

# Good friends gather for sentimental show

## Final curtain drops tonight on the Capitola Theater

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CAPITOLA — On her penultimate night, the first lady of film in Capitola sat in her director's chair, her big white bun bobbing up and down as friends and fans filed in and thanked her.

"I didn't want to be there on the last night," said Audrey Jacobs, sole proprietor of the Capitola Theater, which closes tonight. "Initially I thought it was too painful."

But Jacobs said she would be there, taking tickets like she has for 40 years. Happily, the slightly frayed theater seats were filled with good friends Friday night to help ease her pain.

"I can remember coming here when it was a brand new theater," said Maribeth Craig, a longtime Soquel resident. "It's a fixture of the area. I hate to see it go."

"It's always disappointing to see an establishment like this go," said her husband, Frank Craig.

But the mood was far from maudlin as locals chatted in the ticket line and shared their memories.

"We're going to miss all the gum sticking to our feet," said Stuart Wisong, who has come to the theater for 25 years. "I'll also miss the old (lobby) couch, which is older than the theater."

Wisong's friend, Norbert Benecke of Aptos, has come to the theater every Wednesday for 18 years with a big pizza in hand. He said now he's going to have to find a new weeknight diversion.

Alayne Meeks of Soquel, who has come to the theater for 20 years, said she'd miss the Friday nights, the popcorn and the special way "The Capitola" sold lemonade — always putting the ice in last. Meeks added that almost every night there was some problem with the projector, and she wouldn't have it any other way.

Amie Forest of Capitola credits the theater with saving her post-progeny social life.

"Since my sons were born, this has been my main date," Forest said.

She and her husband, Karl, remember the separate "cry room" with great fondness because their kids could cry like crazy and they could still watch the film. Karl Forest said one side of the couch in the cry room was held up with a brick, and if you leaned back too far it would tip over.

"We're very, very sad to see it go," Amie Forest said.

Jacobs had originally planned to close the theater on Thursday night. But so many people called when they found out about the last show, she wanted to be sure everyone got a ticket. So she ran it for two extra nights.

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— *Stuart Wisong,*  
*25-year customer*

Jacobs chose "The Three Musketeers" starring Gene Kelly for the last shows because it was one of the first films shown in the theater after it opened in August 1948. While most came to see Audrey and the theater for the last time, a few came to check out Gene Kelly and the swords.

Bergen Franklin, who's been alive for only a quarter of the time Jacobs has taken tickets in the little booth, was one of those.

"You know the part where it's all, 'one for all ... uh,'" said Franklin before scampering off to fence with a buddy.

Standing in the long line at the popcorn stand, minutes before the picture began, Sherrie Yabu mulled over the things she would miss most.

"I'll miss that it's local, that it's little, that it's funky, that it's reasonable," she said. "Just like the old times."