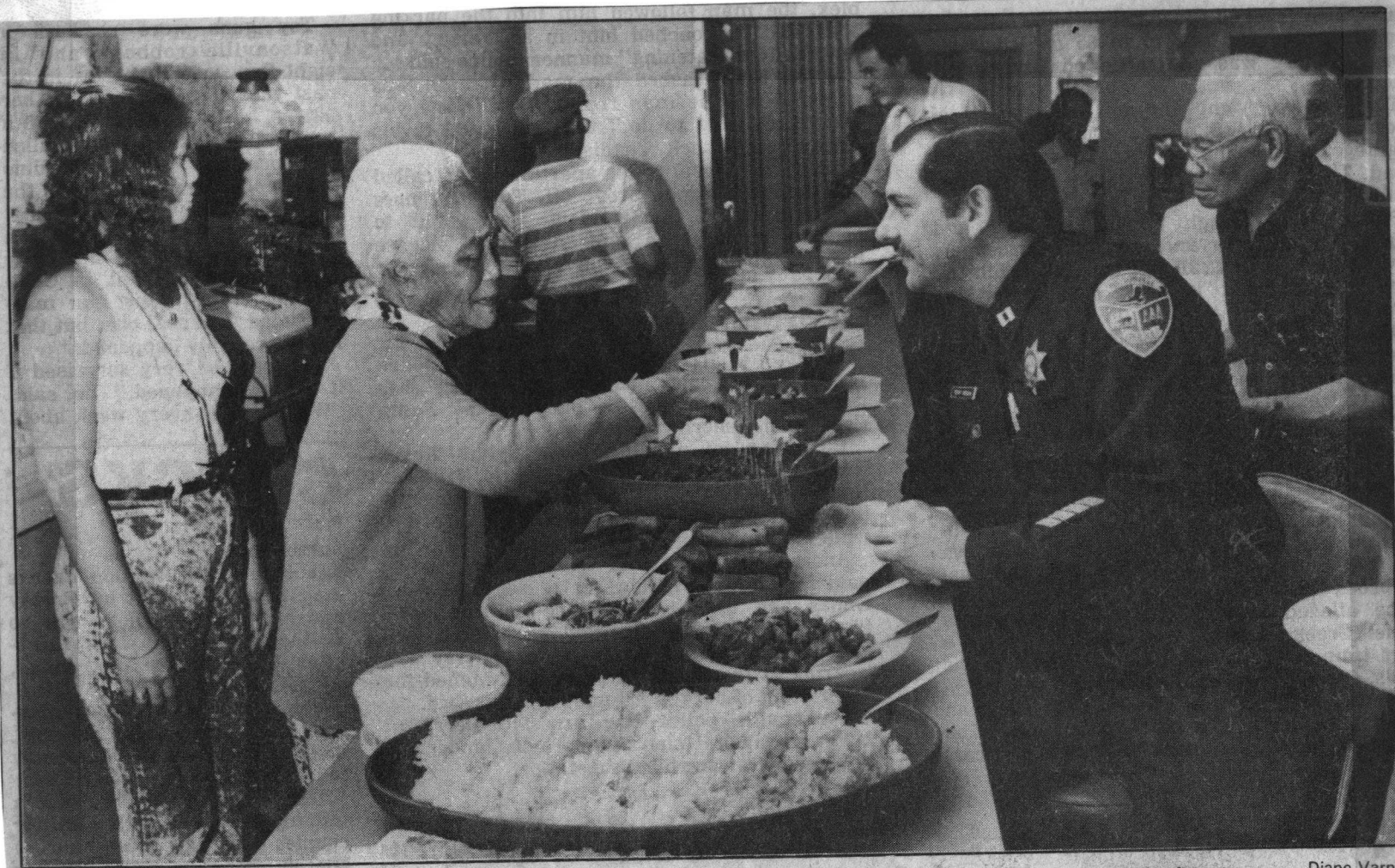


WATSONVILLE  
HISTORY  
1970-1980



Owner Rose Tabasa serves Watsonville policeman Terry Medina at her 'grand reopening.'

Diane Varni

# Philippine Gardens has rebirth

By DAN FITCH  
STAFF WRITER

Patsy Cline's voice slid from the jukebox at the Philippine Gardens and drifted around like a wisp of smoke.

But nothing else about the place was lazy or dreamy.

Anyone who stepped into the Gardens during yesterday's grand reopening at 26 West Beach St. was fair game for a handshake, a paper plate, and a polite shove to the dining counter crowded with Filipino delicacies.

Blood stew with a cup of lime-sherbet punch, or chicken with Coca Cola — the choice was yours.

Or you could do like Potenciano Antonio, and avoid the bustle by stepping out to the sidewalk for quieter talk, sunshine and companionship. For Antonio, 77, talk and companionship are what the Philippine Gardens is all about.

That, and cards.

"If we don't play cards, we are '6 feet under by now," Antonio said. "It is very boring for old people who have no place to go. I will

come here most every day."

With the reopening of the Gardens, Antonio will be able to play cards whenever he wishes.

The previous edition of the Gardens was a victim of redevelopment. Located on First Street downtown, it was demolished with other businesses in the area to make way for the new post office on Main Street.

Merchants on the 200 block of Main Street were either bought out or relocated by the city to clear the block for the post office and other redevelopment plans.

The latest edition of the Gardens is run by Rose Tabasa, as were the previous four:

That's run, by the way, as in "on the run." To keep up with the 75-year-old Tabasa you had better be in good shape, and nimble of foot. Small, genial and very quick, Tabasa worked the Gardens yesterday in a relentless series of introductions, handshakes, laughter and offers of food.

Between introductions she was happy to explain the

revival of the Gardens.

"I miss everybody in the community," she said. "I miss them and I was just getting used to them. We look to be a place where everybody can come, anybody of any race or age, and we won't close our doors until somebody closes them for us."

Tabasa said she has operated some form of the Philippine Gardens since 1938 and was at the First Street location for 21 years.

Specifics regarding the present and future of the business are, well, unspecific. According to Tabasa, the Gardens will not serve food, but soda, beer and donuts will be available.

An inquiry as to how the bills will be paid was met with a quick grin and response.

"That," Tabasa said, "is the 64-dollar question."

An inquiry as to what days the business will be open was met with an uncomprehending look of the furrowed-brow variety.

The Gardens will be open every day, of course.

Tabasa said she will manage the store from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m., and her husband, Audy, will take over for the rest of the night.

"We do not have a specific time of opening and closing," Tabasa said. "We will close when everyone is tired and has to go to bed."

Antonio does not like to stay up particularly late and said he doesn't drink a lot of beer and does not smoke. What he does like to do is get together with friends for an evening of cards and conversation.

Standing next to Antonio on the sidewalk, and nodding in agreement, was Imilio Ramiscal. The two had not seen each other for a while and were happy to be reacquainted.

They weren't much concerned with the specifics and business end regarding the reopening of the Philippine Gardens. Their concerns were of a different type.

"My only regret is that we don't get many young people here," said Antonio, looking relaxed and cool in sunglasses and hat. "Especially women."