

Planning  
1976-1985

Photos by Kurt Ellison

The 81-year-old Marinovich Building as seen from the Plaza.

## Don't steam roller this bar, customers tell Wells Fargo

By KEN McLAUGHLIN

Ed Zar was beaming. He'd just read the news that the Marinovich Building had been given a reprieve. Superior Court Judge Rollie Hall had issued a restraining order that will at least temporarily halt demolition of the 81-year-old structure at Union and Peck Streets, and Wells Fargo Bank — which has plans to tear down the building to add more parking spaces to its lot — asked for a 120-day extension on its demolition permit.

"I feel better now for a little bit," said Zar Tuesday afternoon as he entered the Old Steam Roller, a beer bar he and Josie Jackowski have owned for almost 11 years. (Their anniversary is New Year's Day.)

Watsonville residents have differing opinions on whether the Marinovich Building deserves a "historic" tag. But almost everybody in town looks at the Old Steam Roller as a downtown institution, if not a landmark.

The bar was started in 1952 by John McBrayer, known more fondly as Lo Ball Jonnie because of the card games he ran in the shed behind the Marinovich Building. Jonnie died in 1973, but his name still graces the Old Steam Roller's front window, along with the names "Aunt Josie" and "Uncle Ed."

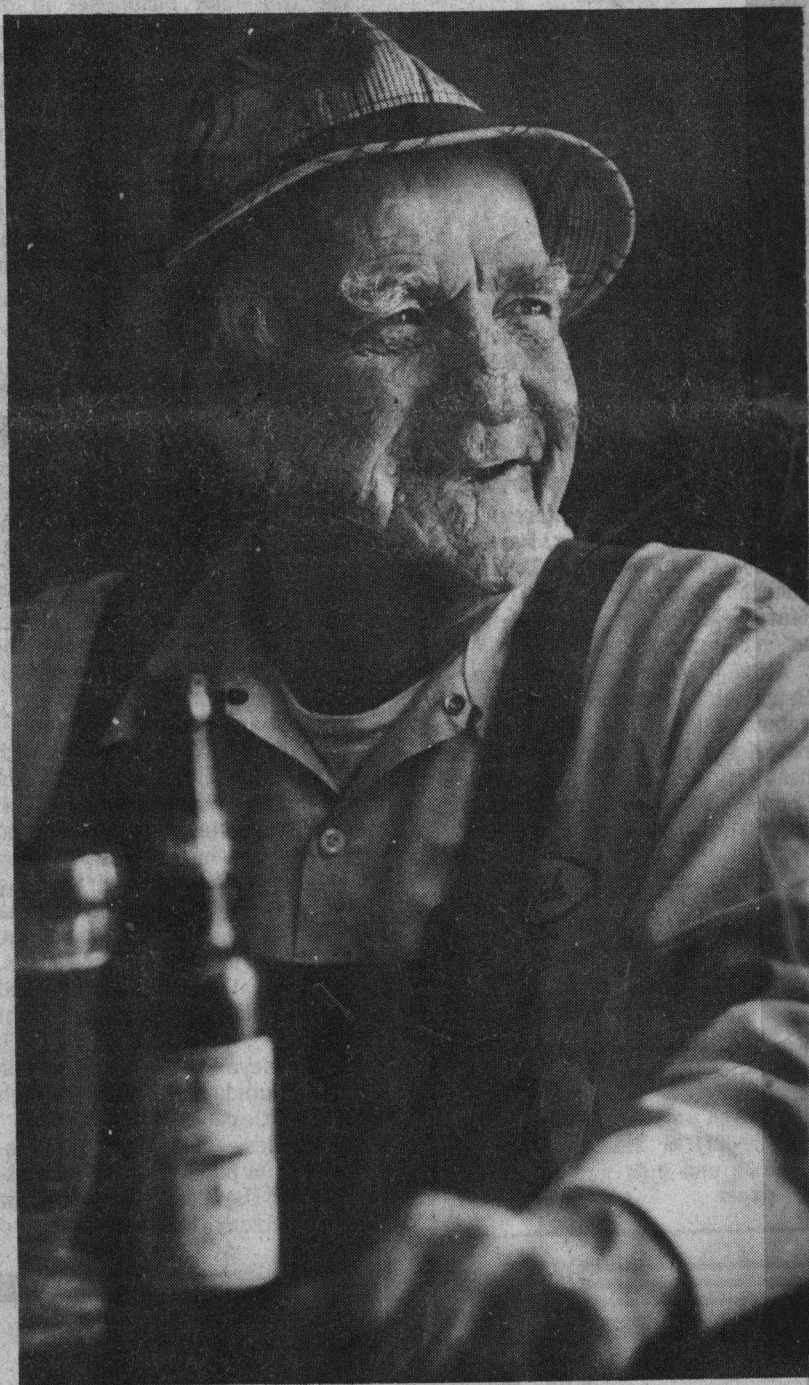
As the names indicate, Josie and Ed look at the bar as a family place. They know all the customers (virtually all working people or retired folks), and the customers know them.

"If someone new comes in, then we introduce him," said retired mechanic Bob Cuddeford as he sipped a beer.

The bar has changed little from the '50s. A 101-year-old, solid-oak ice box — converted into a refrigerator — still keeps the beer cold. The cash registers are at least a few decades old, and the old jukebox still has songs like Jimmy Dorsey's "Green Eyes." And of course the bar still features Anchor Steam beer.

"There'll be a lot of people who'll miss this place if they ever tear this

(Continued on page 2)



Ralph Dewart, a 20-year veteran of the Old Steam Roller, says he'll "raise hell" if Wells Fargo Bank tears down his favorite bar.

REFERENCE

WATSONVILLE  
REGISTER-PAJARONIAN  
December 17, 1980



thing down," commented Cuddeford.

Without the bar, he said, he'll be all alone. "When I go home, all I've got is four walls. Here I can enjoy my friends and the company. I can come here and let off a little steam."

Ralph Dewart, a 72-year-old retired cook from Corralitos, said he'd "raise hell" if the bank knocks down the building.

"They keep hollerin' about revitalization of the downtown, and then they want to tear down all the buildings," remarked Dewart, who's been coming to the Old Steam Roller for more than 20 years.

"You can't find another place in town like this," chimed in cannery worker Ermajeau Still. "If they tear it down, it'll break our hearts."

Dewart said the Old Steam Roller is the only bar in town he and many other seniors can afford. A large glass of draft beer goes for 50 cents, bottled beer for 75 cents.

"I like to keep the prices down and give the customers a break," said Josie.

Cuddeford said whenever he's out of cash, Josie will always lend him some money. "If I'm broke in here, I'm never broke," he said. "In here you're a friend. You're trusted."

Josie said she and Ed learned about the looming demolition after spending \$3,000 earlier this year on painting and installing a new air filtration system.

They've looked hard for another location, but to no avail. Many landlords in town, said Ed, "just don't want a bar." So if the Old Steam Roller closes, it may be for good.

Josie said in "11 years we've only called the police four times. That's what kind of bar this is."

The two other businesses in the Marinovich Building — Johnson-Leggett Stationers and Jim's Business Machines — have been luckier in finding another place. The stationery store will move across the Plaza to the old Senor David store. Jim's will move to Freedom Boulevard.

Ed and Josie aren't going down without a fight, however. They've gathered 400 signatures from

customers and friends opposed to the demolition. Many of the people, said Josie, are Wells Fargo customers who say they'll pull their money out of the bank if the building is demolished.

"If the bank goes through with it, I'm gonna take whatever I got out," asserted Cuddeford.

Josie maintained that without the building, the view south from the Plaza will look awful. "All they'll have is bare walls to give the kids more incentive to write graffiti," she said.

"It's stupid," Cuddeford added.

Asked if he is more attached to the building or the bar, Cuddeford said: "I like both. After all, they're both part of Watsonville."



Ed Zar and Josie Jackowski, owners of the Old Steam Roller.