

Molly's Market: A Neighborhood Grocery in Old Town

By Scott Laird

Many of us have fond memories of going to a small neighborhood grocery store to buy candy, or a soda pop, look through the newest comic books and magazines, grab a pack of baseball cards or gum, and maybe pick up a loaf of bread or a gallon of milk for Mom. It was a place where the employees (who were often also the owners) knew your name, and you could always find what you needed, because the store was never rearranged. We thought those days were long gone in this age of supermarkets and superstores... but in Old Town St. Helens Molly Matchak has revived the neighborhood grocery with Molly's Market at 290 S. 1st Street.

Matchak fondly remembers her neighborhood grocery store when she was growing up in San Jose, California, which was the inspiration for Molly's Market. "I was one of eight children and I often just wanted to get out of the house. There was a store called Rory's and I would go there with my best friend and get a Coke and a candy bar and just hang out. It was family owned and just a super friendly environment. It was just a childhood memory that I wanted to turn into a dream."

In addition to her friendly demeanor and personal service, the secret to Matchak's success seems to be giving people what they want. Molly's is open seven days a week, from 8:00 am to 8:00 pm. "People want consistency," says Matchak. "They don't want to have to think about whether you're open or not, or what time you open today."

Molly's Market carry's a nice variety of groceries, including some packaged products from Trader Joe's, along with cold beer and soda, a nice wine selection, and a few hardware supplies. She has coffee, breakfast sandwiches, baked to order mini donuts, and pizza from Mississippi Pizza in Portland by the slice. She's slowly expanded since opening in October and added tables and chairs, and has room to expand further when she's ready.

"I wanted this to be a place where a family can grab and go," says Matchak. "A lot of the families in this neighborhood don't have cars so they have to walk. With the food, we just wanted to offer something more. There wasn't really a place where you could grab something to eat and go, instead of sitting down and being waited on, and that was a niche that I kept hearing about over and over from customers that we thought we could fill."

Matchak's brother and business partner Phillip Stanton has owned Mississippi Pizza for 20 years, one of the original anchor businesses in the Mississippi District of North Portland. Stanton has seen that neighborhood completely revitalized into a thriving Portland destination. "When I moved there, we were the first restaurant, there was only one stop light, and most of the buildings were boarded up, but over time things have changed," he says.

Stanton owns several buildings in the Mississippi District and also owns several properties in St. Helens, includ-



Molly Matchak and brother Phillip Stanton are business partners in Molly's Market, which is becoming a St. Helens favorite.

coming a bit of a local hang-out. One group of ladies are all retired workers from Safeway and meet there to sit and talk shop. Several regulars like to stop by just to visit and

talk – it gets them out of the house for bit for some socializing. One 82 year old regular stops by several times everyday on a regular schedule. "The people in the neighborhood keep expressing their gratitude," says Matchak.

ing the building where Molly's Market is located, which extends to the newly successful Plymouth Pub at the corner of 1st and Cowlitz Street. "I came out to St. Helens and, like a lot of people, just fell in love with it," says Stanton. "It's a very special place and a really good place to invest – it's so close to Portland, it's on the water with the boats coming by, and it has so much character. I'm surprised it doesn't get more attention."

Old Town St. Helens might be seeing a revival, after several years of constant business turnover – Running Dogs Brewing has survived their first years and recently expanded, the Plymouth Pub is constantly busy, Jilly's clothing remains a funky fixture, and now Molly's Market is having success. Stanton says he expects someone to re-open the Klondike in the near future – the long time restaurant closed last year after many decades. "We're starting to get calls from people looking for available space – one young woman wants to open a yoga studio," says Matchak.

In the future Matchak and Stanton hope to have an on-premises license so she can serve beer and wine. She plans to host small music and other events, and she's looking forward to her first upcoming summer season near the waterfront.

Molly's Market is already be-

Where Do You Read Deep River?

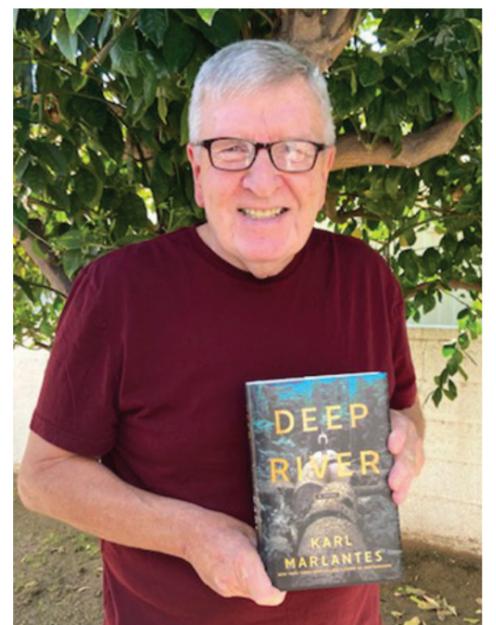
After the publication of our article about Karl Marlantes's logging novel *Deep River* in our recent issue, we received the following correspondence from loyal Voice reader Jim Ekland.

"Greetings from Yuma, Arizona!

We received the February 6 issue of the Voice yesterday, and I just finished *Deep River* by Karl Marlantes last night. How ironic! I'm on page 697 of Karl's latest book!

I met Karl, indirectly, when I was a VHS senior. We played Seaside in our homecoming game, and Karl played across from me on the line. Seaside won the game 7-6, our only loss that year.

Karl's father, Leo, was Principal at Seaside High School at that time. Leo moved



on to Clatsop Community College the following year, where I met him during my freshman year.

Yes, I enjoyed the book, as well as Karl's two books about Vietnam Nam.

It's a small world, huh?"



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