



Valley Ho!



BULLETIN PHOTOS BY MIKE COOK

Renovations are complete on the main street of west Las Cruces

By **MIKE COOK**
Las Cruces Bulletin

South Valley Drive is Main Street for west Las Cruces. And, after nearly two years of massive renovations, all lanes are open, major improvements are in place and landscaping is complete on the \$24 million New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) project.

What may surprise you along the nearly three miles of south Valley Drive – including the work zone – is the wide range of businesses, both large and small, and the many services and products they offer.

You can buy a mobile home or a mobile phone on south Valley, buy gas for your car, get it repaired and wash it, visit a little used but quaint city park, buy a gun and use it for target practice, buy an RV

and stay in an RV park or a motel, rent a vehicle or buy a new or used one, purchase auto parts, visit a bakery or a carpet store, get your roof repaired, hire a construction crew, get an insurance quote, buy a mattress, work out at The Gym, take your pet to see a veterinarian, take your best shot at Strykers Shooting World, and even get your taxes done.

You can shop for groceries at Walmart or a Dollar Store or locally owned Save Mart and you can eat in some of the best restaurants in Las Cruces: Ranchway, Dick's Café, The Frontier, The Shed, Zeeb's, Zia Café, Blake's and Subway. There's also Caliche's and a Starbucks, Village Inn and Sonic. Just off of Valley, you'll find Pepe's, High Desert Brewing Co. and the classic Mexican restaurant, Nellie's.

And what other street in all of Las Cruces is home



Crews finished the sidewalks and landscaping in May.

to a church, a fire station (with a brand new station soon to begin construction next door), an ambulance service, a VFW post and a 75,000-square-foot movie studio?

City Councilor Johana Bencomo said she has talked to many business owners on Valley Drive, which is in the city's District four, which she represents.

They've taken a double hit, she said, with not only long-term street construction, but the temporary closure of many businesses because of COVID-19.

The construction, Bencomo said, makes Valley Drive a more welcoming place to people driving vehicles and also to walkers and bikers.

"Valley Drive was a

complicated project with many stakeholders, and I'm excited to see the final product," said City of Las Cruces Business Development Administrator/Economic Development Mandy Guss. "I look forward to the success of our businesses on that corridor.

"Even though this was an NMDOT project – Valley Drive is part of a state highway – the city business development team did what we could to support businesses through the Valley Drive project," Guss said. "We ran an advertising campaign that encouraged the community to have 'Patience during Progress' and shop local. Along with the Green Chamber of Commerce, we supported the Construction Compadres initiative that brought fun activities and traffic to businesses impacted by the construction."

Construction

The south Valley Drive construction project officially began July 2, 2018, with major construction ending in April 2020 and sidewalk and median work continuing well into May. It renovated a 1.5-mile stretch of Valley Drive from Picacho Avenue to Avenida de Mesilla, including work on Avenida de Mesilla between Valley Drive and Hickory Street and portions of other connectors.

"The newly constructed roadway provides improvements to the area such as a state-of-the-art roadway and signal system," said interim City Manager David Maestas. "The new signals are synchronized to allow for better traffic flow, less idle time, less fuel consumption and less emissions. The new road

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Las Cruces native takes memory lane trip down Valley Drive

By **JESS WILLIAMS**
Las Cruces Bulletin

When I hit the dirt back in 1959, Dwight Eisenhower was president and Memorial General Hospital was downtown. With just a few outlying exceptions, Las Cruces was confined to an area of Three Crosses Road to the north, Solano Drive to the east, Boutz Road to the south and Valley Drive to the west. Fine dining at Tegmeyer's out north or driving over to the NMSU campus were both considered leaving town.

The alternative to Tegmeyer's in town was Johnson's Steakhouse, which operated out of the odd-looking lava rock building on Valley Drive that now houses J.M. Carriere VFW Post 10124. These days, it's well-lit and wide open. Back in the day, it was dim and mazelike. Mom liked their Scotch old-fashioned cocktails with dinner.

We did our grocery shopping at Parton's Grocery on North Valley. At some point, Parton's was renamed



BULLETIN PHOTO BY MIKE COOK

The VFW Post 10124 building has seen a lot in its days on Valley Drive, going back to its days as Johnson's Steakhouse.

Save Mart, and we kept going there. It has since moved a block or so south to bigger digs, and now a Family Dollar takes up the original space. I still shop at Save Mart.

Where the Save Mart is located used to be a drive-in movie theater. I remember going there with my Dad and seeing, among others, "Patton," "Vanishing Point" "Bullitt" and pretty much anything starring John Wayne or Clint Eastwood.

Across the street was University Ford, where I bought my first-ever car with my own money, a 1974 Ford F-100 four-wheel

drive. The salesman's name was Jesse Lyden. Now, Base Auto Sales is located there. University Ford had a shop, but I preferred taking my truck to Bogart's Shell. Bogart's is still in business as an RV shop, owned by my lifelong friend, Jeff Pierce, who worked for Mr. Bogart back in the day.

Down the road a bit was Shirley's Truck Stop, which is now Zia Café (and for many years, Old Town Café). I was an asthmatic kid (still am), and I remember Shirley's always being a nearly impenetrable fog of cigarette smoke and the smell of bacon. That

intersection was a busy one while contractors were busy building the interstates.

Locals remember the pit now called Burn Lake west of Valley was the site from which much of the fill dirt for the interstate was taken out. Back then, the water table was higher, and the pit filled with water, and us kids swam and frolicked and fished there.

Still in the same spot all these years later is the Volkswagen store, now owned by Sisbarro dealerships. Dad bought Mom a VW Fox wagon in a gorgeous hue of blue, then Dad had the roof painted white. She

got really upset with him when he took it deer hunting and hauled his kill back in the rear section of her new car.

If memory serves (I've slept since then), Valley was a two-lane road, and there was some consternation about traffic when the decision was made to build Mayfield High School way the hell out there. Pretty soon, San Andres Estates was built north of Mayfield, and that's where the swanky folk lived.

When it came time for me to go to high school, I was a block away from being in the Mayfield district, but my Dad was a teacher, and my godfather was the superintendent of schools, so whatever strings had to be pulled got pulled, and I got to walk up the tracks to Hoagland and then over to Valley to get to class my sophomore year.

By the time I was a junior and had my F-100, it was naturally equipped with a gun rack, and I often had a .22 and a 20-gauge riding up high behind my head. It was no big deal to park the truck – loaded down with



**Bulletin Editor
Jess Williams**

weaponry – in the school parking lot. Lots of other kids did the same. The only gun-related activity I remember at school during those days were some parking lot sales and purchases after classes let out.

When construction finally finished on the last incarnation of Valley Drive, I couldn't help but think of its dusty past, and the stark contrast between then and now. It remains a fine place for car shopping and authentic local dining. Now that it doesn't require all damn day to navigate it, you should go back if you were previously avoiding the construction.

VALLEY, CONTINUED FROM 1 also features complete street initiatives for all modes of transportation such as sidewalks and bike paths along with beautification of the area with landscaped

medians completed as part of the project. Lastly, the area will benefit from the new drainage features of curb and gutter and storm drainpipe. Businesses in the corridor will see a signifi-

cant decrease in ponding water after rainstorms."

The New Mexico Department of Transportation (NMDOT) project cost \$24 million, about \$1 million more than the original cost

estimate, said NMDOT District One Public Information Officer Ami Evans. The increase was the result of "issues with the base of the roadway" and utilities, Evans said. Because Valley

Drive is part of New Mexico Highway 185, NMDOT paid for the entire project. Maintenance and right-of-way transfers to the City of Las Cruces with the project complete, Maestas said.

Molzen-Corbin & Associates PA, which has an office in Las Cruces, was the project's engineering firm, and AUI, Inc., based in Albuquerque, was the principal contractor.

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Malooly's Flooring Company celebrating 40 years in Las Cruces

By **MIKE COOK**
Las Cruces Bulletin

It all started because George Malooly was tired of hardwood floors.

Malooly owned and operated a gas station in El Paso. One day in the early 1950s, he made a trip to California to buy carpet for his home and business. He wound up with a roll left over, which he sold for a nice profit.

With World War II and Korea over and times changing in the Southwest and across the country, Malooly saw a new trend developing: carpet instead of wood flooring. With his brothers Albert, Edward, Richard and Raymond, Malooly opened a carpet and furniture store in El Paso – in what was then the tallest building in downtown – in the late 1950s. Their grandfather, Esau Malooly, had brought his family to El Paso from Lebanon in the early 1900s, and opened a furniture store in 1907.

The Malooly carpet business thrived and George Malooly added a second store in Las Cruces in the 1960s. Originally located at 600 N. Main St. in Down-

town Las Cruces, the store later moved west, becoming a fixture as Malooly's Carpet City at 765 N. Valley Drive, near the intersection of Valley and Picacho. The building has been enlarged and the showroom remodeled over the years, and the name has changed to Malooly's Flooring Company, but the business ethos remains the same.

Four decades later – the 40th anniversary is this October – George Malooly's daughter and namesake, Georgette, remains actively involved in running Malooly's Flooring Company with her sister, Barbara, who joined her in 1987. Chris Todd, Georgette's oldest son, took over everyday management of the store in 2018. He works with his cousins, Barbara Malooly's sons, Billy and Joseph Quigg, and sales specialists Johnny Garcia and Tracy Stockton, along with bookkeeper Stacy Egnazcek and warehouse managers Doug McClure and Chuy Martinez. "We're not all related by blood, but we all work together like family," Chris said, noting that most of the Malooly's crew has been



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Georgette Malooly, Joseph Quigg, Chris Todd, Billy Quigg

together for decades and collectively have more than 200 years' experience in the flooring industry.

Chris began working at Malooly's in the sixth grade, cleaning the large warehouse. After graduating with honors from Las Cruces High School – where

he also played on the 2009 state champion Bulldawg football team – Chris enrolled at the University of Texas-Austin and earned a degree in business management in 2014.

While Chris deals mainly with scheduling, orders and management, Georgette

and Barbara still specialize in sales and customer service. Georgette likes dealing with people more than any other aspect of the business. "Our customers become our friends," she said. "We take the time to listen to the customer, help find the product that will work best and make sure the customer is 100 percent satisfied. We deliver the whole thing. We help the customer learn about the product, choose what they like, measure and install. If there's a problem or a question, we're here to deal with it."

The store survived the 2008 recession and nearly two years of construction work on Valley Drive, and now is working through COVID-19. While public health

orders are in effect, the store is open and following social distancing practices.

"People actually appreciate that our local store is open," Chris Todd said. "They can shop here without standing in line at a big box store and without the worry of being around dozens of other people." He noted that several local businesses have used the coronavirus down time to remodel and install new flooring. "We're glad to work with people so they are safe and feel comfortable."

Malooly's is open 8 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Monday-Friday and 9 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday. Appointments can be scheduled by calling 575-523-0633. Visit <http://maloolys.com/> and find them on Facebook.

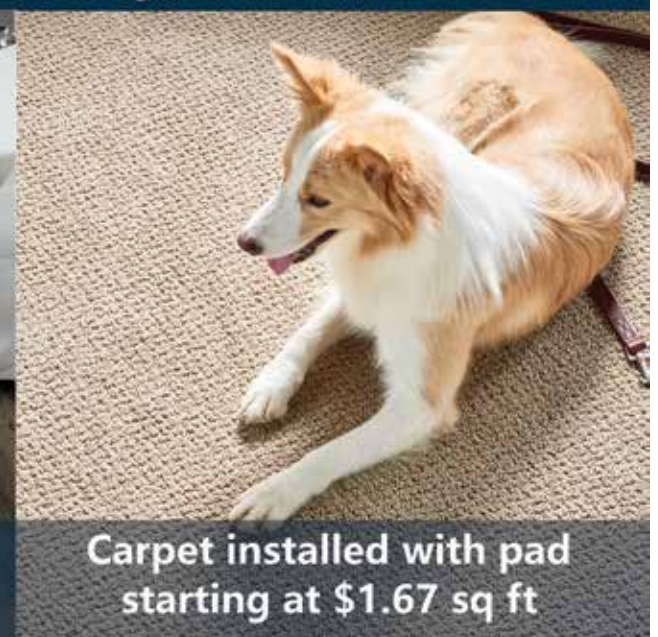


Malooly's has been a Valley Drive mainstay for years.

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