

## People and places

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# Santa Cruz Market: Corner mom-and-pop grocery store

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SANTA CRUZ — The Cream O' Wheat now cooks in 30 seconds. And, no-salt potato chips reflect the healthy state of American shoppers. But, like Bon Ami or Diamond Matches, Santa Cruz Market is pretty much the same as it was in 1964, '54 or '44.

The boxes of corn flakes, sacks of flour and cans of spinach are neatly arranged on the six long rows of shelves. The staples of three generations.

Packs of Pall Mall cigarettes are still behind the counter near the door. Milk is in the cooler in the back ... by the Pepsi.

The hardwood floor is spotless, hiding the footprints of thousands of Garfield Park residents.

Like a dozen or more corner grocery stores left in the area, the fact that the Santa Cruz Market has not changed is one of its biggest attractions.

If you looked in the dictionary under "mom-and-pop grocery store," you'd expect to find a picture of Santa Cruz Market. Close. It's a brother-and-sister store, owned for the past nine years by Ki Hong and his sister, Su.

"One lady — she was maybe 85 or 90 years old — came in and looked around. She said she used to come in as a child. She said not much has changed," explains Su. Ki has appointed her spokesman.

Another man recently stepped in off California Avenue to buy himself some memories. He was back in Santa Cruz after 20 years and was just driving past the old neighborhood. "He said it looks the same," says Su.

## Has served Garfield Park area for years

The market, she says, is reported to be more than 100 years old. A neighbor recently gave the Honges an old photograph of the market, taken shortly after the turn of the century. The sign then read: P.P. Wettstein Cash Grocery Store. A shopper's horse is shown hitched to a post at the side of the market.

Back then, the store was owned by the Paul Wettstein, who had come to Santa Cruz in 1905. In 1923, he and his partner, Rupert Lease, purchased Hinkles Cash Store at the head of Pacific Avenue. The building later became the famous McHugh and Bianchi market/gourmet food store. It was torn down and replaced by the World Savings and Loan building.

The Honges purchased the market just six months after coming to the United States from their native Korea. "You know North Korea and South Korea were always fighting. It makes us nervous," says Su. She gave up a job as a teacher and her brother a job as an engineer to come to America.

They moved in with a sister who had emigrated to San Jose earlier. Just six months after arriving, Ki and Su bought the market from another Korean family.

Being new to America and the grocery store business, the Honges say they couldn't have made it without their customers.

"People would say this is good brand and we would order it," Su says. "The neighbors really helped us. I love this neighborhood," she says.

Many of those first customers still shop at Santa Cruz Market. A lot of UCSC students have moved into the Circles area of Santa Cruz. "We have many come in for four years and then there are new ones," Su adds.

Nearly all of the patrons of Santa Cruz Market also shop at a large supermarket. "They come in here for something they forgot or something they ran out of," she explains.

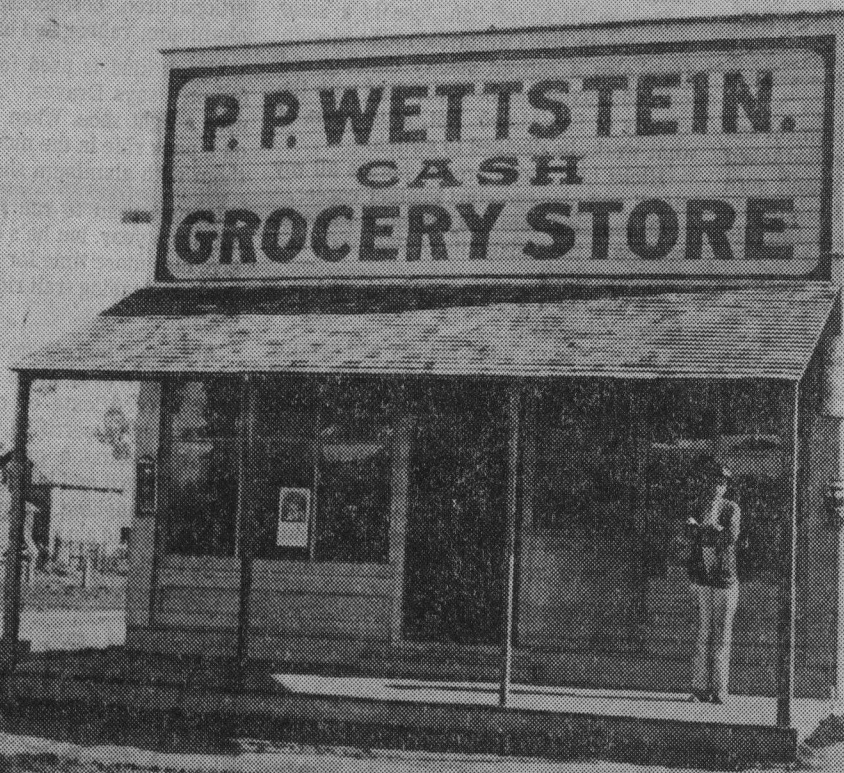
Keeping the store open from 7:30 a.m. to 8 p.m. seven days a week is a full-time job-and-a-half for both of the Honges.

"No day off," says Su. An hour or two once in a while is the only break they get.

Stocking the shelves remains the hardest job after nine years. "Sometimes there are 200 boxes in the aisles. It looks like a lot. But, when they're all put away on the shelves, it is not so much," she says.

Brother and sister get along remarkably well, despite the long hours together. "We argue sometimes about this or that. But not too much," says Su.

Outside on the stoop of their store, Ki and Su Hong hold hands and smile for the photographer. The picture shows they like their store, they like their neighborhood and they like each other.



Paul Wettstein opened the market in 1905.





Ki Hong and his sister Su own Santa Cruz Market.

Dan Coyro/Sentinel