

Photographer Recalls Old Santa Cruz

New Development: Ed Webber Sells His Photo Shops

The picture has changed on the Pacific Avenue Mall with the sale Friday of Webber's Photo Shop.

The sale of the store on the mall and another at Rancho Del Mar Center in Aptos, ends nearly 44 years in the photography business for Ed Webber, who took the first pictures published in The Sentinel back in 1937.

New owner of Webber's photo shops is Klaus Meyerhof of Los Altos, who currently owns stores in Los Gatos and Monterey.

Webber, a Santa Cruz native, got his first exposure to news photography with the San Francisco Chronicle from 1935 until he returned to Santa Cruz to open a photo business in 1937.

Webber recalls the first picture to appear in The Morning Sentinel back in August of that year.

"A little girl was kidnapped and oh, gee, the police and everybody was going ape trying to find her.

"We found out where she lived and went

there, but nobody was home. We 'liberated' a picture of the girl from the house, copied it and took it over to San Jose to be engraved (there were no engravers in Santa Cruz at the time).

"We ran the picture of the little girl and she was located the next day," Webber recalls.

Webber won a number of Associated Press photo awards during his 25 years as Sentinel photographer.

In the early days, Webber took his photos with a 4x5 camera. Taking a picture was a hefty job back then for the photographer had to lug around practically a studio-full of equipment to get one shot.

"I used to take two pictures of the subject and then hope he had his eyes open and wasn't blinking," Webber recalls.

Of the hundreds of events he photographed, the one he most vividly recalls was the downtown flood of 1955. Perhaps that's because it hit right at his doorstep.

Webber recalls that early on the eve-

ning of the flood he and Sentinel Editor Gordon "Scotchy" Sinclair had gone out to take pictures of areas of town that were prone to winter flooding.

"I came back downtown to find my own shop flooding," Webber recalls. "Scotchy and Arnold (News Editor Arnold Wechter) helped me dig things out of my basement. We used candles because the power had been off for several hours.

"I remember looking at the back door and watching water squirt about three feet through the keyhole. The water must have been three or four feet deep outside. We stacked fixer (chemical used in developing photos) against the door to keep the water out. It's a wonder we all didn't drown that night."

Sinclair recalls another harrowing incident in which he and Webber sped up the coast to get photos of a boat breaking up in the surf near Davenport.

"Ed was hanging over the cliff taking pictures. I had one arm around him and

the other on a bush until the bush started to give way," Sinclair recalls.

He also remembers being with Webber in a sinking boat and almost flying into the Giant Dipper while photographing old Windjammer yacht races. Webber, says Sinclair, was an excellent aerial photographer.

Taking pictures, Webber says, gave him a real sense of community involvement. "You just don't realize how well informed you get to be doing that."

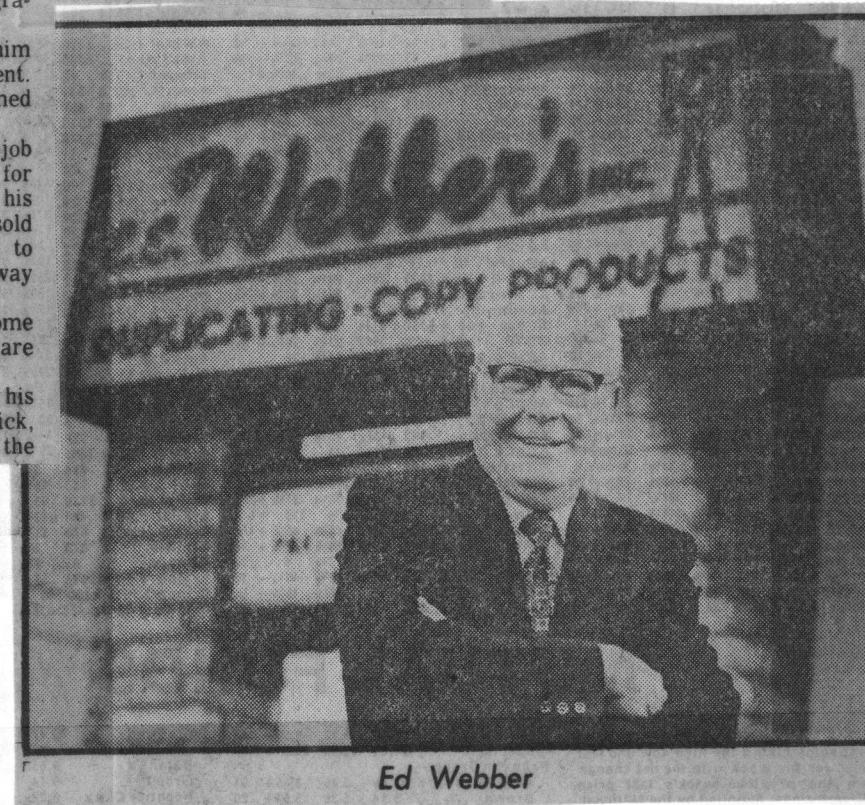
But, as any photographer knows, the job is accompanied by a deluge of requests for pictures from friends. So, after ending his news photographer career when he sold his store's commercial department to Vester Dick in 1962, Webber also put away his cameras.

Now, he says, he has a Minolta at home somewhere. "I think the batteries are dead," he says.

At the same time Webber sold his commercial department to Vester Dick, he expanded into a new area with the

advent of Eastman Kodak's copy duplicator, the Verifax Copier.

The well-known Santa Cruz businessman will continue E.E. Webber's Inc., a printing equipment and copier supply business at 502 River St.



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