

Rancho Del Mar Gottschalks quietly closes

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Watsonville store to remain open; Aptos Comfort Company to expand *PR 7-31-83*

By MICHAEL SEVILLE
OF THE REGISTER-PAJARONIAN

Aptos shoppers have one less choice when hoping to shop locally with the closure of one of the largest corporate retailers in the area this past weekend.

On Saturday, the Gottschalks in the Rancho Del Mar shopping center quietly closed its doors for good on a barren store offering only the slimmest of choices to weekend shoppers.

With seemingly no notice, the store went out of business due to an expired lease and the company looking to move away from its specialty stores toward the more traditional department store model.

"When the lease came up for renewal we opted to not extend it," said James Famalette, executive officer and director for the corporation.

The Aptos store, which had been located there since 1989, only carried women's and men's clothing, and was labeled as a specialty store.

"The Watsonville store is seven times larger than the Aptos store was, and that is what we want to be," Famalette said.

For the people at the Watsonville Gottschalks, the good news is that the company has no intentions of closing its doors.

"We are a department store that carries everything from clothing to furniture, china and houseware," Watsonville store owner Theo Wierdsma said.

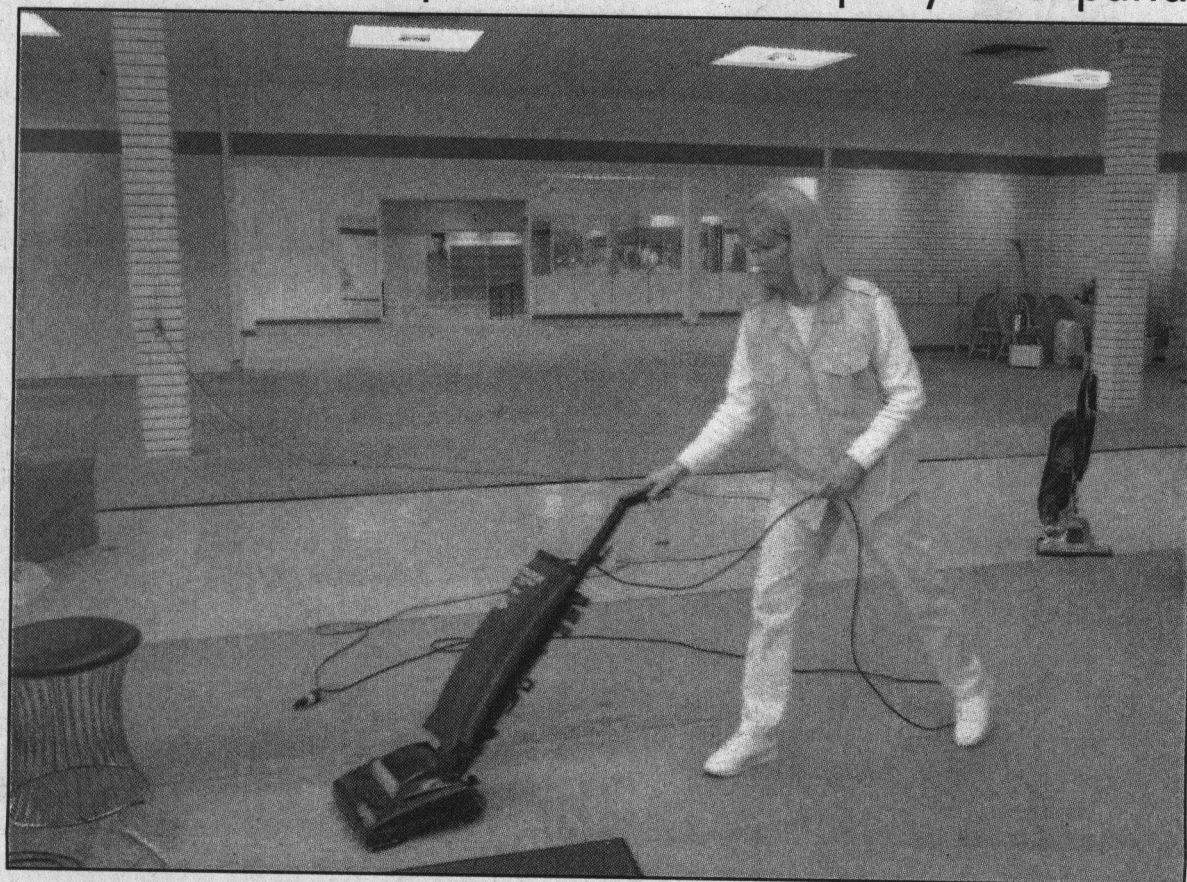
He said his store may see an increase in business as the Gottschalks faithful opt to come to the Watsonville store location as opposed to the busy Capitola Mall.

In the Rancho Del Mar shopping center, the closing of one store means a new opportunity for another — in this case, a smaller local retail store.

Aptos Comfort Company, which is also located in the Rancho Del Mar center, is taking the opportunity to expand more than fivefold.

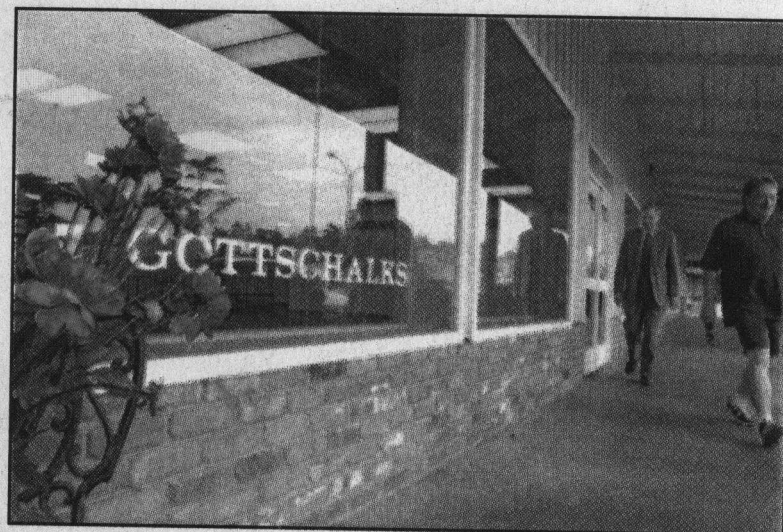
"We are hoping to be moved in and open for business by Oct. 1," said Aptos Comfort Co. manager Kara Meyers. "We are going to be expanding the items we carry in every department, especially men's shoes."

The locally owned retail store



Sally Gaines, manager for Gottschalks at Aptos, cleans up the department store in the Rancho Del Mar shopping center Wednesday after the store closed Saturday. Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

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The Aptos branch of Gottschalks department store in the Rancho Del Mar shopping center closed Saturday. Tarmo Hannula/Register-Pajaronian

away, Aptos Comfort Co. will be moving from a meager 2,000-square-foot store to an 11,000-square-foot store, which will mean a much larger space to display and stock merchandise.

"Up until now, we have really been limited in what we could car-

ry because we are literally popping through the seams," Meyers said. "(The new location) is going to make a big difference."

The store is plans to expand its men's and children's selections of shoes as well as its selection of women's and men's clothing.

specializes in women's and children's comfort shoes, and has a small selection of men's comfort shoes and women's clothing.

By moving just a few doors