of times a day, figuring what's going on, what needs to get done. There's the business analysis part of it. We assist the tenants in terms of marketing the center, promoting the center. Our whole goal is to bring foot traffic to the mall so the tenants can increase their sales from the year before.

Then there are the day-to-day operational things. You know, things that you've got to take care of.

Q: Given safety concerns in the past, what is the mall doing in terms of safety?

A: We have what is called the "scan program," which basically is a closed-



RICHARD GREEN/BUSINESS 101

Greg Millsap, senior property manager of Northridge Mall in Salinas stands Oct. 30 near the front entrance.

circuit camera system. We are able to monitor every area of the mall. We can watch, we can listen, we intervene and we can maintain the safety of the center through our camera system. We also have 24-hour security. Seven days a week someone is always on staff all the time. Customers are welcome (to ask for) an escort to their car after dark, if they need assistance with their packages. We are always helping customers There

are a lot of things that we have done to not only increase the security but the perception of safety at the mall. And that's what it's all about: People want to feel safe where they're shopping, whether it's at a grocery store or The Gap or going to a movie at night or eating at a restaurant. Their No. 1 major concern is their safety.

Q: Is competition from growing cities, such as Marina, a concern for the mall?

A: We draw from a good 30-minute

ABOUT MY JOB

Business 101's Christopher Ortiz sat down late last month with Greg Millsap, senior property manager for Northridge Mall in Salinas. Millsap, 47, has worked at the mall for a year and a half. He attended college at Texas A&M University, where he studied retailing. Originally from Texas, he lives in Salinas. Annually, the mall, which has 120 stores, including Macy's, Sears, Best Buy, Century 14 Theaters and Firestone Tire and Service, generates \$200 million in sales and serves 5 million customers. Millsap also serves on the Salinas Valley Chamber of Commerce board of directors.

drive diameter. So, we have people that come shop here from Gilroy, Monterey, Seaside, Marina. So our main competition at this point from the perspective of another shopping center is Del Monte Center (in Monterey). We look at development, like what is going to go across (Highway) 101 at the auto center We look at that as an opportunity rather than competition, because we feel it brings more people to north Salinas. We will partake in their traffic and they'll partake in ours.

Together, it makes for a stronger retail environment.

But in those terms, Best Buy has helped us because we feel like, and customers have told us, they no longer have to drive to Gilroy to go to a Best Buy, they can do that here. And their grand opening was just phenomenal. They did much better than they thought they would. And that is very encouraging, in terms of consumers being able to get what they want in Salinas. We are encouraged with that.

Q: What's in store for the mall?

A: We're looking to update the first of next year — new paint on the exterior ... so that is the next big thing for us, is to get the updated look to it. We are also looking, in the one- to two-year range, to possibly going after a couple of restaurants. We feel that is a great opportunity for the property. For the customer to stay, shop, go to a movie and then be able to have a sit-down dining experience rather than go across the street or go to Westridge. They can stay on the property for their dining and shopping and entertainment. That's the whole goal — to keep the customer for all three of those purposes.

Q: As property manager, do you get a discount at the mall?

A: No, we are a customer like anyone else.

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