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Moraga Safeway employee nears 50 years with the store

By Vera Kochan



Safeway's Greg De Carli at his checker's post.
Photo Vera Kochan

Most shoppers at Safeway's 1355 Moraga Way location in Moraga simply know him as "Greg" thanks to his name tag, but the stalwart checker's nearly 50 years with the company has earned him additional recognition on social media.

Greg De Carli first began working for Moraga's Safeway in 1974, when it was at its original location, just across the parking lot in the spot now occupied by McCaulou's.

De Carli was 23 years old at the time and fresh from taking courses with Safeway about things such as correctly identifying various types of produce. Once he "graduated" he was handed an envelope that told him which store he'd be assigned to work. A fellow "graduate" told him that Moraga was a great location.

Through the years, De Carli has worked a variety of positions such as grocery clerk (restocking shelves between 3 p.m. to midnight), ice cream/dairy stocker, produce stocker (for one day, because he didn't like it), and his current position as checker (for the past 20 years).

"The first thing I bought with my earnings was a used car," recalled De Carli. "The next thing I bought was a camera." An avid amateur photographer, he practically took daily photos in 1986, when the current Safeway was under construction, documenting every aspect of the process including a picture of the new-fangled scanning machine that would become every checker's dream. "There were so many changes that we never thought would catch on."

De Carli remembers when the shelves were not as tall as today's, and on one occasion shoppers could see someone dressed as a Granny Goose mascot handing out lunch box-sized bags of potato chips to little kids in the next aisle. "It was funny, because all you could see was the goose's head floating around on the other side."

Another memory involves a celebrity sighting of the late actor, Dennis Day, who was in town to attend his grandchild's graduation from Saint Mary's College.

Speaking of SMC, De Carli is amused by the grocery purchases the students make. "When the school year starts, and their parents come to the store with them to stock up their supply with healthy items, it all changes later in the year when the kids come on their own and buy junk food."

Safeway customer, Clay Watkins, has high praise for De Carli. "I have known him since I moved to Moraga 21 years ago, and he is a `rock' at this store; very dependable and was at the store every day during the pandemic making sure we were all able to purchase the food needed for our families. Greg is always polite, and kind, and just an all-around nice guy."

"Working during COVID was scary," remembers De Carli. "We all had `Essential Worker' cards to be able to work during it. I remember that customers had to line up to come into the store, and some were even coughing. I'm glad that I have a high immune system."

De Carli plans on retiring from Safeway in August 2024 - his 50th anniversary. He will continue with his second job delivering pizzas for Round Table in Martinez, and does plan on traveling to Europe, especially Switzerland, and taking loads of photos to add to his collection of various locations around the Bay Area, such as the Golden Gate Bridge and Mount Diablo.

Memories of Moraga will include his many customers. "The people are really fun," he stated. "And, I've worked here long enough to see the babies now having babies."

Reach the reporter at: vera@lamorindaweekly.com

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