



Connie Marshall bags up a load of groceries for a customer Friday inside the popular Aromas market. Photos by Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

End of an era in Aromas

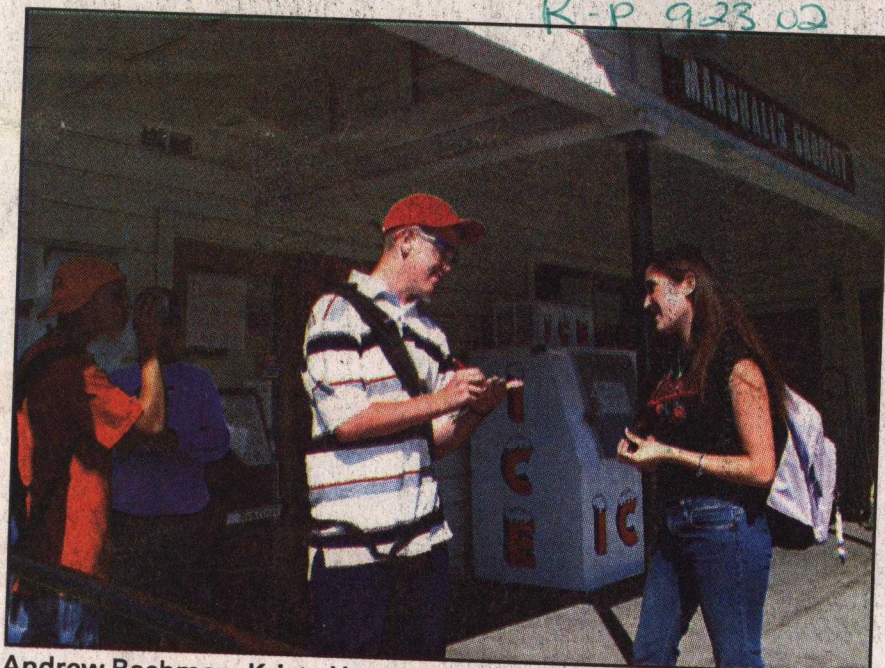
Business - m
Dolan Marshall leaves a legacy to be remembered for generations

By DANIEL S. HINDIN
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

Dolan Marshall lived on the same intersection in the same town for his entire 80-year life. He lived, breathed and bled Aromas. The tiny foothill hamlet's spirit flowed through his veins like a lifeblood and he, in turn, gave life to the town he loved.

"This was Mr. Aromas," said 21-year Aromas resident George Morton. "There might have been someone before him who was more Mr. Aromas than him, but I never met him."

It was only natural for Marshall to run the market that came to be the business around which the town revolved. Marshall ran Marshall's Grocery on the intersection of Carpenteria and Blohm roads in downtown Aromas from 1947



Andrew Bachman, Kristy Huerta and several other students wait for rides home after school in front of Marshall's Grocery.

until his death in April of 2001, almost a year to the date after the passing of his beloved wife of 53 years, Rose.

For many of its 54 years Mar-

shall's was the only general grocery market in town. But Marshall's was more than just a market, and Marshall

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Photos by Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

Connie Marshall packs bags of groceries for a customer Friday inside Marshall's Grocery in Aromas.

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was more than just a businessman.

Marshall, whom everybody in Aromas — including his children — refer to familiarly as Dolan, acted as town patriarch and creditor, often acting as a second father for the community's children and many times providing young families with enough money to purchase their first home or automobile, sometimes running credit tabs for as many as 40 years.

The market, which most townspeople refer to familiarly as Dolan's, acted as a general meeting place, the town's top Halloween trick-or-treating destination and a place where every newborn baby was taken to be weighed on the giant scale that stood in the rear of the store.

"My parents were an example of a lot of people in this town," said Marshall's daughter Connie Marshall. "They came back from World War II (where Marshall fought in Okinawa) and worked hard. They were just good people, and the town was full of them. It still is."

After Marshall died, two of his children, Dolene Holmes and Connie Marshall, took over management of the market. Holmes drives every day from her Monterey home to help run the store, and Connie Marshall quit her job as a flight attendant and sold her house in Boise, Idaho, to move back into the family home that is attached to the market.

Together, the two have kept the market running smoothly for the past year and a half, but a few weeks ago they decided that it was too much for the two of them to handle. "It's been a hard decision," Connie Marshall said, "but we decided we had to do it."

The exact closing date has yet to be determined. Currently, the sisters are trying to clear their shelves by selling everything at much-reduced prices. A steady flow of loyal customers still crowd the aisles at the eerily half-empty store, which is expected to close within the next few weeks.

According to the Marshall family, numerous offers have already been made for the purchase of the property. Some of the potential buyers have said they intend on continuing to run a market out of the building, but some have no such intentions. "Hopefully whoever buys it will keep it as a grocery store," Connie Marshall said. "Hopefully they'll keep it like it is. People have said they want to keep the name, but in reality it probably won't happen."

While many community members share Connie Marshall's sentiments — "If it doesn't turn out to be a store, it'll be a real tragedy," said Marshall's niece Bonnie Mahler — some have mixed feelings about the future of the property. "I would hope it'll be a market," Morton said. "But at the same time, it would be fitting for the market to close — kind of like retiring a jersey."

The Marshall family history in Aromas goes far beyond Dolan Marshall. His father Homer Marshall owned the market previously, and his "Grandpa Robbins" (no-



Dolan and Rose Marshall

body seems to remember his first name) owned Marshall's service station across the lot from the market previous to that.

All of the many patrons who still pass through the market each day have their own fond memories of Marshall and his market. "Dolan was just about the greatest person you could ever know," said Mahler, the owner of Aromas' Ducky Deli. "He was my uncle, my friend, someone we all loved. He was just there for the community always."

"Halloween was always big candy bars here," said Aromas resident Belinda Jones as she waited in the checkout line last week. "Full size. Everywhere else gave you those mini ones, but you always got the full size here."

"Dolan would always keep the store closed on Sunday's, but someone would always call or knock on the door needing to buy something or another," Connie Marshall said. "Then someone else would come in and need something else. My dad would finally say 'phooey' and just keep it open all day." "He probably worked 18 hours a day and thought about it another four," Morton said.

But people don't just remember Marshall for his market; they remember him as an outspoken supporter of the individuality of his beloved town. He fought hard to keep the town's park away from developers and to convince the town to secede from the Pajaro Valley Unified School District and form its own school board. He was also one of the founders of the town's first volunteer fire department.

It is clear that Marshall is already terribly missed throughout the town of just over 2,000. Connie Marshall said she has shared in tears with many customers since her father's death. The man's legacy will surely live on for generations to come.

Perhaps Morton, a longtime friend of Marshall's who would stop into the market every morning whether he needed to make a purchase or not, summed it up best. "Dolan would always take a walk through the park every morning," Morton recalled. "Some mornings I swear I see Dolan and his dog Lucy out of the corner of my eye. But I turn and look and of course they're not there. Although he's gone on to the little grocery in the sky, there's still a lot here to remind us."

Tilting one's ears up to the hills to the east, one can almost hear a collective, "Amen."