

# Memories of the Original Catalyst

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Do you have fond memories of the original Catalyst Coffee House and Delicatessen in the old Saint George Hotel? It was a magical place where "town and gown" could meet and socialize. That was the purpose of this enterprise started in 1966 when the University was new. Al and Patti DiLudovico, U.C.S.C. Administrator Bryan Stockey and Santa Cruz community leaders financed the opening by selling shares to faculty members and city citizens.

The Coffee house more than served this purpose as a gathering place for students, faculty members, musicians, authors, politicians and local residents. Patti chose the name the Catalyst and drew on her background as a folk singer to create a relaxed welcoming atmosphere, featuring 25 cent mugs of coffee and delicatessen sandwiches for 75 cents served at tables around the fountain in the many windowed garden room.

There were chess games, poetry

readings by Morton Marcus and Al Young, music by folk singing groups, and bands including D.A. Peter Chang on the trumpet. Local authors included James Baldwin, Henry Miller and Peter Beagle. Patti remembers a magical afternoon in the Colonial Ballroom when Peter Beagle read portions of his "Last Unicorn" (one of my favorite books). He was surrounded by a green glow as the sunlight streamed

through the stained glass window.

The establishment served beer and wine and the college students

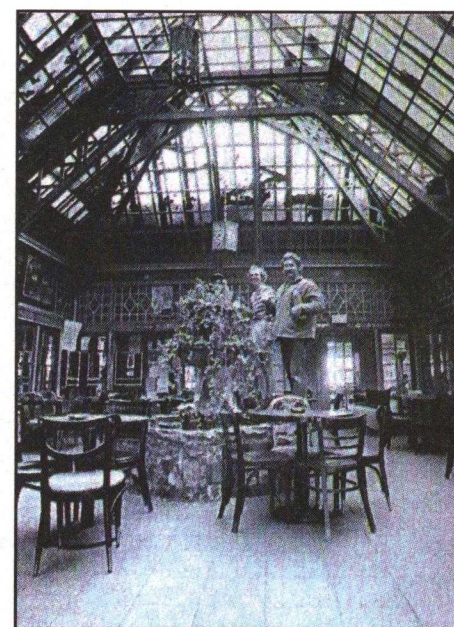
formed a custom of celebrating their twenty-first birthdays there. Historian Caroline Swift recalls waiting for the stroke of midnight to drink the beer that was waiting for her on the bar. Columnist Lee Quarnstrom stated, "It was one of the few places that courted the hip/hippie crowd."

The Catalyst was sold to Randall Crane in 1969 and later moved to Pacific Avenue where it is in full swing as a nightclub

today. Al and Patti DiLudovico entered the world of community involvement with emphasis on helping people. Al went to work for the Community Action Board and founded Food and Nutrition Services now known as Community Bridges, a tri-county meals program for seniors, Meals on Wheels for shut-ins, a breakfast program for needy children and senior transportation services. Gary Patton stated at one time, "Al came out of the tradition of political confrontation, always arguing and advocating for the poor and those who need help from the community."

Later, he served on Governor Jerry Brown's Inner City task Force in Watts and East Oakland, and worked for Cal Rural. With Laney Trout and Eric Hansch, he started Santa Cruz Community Credit Union for low-income individuals and inter-city minorities. He was working with Leon Panetta on the possibility of nation wide Community Credit unions

As Chairman of "Operation Wilder," he worked with a group of dedicated Santa Cruz people to save the Wilder Ranch from developers. The group was successful in its



Patti and Al DiLudovico of the Catalyst

efforts to have the state purchase the ranch for a State Park.

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His last work was serving as Executive Director for Housing for Independent People known as H.I.P. The organization, based in San Jose, developed housing for special needs population including mentally ill, developmentally disabled and single-room occupancy hotel rehabilitation for the elderly. In order to accomplish this, the organization purchased 12 hotels including the Resetar Hotel in Watsonville.

To provide housing for the chronically mentally ill, they built housing in three locations: Eff Street, Casa Linda and Casa Felix through Housing and Urban Development on property that was often donated. There is a documentary about the Julian Homeless Center and Al led the battle to secure housing for people with HIV AIDS. Viviente I and Viviente II are two homes providing housing for Developmentally Handicapped Children. The name was chosen by Patti who worked along side Al in all of his many endeavors.

Among the many plaques honoring Al, there is a favorite of Patti's. It reads, "IT'S HIP TO HELP. THANK YOU AL DILUDOVICO FOR HOUSING THOUSANDS OF CALIFORNIANS"

Someone should write a book about this fascinating couple. ■

