

# MARTINEZ NEWS-GAZETTE

**By Rick Jones**  
**Martinez News-Gazette Editor**

Main Street Sweets, an anchor of downtown Martinez for over 20 years, will close its doors on February 1. According to owner Marty Bender the landlord at 815 Main Street “basically has given us the boot.”

A 150 percent increase in rent the last decade puts the business operating at a loss. When Marty and Carol Bender bought the shop in 2010 the rent was \$600 month.

The store was originally started by Cathy Duncan in 1996 and was called Ye Olde Sweet Shoppe. In 2001 current Martinez City Councilmember Noralea Gipner took over, later partnering with Linda Filomeo, who then sold it to the Benders.

“Our three-year lease ended in October,” Bender said. “And when we met with him the first thing he told us was he needed \$1,500 for that space. We were paying \$875 when the lease ended.”

Since that time the Benders have unsuccessfully attempted to sell the store.

The landlord “reluctantly let us put it up for sale, we haven’t had any offers,” Bender said “Rent is so high it really wouldn’t work. He allowed us to do month-to-month until the end of February for \$1,175 a month”.

The owner plans to lease the first floor building as office space. There are 10 apartments on the second floor, Bender said.

The Benders have experienced the ebbs and flows of a small business the past decade. Holidays were always a big part of the yearly bottom line for the candy store.

“Valentine’s Day was always good for us,” Bender said. “It was hard work, but we made money.

“The ‘Shop Local’ movement helped. It’s been kind of feast or famine. We had some really good stretches where sales were good. But overall it was a struggle, it’s been hard work.”

Bender has seen many changes to downtown Martinez, some of them hurt his business.

“One thing that really hurt us was when the Friday Night Car Show stopped,” Bender said. “That went on for many, many years.

For four to five months every year, we would stay open late.

“We had a lot of returning customers that were affiliated with the car show. We would do triple the business every day, and that really helped out. Gave us a nice boost. Sounds minor to some people, but a lot of people were upset when the Car Show left.”

When the Friday car shows left, it was replaced with another event that Bender said didn’t draw people to his location.

“The car show was replaced with the ‘Thursday Music and Movie’ but that didn’t really help us at all. Everything is down by the plaza; we get little traffic where we are.”

Bender, who retired from a career with East Bay Regional Parks District and his wife Carol, who works for Kaiser Permanente, have no plans to continue the shop at a new location. Bender said it’s becoming more difficult to start a business in California.

“We are going to retire, no plans to relocate,” Bender said. “Rent is too high. And it’s expensive to start a business from scratch. So many regulations with the health department just for our little store. Permits to operate, checks on our scale, annual city permit. We have seven sinks that are required by health department.

“It’s really put the kibosh on people trying to start new things. You may have a good idea but with the high rent, permits and regulations it’s hard to get going.”

After being in downtown Martinez for 10 years Bender understands the unique environment Martinez presents.

“Martinez has a different atmosphere,” Bender noted. “The only draw down here is the county (offices) and the courts.

“Concord, Walnut Creek and Pleasant Hill all have the big mega-movie theaters and that draws people all day long. We don’t have a family entertainment draw in downtown. We have a lot of alcohol related things, and they bring people in, but I would rather see something for families. I don’t know what that is, who knows what is.”

Bender says things are trending up in downtown and it’s because of energized business owners.



“Arash (Pakzad, owner of Barrel Aged & Barrelista) came in and was gung-ho, young guy who had an idea and the financing to do it. Candice (Gliatto) at Citrus is another example. She used to be our neighbor when she started in a teeny, tiny place. She moved down Main and then moved into that beautiful salon she has now. Candice was another who was just gung-ho.”

The Benders are thankful for the support over the last 10 years and will always love Martinez and its hometown charm.

“We get a lot of jurors from around the county in here and they love the town,” Bender said. “They love the look; we don’t have a lot of the corporate things. That was one of the fun things about this business was being able to brag about Martinez.

The last day of business for the Main Street Sweet Shop will be Saturday, February 1.

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# Martinez Police Department Blotter November 16 - 31, 2019

On November 15, 2019 at 10:00 am, Officer Lucido contacted a 51-year-old man from Martinez, in the parking lot of 7-11, 3520 Pacheco Boulevard. He was arrested for a \$5,000.00 misdemeanor warrant for drug possession. He was also arrested for possession of meth and violating probation. He was booked into the Main Detention Facility (MDF). Case# 19-3063.

At 10:40 am, Sergeant Gaul contacted a 39-year-old woman from Martinez, in the parking lot of 7-11, 3520 Pacheco Boulevard. He had prior knowledge she was wanted for a \$20,000.00 misdemeanor warrant for battering a police officer. She was booked into MDF. Case# 19-3064.

At 3:00 pm, officers were dispatched to Amtrak for an armed robbery which just occurred. The victim was selling an iPhone on "Offer Up" and agreed to meet the buyer at the train station. Upon arrival he met the Hispanic female buyer at her black Ford Expedition. Upon contact two Hispanic males were hiding in the back seat. One pointed a handgun at him and demanded the phone. He complied and the suspects fled the parking lot. Victim provided all of the communications over text. Unknown if real names/info. Corporal Mayberry. Case# 19-3065.

At 10:57 pm, officers responded to the Martinez Marina for a report of a fire. Upon arrival, a boat tied to the launch ramp pier (east pier) was fully engulfed in flames. A man from Richmond claimed to own the boat. He was on the boat with his girlfriend and the boat caught on fire while they were sleeping. There was no obvious evidence of any foul play. The boat burned into the water and the pier did not appear to be damaged and or burned. A Contra Costa County Arson investigator responded to the scene. A city corporation yard employee responded and the pier was barricaded off. City employees returned in the morning to remove the boat from the water during daylight. Water

booms were wrapped around the boat to contain any chemicals. Case# 19-3067.

On November 16th at 8:00 am, Officer Lucido contacted a 27-year-old man from Martinez and a 57-year-old man from Santa Barbara, smoking in the Amtrak parking lot. They were both arrested for possession of meth. Cite released. Case# 19-3068.

At 8:40 am, Sergeant Gaul observed 37-year-old man from Martinez dumpster diving at Nor-Cal Courts. Sergeant Gaul had prior knowledge the man was wanted for two misdemeanor warrants. \$5,000.00 for drug intoxication and a \$5,000.00 for possession of drugs and drug paraphernalia. He was also found to be in possession of meth. The man was booked into MDF. Case# 19-3069.

At 9:00 am, Sergeant Gaul contacted a 34-year-old man from Martinez, on Waterfront Road near Copart. The man was arrested for a \$7,500.00 misdemeanor warrant for drug possession. Cite released. Case# 19-3071.

At 9:15 am, Officer Lucido stopped a paper plated 2018 Nissan Rogue on Marina Vista at 680. A check of the VIN revealed the vehicle was stolen. It was reported stolen to Concord PD on 11/13/2019. The driver was a 41-year-old man from Concord. He was arrested for possession of a stolen vehicle and booked into MDF. Case# 19-3070.

At 2:00 pm, Corporal Mayberry contacted a 38-year-old man from Walnut Creek in the 400 block of Richardson Street. The man was arrested for a felony no bail warrant for burglary. He was also found to be in possession of meth. The man was booked into MDF. Case# 19-3074.

At 10:03 pm, Sergeant Busciglio located a man (Martinez transient) laying on the sidewalk at Alhambra Ave. and Ward Street. The man was intoxicated, unable to walk without stumbling and arrested for disorderly conduct. He was booked into MDF. Officer Espinoza, case# 19-3077.

On November 17th at 7:45 am, officers were dispatched to Amtrak for a battery which just occurred. A 46-year-old man from Martinez punched the clerk of Rosemary's Café in the face. The man was refused service due to prior problems he has caused at the café and train station. He was booked into MDF. Sergeant Gaul, case# 19-3079.

At 9:45 am, Sergeant Gaul was on foot patrol downtown. He discovered a vehicle which had its window shattered. He was unable to locate the victim to determine loss and time of occurrence. Case# 19-3080.

At 6:11 pm, officers were dispatched to Walmart located at 1021 Arnold Dr. to investigate a fraud via coin star. Officer Montano made contact with the suspect who on video put a few coins in the coin star machine, but had a voucher for \$700.00. The 32-year-old man from San Pablo was arrested for PC 470(d) and cite released.

On November 18th at 10:42 am, Officer Miller responded to Bail Hot Line for a burglary investigation. Over \$6,000.00 was taken. Video surveillance shows two male suspects enter through the unlocked rear door and walk directly to the where the money was kept. The video surveillance is being looked at closer in effort to identify the males. Case #19-3087.

At 12:29 pm, Officer Weems responded to the high school for a report of threats written on the boy's bathroom walls. Video surveillance is being reviewed in attempt to identify the responsible party. Case #19-3089.

At 1:16 pm, Officer Weems responded to the 1000 block of Ferry Street for the theft of a catalytic converter. Case #19-3091.

At 2:29 pm, Officer Weems located an unoccupied stolen vehicle in the Jack in the Box parking lot, via a license plate reader (LPR) alert. Case #19-3092.

At 10:33 pm, Officer Parsons conducted a traffic stop at Pacheco

Boulevard and Camino Del Sol. The male driver was arrested for DUI (drugs). Case #19-3095.

At 12:00 pm, Officer Weems received an LPR alert on a stolen license plate. He located the vehicle in the Lucky's parking lot. The operator of the vehicle arrived and stated he had purchased the vehicle just over a week ago. Both license plates were recovered and logged into evidence. Case #19-3100.

On November 19th at 7:57 am, Officer Angoco took a report on a theft of firearms from a resident in the 300 block of Willow Creek Lane. Case #19-3106.

On November 20th at 12:08 am, Officer Winslett took an auto burglary report at Chipotle parking lot, where a back pack was taken from a vehicle. Case #19-3110.

At 3:06 pm, Officer Weems responded to a residence in the 500 block of Amber Lane for a residential burglary. The victim came home and saw a U-Haul pulling out of her driveway. Property from her yard and inside the residence had been taken. Approximately one and a half hours later Officer Weems located the U haul, occupied by the male suspect, on Birch Street. The male fled and was not located. Case #19-3112.

At 10:26 pm, Officer Ramos was on Scenic Drive, near Elm Street, when he located and arrested the residential burglary suspect. Case #19-3112.

On November 21st at 12:09 am, Officer Parsons received an LPR stolen vehicle alert on Alhambra Avenue. He located the vehicle at the car wash. The female driver was arrested for possession of stolen property, possession of a firearm, and possession of a controlled substance. The male passenger was arrested for possession of a stolen firearm. Case #19-3113.

At 11:49 am, Officer Weems responded to a traffic collision on eastbound HWY 4, near Alhambra Avenue. An involved party reported that a firearm was brandished during the incident. Officer Weems confirmed that an involved party had an unloaded firearm in



his waistband, and he did point it at the other involved party because he was scared. The party with the firearm was detained and CHP took over the investigation. Case# 19-3117.

On November 22nd at 7:30 am, Officer Buda took a vehicle burglary report from a resident in the 100 block Macalvey Drive. A purse and computer were stolen. Case# 19-3121.

At 8:00 am, Corporal Mayberry arrested a male in the 900 block of Ward Street for warrants. Case# 19-3123.

At 9:30 am, Officer Wah took a vehicle theft and vehicle burglary report from a resident in the 100 block Sunnybrae Court. Nothing of value was taken from the first vehicle. A water pump was taken from the trunk of the second vehicle. Case# 19-3126.

At 1:30 pm, Officer Wah arrested a male for trespassing at Chase Bank in the Village Oaks Shopping Center. Case# 19-3131.

At 4:45 pm, Corporal Mayberry conducted a traffic enforcement stop on a motorcycle on Marina Vista Avenue near Alhambra Avenue. A VIN check on the motorcycle returned as a reported stolen vehicle. The male rider was arrested. Case# 19-3132.

At 10:25 pm, Officer Weems conducted a traffic enforcement stop on westbound HWY 4 near Center Avenue. The female driver was arrested for DUI. Case# 19-3133.

On November 23rd at 12:16 am, Officer Lucido contacted a male bicyclist in the 3200 block of Pacheco Boulevard. He was found to be in possession of a controlled substance and arrested. Case# 19-3134.

At 7:10 am, Office Wah arrested a male for trespassing at the Marina Market. Case# 19-3136.

At 11:00 am, Officer Buda conducted a traffic enforcement stop in the 1100 block of Arnold Drive. The male driver was arrested for driving on a DUI suspended license. Case# 19-3139.

At 3:45 pm, Corporal Schnabel arrested a female in the 2700 block of Alhambra Avenue for

public intoxication. Case# 19-3140.

At 6:39 pm, Officer Montano responded to Lucky's for a theft where an unknown person said they were arriving to collect the money from the Salvation Army collection can. Case# 19-3141.

At 11:03 pm, Officer Montano responded to the 100 block of Gilbert Court for fireworks in the area. A fire was discovered on the hillside and Contra Costa Fire responded to extinguish the fire. Case# 19-3142.

On November 24th at 11:50 am, Officer Weems responded to Safeway (downtown) for a male harassing customers. The male was arrested for trespassing. Case# 19-3147.

At 9:57 am, Officer Buda took a credit card theft report. The victim accidentally dropped her credit card in the Ronald McDonald House donation box at the McDonald's drive thru. The employees did not have access into the donation box, which was later stolen. The victim's credit card was used at several locations. The case is still under investigation. Case# 19-3145.

At 1:00 pm, Officer Wah took an auto burglary report at the Franklin Canyon Park and Ride. The victim's vehicle window was smashed and her purse and cell phone were taken. Case# 19-3149.

At 3:15 pm, Officer Weems responded to a residential burglary in the 1200 block of Escobar Street. The female suspect fled after being confronted by a neighbor. She was located in the 500 block of Main Street and arrested for trespassing, as the residence was vacant and no items were taken. Case# 19-3150.

At 4:10 pm, Corporal Mayberry arrested a male for public intoxication in front of Valley Convenient Mart. The male was consuming alcohol when he was contacted. Case# 19-3151.

At 5:00 pm, Corporal Mayberry took a theft from an auto report on Talbart Street, near Escobar Street. The victim's purse was taken. Case# 19-3152.

At 5:30 pm, Corporal May-

berry responded to an alarm at Martinez Junior High. A window was shattered. It appears potato chips were taken. Case# 19-3153.

On November 25th at 10:03 am, Officer Weems responded to the 300 block of F Street for a dispute between neighbors. A male was arrested for brandishing a firearm during the dispute. He was also in possession of a controlled substance. Case #19-3158.

At 7:31 pm, Officer Mayberry was conducting a security check at an abandoned building in the 3500 block of Alhambra Avenue. He contacted a male who he thought to be trying to gain entry into the building. The male refused to comply with Corporal Mayberry's commands and began to approach Corporal Mayberry, who believed the male was going to assault him. An altercation ensued and the male was taken into custody. Case# 19-3164.

On November 26th at 4:32 pm, Officers responded to the 2300 block of Wayne Street for a residential fire. Contra Costa Fire contained the fire to the property. Incident 1611260058.

At 8:13 pm, Officer Parsons responded to a theft at Safeway (downtown). A description of the responsible female, her vehicle and direction of travel were provided. Officer Parsons conducted a traffic enforcement stop near the Franklin Canyon Park and Ride. The female was arrested for warrants. Case# 19-3175.

At 11:34 pm, Officer Espinoza arrested a female at Amtrak for battery. The female struck an Amtrak employee with a tree branch. Case# 19-3176.

On November 27th at 7:10 am, Sergeant Busciglio arrested a male at Amtrak for interfering with the business and trespassing. Case# 19-3177.

At 10:16 am, Officer Wah arrested a female at Walgreens for trespassing. Case# 19-3178.

At 7:38 pm, Officer Parsons responded to a residence in the 1900 block of Alhambra Avenue to conduct a welfare check on the male resident who was not answering the door. The male resident had

passed away in the residence. There were no signs of foul play. Case# 19-3181.

On November 28th at 6:13 am, Contra Costa Fire responded to a fire under the Amtrak bridge. A female fell asleep under the bridge with a lit cigarette, causing the fire. Case# 19-3184.

At 7:16 am, Officer Wah responded to Hidden Creek Court for several vehicles that had their windows smashed. Case# 19-3185.

At 10:39 am, Officer Weems responded to Marina Market for a male panhandler. The male was arrested for public intoxication. Case# 19-3188.

At 3:58 pm, Officer Wah responded to a theft at Rite Aid. The male suspect was in the parking lot, and he fled across the street. He was taken into custody in the Taco Bell parking lot. Case# 19-3189.

At 5:14 pm, Officer Weems responded to a residence in the 1200 block of Escobar Street for a burglary in progress. The male suspect was located and arrested for trespassing with property damage. Case# 19-3190.

At 11:33 pm, Officer Angoco contacted a female driver during a traffic enforcement stop on Pacheco Boulevard, near Camino Del Sol. She was arrested for a warrant. Case# 19-3191.

On November 29th at 8:38 am, Officer Weems responded to a burglary at Public Storage, 901 Arnold Drive. A storage unit door was forced open. The victim was not able to respond to the storage unit to determine loss. Case# 19-3192.

At 11:00 am, Sergeant Gaul stopped a vehicle on Pine Street at Jones Street. He contacted a 26-year-old man from Martinez. The man was arrested for a \$50,000.00 misdemeanor warrant for evading and booked into MDF. Case# 19-3193.

At 2:50 pm, officers were dispatched to McDonalds for a man sitting at a table with a crank pipe refusing to leave. Officers contacted the 34-year-old man from Concord. He was arrested for drug

# Park It by Ned MacKay: Merritt College Classes

A series of courses attractive to people interested in outdoor, environmentally related employment is being offered starting this spring at Merritt College in Oakland.

The courses are taught by Merritt College faculty and East Bay Regional Park District staff, leading to certificates of achievement.

Courses include conservation and resource management, natural history and resources, and urban agroecology. For more information, visit the website, [www.merritt.edu/wp/nhs](http://www.merritt.edu/wp/nhs).

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The first weekend in February brings a variety of programs to the Environmental Education Center at Tilden Nature Area near Berkeley.

It all starts with botanical watercolor painting from 2 to 3 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 1 with interpretive student aide Emily Ritchie. The idea is to create watercolor images of the nature area's native plants. Participants will gain basic skills in life-drawing, plant identification, and of course watercoloring techniques.

Then from 3 to 4 p.m. on Saturday, Feb. 1, explore the nature area with naturalist Trent Pearce in search of salamanders and frogs. The search will proceed rain or shine. The program repeats on Feb. 15.

And farm animals are the focus of two programs with naturalist Jenna Collins, on Sunday, Feb. 2 and again on Feb. 16.

Meet the Little Farm rabbits from noon to 1 p.m., or flock with the lambs from 3 to 4 p.m.

The center and Little Farm are both at the north end of Tilden's Central Park Drive. For information, call 510-544-2233.

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For an opportunity to explore the newest addition to Sibley Volcanic Regional Preserve in the Oakland hills, join the Wednesday Walkers on a three-mile loop starting at 9:30 a.m. at the Wilcox Staging Area on Pinehurst Road. The property will soon after be closed for creek restoration.

The best access is from Canyon Road in Moraga, then turn right on Pinehurst. No dogs, please, and heavy rain cancels. For information, call 510-544-3187.

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The Over-The-Hills Gang is an informal group of hikers 55 and older who enjoy exercise, nature study and local history.

Naturalist "Trail Gail" Broesder will lead the group on a mostly flat hike at Pt. Pinole Regional Shoreline from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 4. Learn about the park's explosive past.

Meet Gail at the staging area at the end of Atlas Road in Richmond. Call 510-544-2233.

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Crab Cove Visitor Center in Alameda features Family Nature Fun from 2 to 3 p.m. every Saturday and Sunday, with activities for all ages.

The theme on Feb. 1 and 2 is "Duck, Duck, Goose!" with games to help learn more about our feathered friends.

There's also story time from 11 to 11:30 a.m. every Sunday with stories, crafts, and activities. And from 3 to 3:30 p.m. on Saturdays and Sundays, you can watch the

staff feed the fish in the center's large aquarium. The aquarium fish are the same species that inhabit San Francisco Bay.

Crab Cove is at 1252 McKay Ave. off Alameda's Central Avenue. For information, call 510-544-3187.

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Sunol Regional Wilderness in southern Alameda County also has recurring, naturalist-led programs every Saturday and Sunday. "Nature Crafts" is from 10 a.m. to noon, with a different craft each week. And "Wild Wonders" is from 2 to 3 p.m., a family-friendly exploration of the park with games and other activities.

Sunol Regional Wilderness is at the end of Geary Road off Calaveras Road about five miles south of I-680 and the town of Sunol. There's a parking fee of \$5 per vehicle; the programs are free of charge. Call 510-544-3249.

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For an update on current events affecting the Delta, join in coffee talk and Delta news from 8:30 to 9 a.m. on Wednesday, Feb. 5 at Big Break Regional Shoreline in Oakley.

Big Break is at 69 Big Break Road off Oakley's Main Street. Call 888-327-2757, ext. 3050.

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There's always something to see and do in the regional parks. For a complete schedule, visit the website, [www.ebparcs.org](http://www.ebparcs.org).

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