

# The FEB 20 1990 Reactor

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## ...And in those days

Among the many things from my childhood now on the endangered or extinct lists are the family-run dairy and the mom n' pop grocery where the owners lived above or behind the store.

I had no idea at age 13 that the glass bottles of Fenton Dairy milk I helped deliver to the porches of Santa Rosa were close to being the last of their kind, soon to be driven out by paper, supermarkets and huge dairy corporations.

Neither did I realize that the lifestyle of our neighbors the Santarinis, who lived above their Black and White Market, would be almost incomprehensible to kids growing up 40 years later.

Planning Commissions, 7-Elevens and Safeway have combined to make the idea of combining family home and neighborhood grocery obsolete.

However, there was one store in Pacifica that operated in the old familiar pattern when I first came to town, 27-1/2 years ago. Louise's store in Rockaway Beach was a big old red barn of a building. The bare wooden floor had never been painted or tiled. Louise Cerri ran it with her brother Gidge. They served Rockaway residents with the neighborhood news along with the daily bread, milk, etc.

Louise's was the Greyhound bus stop for Pacifica, and provided other conveniences I've forgotten. I

stopped at Louise's at least once a week to pick up a bussed-in package for the *Tribune*, but it was several years before I chanced to stop and find Romeo Santarini behind the counter, ringing up the cash register. I learned then that Louise was Romeo's aunt, and the idea of living behind or above the family grocery was a real family tradition.

Louise's store closed 20 years ago. A year later the old red barn of a building was demolished to make way for Fassler Avenue.

There's no sign left there was ever a friendly little grocery store on the southeast corner of Rockaway Beach Avenue and Coast Highway, where the owners were ready to serve people at all hours because they lived behind the store and ran their lives to suit the needs of their customers.

As Buzz Haskins bulldozers were getting ready to turn it into rubble, the *Tribune* said goodbye with a front page story about "the friendliest store in town... it smelled like a country store should ... from gasoline to coffee to peppermint candy."

In the early days it had the only phone in Rockaway Beach. Louise's family took over in the late '30s, but the old store had been part of the Rockaway scene since at least 1921. By the time it closed down it had been in business for at least a half century.

That's a record that is unlikely to be matched by any of the present supermarkets, stores more likely to smell of computers than peppermint.

The people of Sharp Park are luckier. Their oldest store, Andersons, closed only in recent years after an 80-year run, and County Road Market is still there, reminding us of the days of Salada Beach and the Ocean Shore Railroad.

The old stores sold more than groceries. They were a way of life.