Palace Art leaps into new building

By MARIA GAURA
Sentinel staff writer   3-1-88

SANTA CRUZ — Monday was Leap Day, a timely occasion for Palace Art and Office Supply to jump down the Mall to a new home. The venerable art supply center chose Monday to cut the ribbon on its new store, only two doors from its old Pacific Avenue location.

Col. Frank Trowbridge, the store's founder, and Grace Johansen, the store's first full-time employee, stepped forward to cut the ribbon with a smile and a large paper-cutter. After 40 years, Johansen still works as the company's bookkeeping manager.

Mayor John Laird and Supervisor Gary Patton both presented official proclamations honoring the Trowbridge family. Columnist Bruce Bratton was master of ceremonies.

"When I came to Santa Cruz 20 years ago, I was told to come in and say hi to Mr. Trowbridge," Laird said. "I've been doing the same ever since."

"If anyone has ever told you that I'm against growth and development, no sir-ee," Patton said. "This is the kind of growth and development we need downtown."

Also in attendance at the opening ceremony were four Trowbridge grandtoddlers, who assisted their parents by tearing down the paper covering the store's big display window and revealing an exhibit of children's art.

The grand opening of the new store, which boasts twice the floor space of the old, is just the first expansion project planned by the Trowbridge family for this year.

Opened in 1949 by Col. Trowbridge, Palace Stationers (as the store was called back then) has grown along with the Trowbridge family. Today Col. Trowbridge's sons Frank, Roy and Gary run the Palace operation, which includes another retail store on 41st Avenue and a commercial sales division also located in Capitola.

The 41st Avenue retail store will be doubling its floor space this year, while the Commercial Sales Division is in the process of buying a 12,000-square-foot warehouse.

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Grace Johansen and Frank Trowbridge celebrate store.