

Vera Casalegno, 99, ran Soquel mountain store

By **DONNA KIMURA**

Sentinel staff writer

SOQUEL — Vera Casalegno, who helped establish Casalegno's store on Old San Jose Road nearly 70 years ago, died Monday in Santa Cruz. She was 99.

The store remains a fixture in the mountain community.

A native of San Francisco, Mrs. Casalegno lived in Santa Cruz County for 76 years.

Prior to moving to the area, she and her husband, George Casalegno, lived in Fairbanks, Alaska, and had three of their six children.

Upon their arrival in Santa Cruz, Mrs. Casalegno and her husband settled down on Old San Jose Road and became orchard farmers, growing apples and cherries, and raising chickens.

They started their mom and pop store, Casalegno's, in 1929 with a hand pump for gasoline and a few cases of soda water. The landmark store has also served as the family home.

"Following the 1989 earthquake, it seemed like everyone in the mountains congregated at the store," recalled her son-in-law, Ted

Szychowski. "It seemed like it was the oasis for the community. It was a safe haven to come to."

An excellent Italian cook, she was an avid gardener. She was often accompanied by her beloved cocker spaniel, Sunny.

She also enjoyed traveling to Nevada casinos.

She is survived by three sons, Bill Casalegno of Soquel, Matthew Casalegno of San Jose and Bernard Casalegno of Orangevale; two daughters, Lucille Mogaard and Loretta Szychowski, both of Soquel; 16 grandchildren; 22 great-grandchildren; and two great-great-grandchildren.

Mrs. Casalegno was preceded in death by her husband, George Casalegno, and her son Frank Casalegno.



Casalegno