



Winding Down--

MERRY AND JEFF VAN HORN are winding down their business at M&J's Market in Ottertail. The business is scheduled to close soon. The Van Horns have owned the business since 1995 and purchased it from Marlys and Jim Wipperling, who named it "M&J's."



it. Into the third generation of Brutlag ownership, the store continued to carry some general merchandise, such as clothing and shoes.

In 1954, Ken sold the store to Ormand and Leora True, and the name changed to True's Store. They owned it until 1971. Subsequent owners were Alvin Koblin (for 7 1/2 years), Roger Siedow and Roger Hikes. The name of the store kept changing to reflect the ownership.

On Jan. 1, 1892, Jim and Marlys Wipperling purchased the business and changed the name to M&J's Market, using the initials of their first names.

Marlys said the store has probably always been something of a community information central location. And that role definitely continued during the Wipperlings' 13-year tenure.

In 1994, the Van Horns, who lived in Oregon, attended a family reunion in Otter Tail County. They fell in love with the area and decided it was where they wanted to live and raise their daughters, Lyndsey and Katlyn.

After checking out possible business opportunities, they found out M&J's was for sale and they wouldn't even have to change its name because the store's initials matched their own first names.

After buying the business in 1995, the Van Horns said they were ready to "jump in and be a part of the community," and were even looking forward to experiencing Minnesota's legendary winters.

They said they feel they have become part of the community, but Merry admitted, "we're not too crazy about winter anymore."

"I've enjoyed fishing and meeting the new people from all over the country," said Jeff. "There are a lot of nice people."

And the Van Horns have continued the M&J's community information function.

"We don't know a lot, but we can direct them to people who do," said Merry. "We tell them where the fish bite," added Jeff.