

Team Member, Store Celebrate 50th Anniversaries Together

When Jenny Cavanaugh was hired at Meijer on Jan. 26, 1973, she never envisioned she would still be there half a century later.

"I was only going to work here 2 years to get money to go to college," she said.

Fast forward to March 13, 2023, and Jenny was center stage at the 50th anniversary celebration for our Burton, Mich. store as its longest-serving team member. She still remembers the grand opening and loves to share anecdotes about her time with Meijer, starting with day one.

"Want to hear a story?" she asks.

Grand Opening

"It was wall to wall people. I remember in particular we ran a 12-pack of Coke for 89 cents. We had to do skids in the front because everyone was getting two," she said.

Jenny remembers far more than the price of a 12-pack of Coke in 1973. She rang up a handful of items so many times, the numbers are burned into her brain.

Milk: 77 cents

Postage stamp: 13 cents

TV Guide: 13 cents

Pack of cigarettes: 39 cents

Getting Hired

Jenny came to Meijer with some retail experience during her teenage years. But she jokes it may have been her last name that won favor with the company named for a Dutch family.

"My maiden name was VanderMey. The Store Director, whose last name was VanderArk, asked if I was Dutch. I said my grandparents were born in the Netherlands. He jokingly said, 'You're hired!'"

From there, Jenny trained at the Okemos and Ypsilanti stores before helping open the Burton supercenter.

"My very first customer on my very first day in Okemos came through with a commercial order. I must have had a look on my face, and she said, 'Honey, I'll help you get through.'"

A commercial order is when someone is purchasing items for a business, requiring some forms to fill out. Jenny said it was a little more complicated than a regular order, but the customer helped her through it.

"I never had a bad customer, they were always so nice," she said.

Wild Weather

A few weeks after the Burton store opened, there was a significant snowstorm in the area.

"The Pet and Gardens side was all glass windows with a canopy over it. The canopy was so loaded with snow that it came down and broke all the windows and all the snow fell into the store," Jenny said. "Before they broke, they waved and shattered. It was a mess. I had to get home on a snowmobile."

Meeting Fred

In her 50 years, she met Fred Meijer several times. Jenny said there were only a couple dozen stores at the time, so Fred came by about once a month.

"I can't say enough about Fred Meijer. He never had to look at your name tag; he always knew our names," she said. "He stopped to talk to every customer, shook their hands, introduced himself. He was the most wonderful man."

The Future

If the Burton Meijer is your store, expect to see Jenny for some time.

"I've always loved my job. I love working for Meijer. I wouldn't have stayed this long if I didn't," she said. "I have no plans to retire. The longer you work, the longer you live. I'll be right up there with Fred, I'm going to live to be 100."

Additional assets available online: **Photos** (1)

<https://meijercommunity.com/Team-Member-Store-Celebrate-50th-Anniversaries-Together>