

SAME FACES, NEW NAME
BISHOP DRUGS:
Family pharmacy ends after 114-year legacy

By Amy Davis

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MONTEREY – Theresa Bishop remembers the days when her uncle Dewey Goff hardly got a full night’s sleep – back when his pharmacy customers came knocking at all hours for medicine.

“He hardly ever took his clothes off at night, and he kept his shoes where he could slip into them,” she said. “He was always there for the people.”



It was the only life Theresa – who had been raised by her aunt and uncle in the small apartment above what was then called Goff Drug Store on the corner of Commercial Avenue

and South Holly Street in Monterey – had ever known.

(Pictured: Theresa Bishop and son Cliff Bishop meet in the former Bishop Durgs building in Monterey. The 114-year-old family business became Fred’s Pharmacy in November).

It was a life she loved – and a tradition that she would continue for many years to come, even passing it on to her son Cliff.

After all. It was the family business, dating back to 1898 with her uncle’s father, Emmet Goff.

But on Nov. 15, following her family’s 114-year of serving the Monterey community, Theresa put the pharmacy business behind her for good when Bishop Drugs became Fred’s Pharmacy.

The decision to sell didn’t come without tears, but Theresa – who had been semi-retired in recent years while Cliff handled most of the day-to-day operations – had known the day would eventually come.

Times have changed, she pointed out. And so has the pharmacy industry.

“Pharmacy as far as what you do is the same,” said Theresa, who has been a pharmacist since 1958. “You still have to fill the scripts and get the right medicine. But as far as the procedure, there has been a big difference..and it’s been difficult, with the government in on everything and telling you what you can and can’t charge.”



(Pictured: This is what the original Bishop Drugs building looked like in the early 1900s, when it was known as Goff Drug Store. Waiting to greet customers are, from left, Dewey Goff, Doc Goff and Emmett Goff).

The prospect of selling the pharmacy was not a new consideration.

“People have been approaching us for a long time,” Theresa said.

Cliff added, “From the historical stand point, the decision was terribly difficult, but given the economic changes occurring in pharmacy and the continued pressure in how it was affecting us as a small business, it just made sense economically when a chain came in and offered to purchase the business and have us work for them. Emotionally, though, it was really hard.”

Even though the pharmacy is under new ownership, Bishop Drugs customers will continue to see the same familiar faces they’ve been accustomed to all these years since Cliff remains on board to serve as pharmacy manager. His wife, Connie, will continue managing the front end of the store.

“It will still be good for the people,” Theresa said.

A few new faces have joined the Bishop crew from Super Discount Drugs, another Monterey pharmacy that was purchased by Fred’s.

“Nobody lost any jobs over it,” Cliff added.

The drug store building itself remains in the family; Fred's is renting the facility for the next year or two until the pharmacy can construct a new building, Theresa said.

While it's a big change getting used to a new computer system and reporting methods, Cliff said he feels everyone involved is adjusting well.

"The change has been very challenging because it's completely different, but I think it will get easier," he said.

He looks forward to serving his old customers as he moves forward with Fred's Pharmacy.

I'm too young to quit but I look forward to maybe having a little more free time and not being as tied to the business as I was when I was an owner," he said. "As an employee, my time is now my time rather than me always being on call."

It's a different world from the old days of the business. Theresa remembers the time before insurance and Medicare when customers simply paid when they could.

"Used to, you knew the people, and you gave them their medicine," she said. "If they owed you for it, they owed you for it, and they would pay when they got the money. But now it's mostly insurance, and it's getting more and more complicated."

Theresa, who was born in Chicago, came to live with her Aunt Luetta and Uncle Dewey as a baby.

"When I was a month old, my mother, died, and Auntie said she would take me and my two sisters, but for my father not to ask for us back," she said. "and so he had no other alternative because he couldn't take care of three children and work on the railroad. So, he sent us here, and that's how I came to grow up in the drug store."

What was it like?

"We just played and enjoyed meeting the people," Theresa recalled. "They taught us how to put up stock and wait on customers. As I got older, Uncle Dewey would let me help fill the prescriptions because he had taken a course by mail to be a registered pharmacist.

"It was all I was ever interested in, so I went to pharmacy school."

Theresa graduated from Howard College (now Samford University) in Birmingham, Ala, in 1958. While there, she met and married Harold E. Bishop.

"My husband was a pharmacist, and we moved back up here in 1964 because Auntie said Uncle Dewey was getting to where he couldn't do everything and needed help," Theresa said.

The Bishops then opened Bishop Drugs down the street from Goff Drug Store, with Theresa helping out at both locations.

When Dewey died in 1974, Goff Drug Store closed for remodeling.. Two years later, Theresa's husband died.. At that point, she decided to finish the remodeling while still running Bishop Drugs and in 1981 moved her business back "home" to its current location.

"I didn't change the name back to Goff Drugs because everything we had by then was Bishop Drugs," she said.

Although she didn't actually live on site any longer, she still practically raised her three children there.

"They all had to work there a bit as they got older," she said.

Her son Cliff enjoyed it enough to remain in the family business, graduating from Samford pharmacy school in 1981 and becoming a Bishop Drugs partner in 1988.

With the pharmacy business having been a central part of her life, it's been a difficult thing for Theresa to let go of.

"It just leaves you with an empty feeling, and I'll miss it," she said.

"I've been there since I was a baby. As long as I live, I'll miss it."

As she continues adjusting to the change, she keeps focused on what has meant most to her over the years – the people.

"I appreciate them telling me how their families have traded with us – because so many have," she said. "We've valued them and helped them any way we could."

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