

News for
your community

2



Andrew A. Freiberg

Young doctor keeps
family tradition
alive and well

THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

EXTRA



Ken Weber

6 Dynamo gymnasts
take leap into
the nationals

12

Editor: Roni Rucker Waters, 860-5180

11 Tuesday, June 6, 1989

A Market On The Corner



When Mike Mages
says he emphasizes
personalized service, it's
not just a bunch of baloney.

Fred Straub/
The Cincinnati Enquirer

Little things really do mean a lot for this Lockland grocery store

BY WALT SCHAEFER
The Cincinnati Enquirer

TO MIKE MAGES, one word reflects the difference between the big supermarket and the little store he and his parents own in Lockland. The word is "Hello."

"I've worked with my dad in here for 13 years," said Mages, 29.

"I can remember, as a kid, sleeping on the shelves when my parents were

working late.

"We have tried to never let the customer say hello first. If you say hello first, the new customer will be surprised to hear that.

"There is always an owner in this store. Have you ever gone into Biggs or Thriftway and have the owner come out and say hello?" Mages asked.

Once cornerstones in almost every older neighborhood, many a corner grocery store has fallen to the glitter of

the big chains, where the advertising dollars lure the multitudes.

But some, like Westendorf's, are still where they've always been — tucked away on the side streets.

Here, you park on the street, not in painted rectangles on acres of asphalt.

"If you took the name 'Westendorf' off the sign out there and put our name up, it wouldn't work. The business would

(Please see GROCERS, Page 4)

Vets get tips on business

Class teaches
success secrets

BY LYNDA HOUSTON
The Cincinnati Enquirer

IN 1987, Sherry St. George stepped out of her Marine Corps uniform and into civilian clothes.

That's about the time she decided to make everyday clothing her bread and butter; it was just a matter of finding the knowledge and support to help her start her own business.

After being in the Marines for a decade, St. George was used to challenges. So she started out on her business venture alone, driving from Cincinnati to New York on the weekends to buy unique clothing. She then sold the clothes to friends out of her home.

After finding success, St. George decided she wanted more, but was unsure how to do it.

Help was available

The Mount Auburn resident later found the assistance she was looking for in the Ohio Veterans Entrepreneurial Training program at Cincinnati Technical College.

The statewide program, funded by a federal grant from the Small Business Administration, allows military veterans to learn the ropes of the small-business world, from planning to implementation and management. Students pay \$100 for the yearlong course.

St. George, now a salesperson at Sakowitz Destinations at Forest Fair Mall, was among the 15 local military veterans who graduated last week from the new program. Many of them served in the Vietnam and Korean wars. Mayor Charles Luken proclaimed June 1 as Cincinnati Veterans Entrepreneurial Education Day.

As the only woman in a class, St. George learned that the fear of

(Please see VETERANS, Page 2)

Banquet will honor inner-city youths / E6

Forest Park H.S. wins computer / E11

Grocers

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

fizzle," said Mike's father, George Mages.

The name Westendorf has been synonymous with groceries in the Mill Creek Valley for decades. Joe Westendorf Sr. opened the store on West Forrer Avenue in Lockland in 1929.

In 1972, George and his wife, Lorraine, Westendorf's daughter, took over the business.

The family operated another store in Wyoming. It is now a pizza parlor owned by Joe Westendorf Jr., who said the available space was not enough to run a competitive grocery store.

"This (Lockland) store has a reputation for personalized service," Mike Mages said. "The majority of the people are local — from Lockland, Reading, Lincoln Heights, Wyoming and Hartwell."

To some folks, their neighborhood grocery and the friendship of the family who owns the store is important.

"I'm widowed now," said Lucille Amyx, 71, of Lockland. "But since I was first married, we believed in patronizing the hometown and trading with the independent store. I don't care if it was a grocery or drug store."

"They only deliver three times a week any more, but once I had company come unexpectedly on a day they didn't deliver. They made an exception for me that day. That's why I do my business at Westendorf's."

"One thing my dad taught me was common courtesy. If you're snobbish to customers, you won't see them come back."

— Mike Mages

The atmosphere of the corner grocery is filled with chit-chat. There's a bustle of sorts. A clerk carries bags to cars, another stocks the shelves. A butcher cuts steaks to ordered thickness.

Service to the customer separates the little store from the more impersonal superstore, with aisles 50 yards long and a battery of cashiers at numbered cart slots.

"That's just it," Mike Mages said. "The big stores have the flashing lights, bells and whistles and somebody has to pay for that somewhere down the line."

"I was just to Biggs last Thursday and looked over their deli. There was a nickel here and a nickel there, but basically we were right with them."

Most small stores purchase from one or two suppliers who cater to their needs and can buy in sufficient quantity to keep prices in line.

Westendorf's delivery service and personal touch reflect how the small store is linked to a neighborhood — its needs and its wants.

"Not long ago we had two elderly ladies come in to check us out."

They wanted to see where their groceries were coming from. We deliver to senior citizens at Maple Knoll Village in Springdale. Sometimes two truckloads a week," Mike Mages said.

Survival for the small grocer is tied to service, quality, competitive price and location. Location is of major importance.

"There's no other place a big store could squeeze in. There's no other store flashing signs at us saying 'lower prices' and we give a fair price," he said.

Running a small grocery store is no easy task — another reason fewer exist today. "There's no boss to tell you what to do and you can make your own hours. But, you have to hustle and put out a decent product," he said.

"My brothers and sisters didn't want the store. They didn't want the work. This job can be 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. You get your holidays like Christmas, but you *don't* get the day after Christmas."

"Sometimes I get the feeling maybe I should do something else, but, I have knowledge of this. I grew up in it. One thing my dad taught me was common courtesy. If you're snobbish to customers, you won't see them come back."

"I'd like to find another store. A place just like this one — a stable residential area where there are families and friendly people. The key to this business is how you treat people."

"Our business is growing."