

MERCED NEIGHBORHOOD
VERTICAL FILE

A Moment of Silence For Lost Soda Bread

Stonestown bakery closes after 25 years

By Steve Rubenstein
Chronicle Staff Writer

The last loaf of genuine Irish soda bread in San Francisco changed hands yesterday, with deep feelings on both sides of the counter.

The bread itself was half-price, but that did not make customer Barbara Hart, originally of county Galway in Ireland, feel any better.

"I'm mad about this," she said, chewing over the situation while chewing a mouthful of the bread. "Things keep closing down. A part of your life gets wiped away."

There will be no more soda bread, Parker House rolls or challah passing over the counter at the Viennese Cake Box bakery at Stonestown shopping center. The bakery, a fixture at the shopping center for decades, lost its lease and has closed forever.

The wake and half-price bake sale was held yesterday. Rolls were 12 cents. A butterscotch cookie was 17 cents. Petit fours were petit twos.

A woman named Marguerite bought the last chocolate doughnut.

"I've been coming here three times a week for years," she said, clutching her doughnut to her breast, as if it were a life preserver. "And these people donate cookies to my church every Christmas. This is just terrible."

Word around the shopping center is that the McDonald's restaurant next door wants to expand into the bakery site, perhaps erecting a climbing gym for kiddies. Mall manager David Mackey declined to say who the next occupant of the site would be, but since the mall remodeled a few years ago, it has sought to

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BY MICHAEL MALONEY/THE CHRONICLE

Marge Compagno of Daly City eyed the last doughnut on the last day for the Viennese Cake Box, a popular bakery that closed yesterday after more than 25 years in Stonestown shopping center

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attract upscale young shoppers, not the soda bread set.

Bakery owner Klaus Jacobi said the shopping center backed out of a verbal agreement to grant him a 10-year lease.

"They dumped me flat," Jacobi said. "I'm a little mad. The custom-

ers have been standing around and crying their eyes out. A bakery is a personal thing. We don't just sell bread — we talk to people, ask them about the family. We try to make people feel good."

Helen David wasn't feeling at all good. She has bought elaborately decorated birthday cakes from the bakery for her daughter, Julie,

for the past 13 years.

"Well, her 14th birthday is next month, and I'm going to have to find someplace else to get the cake," she said. "That's sad. That's very sad."

Hazel Fermon said that at Christmas she will miss the mincemeat pie, which "is not as good as my mother's, but almost."