



Longtime Central Lake grocer Gene Plaggemars is looking forward to relaxing a bit after 43 years in the market at the corner of M88 and Old State Road in downtown Central Lake. Plaggemars recently sold the store to Alden Village Market owners Kevin and Kelly Young.

## Central Foods sold

By TINA SUNDELIUS

CENTRAL LAKE - Longtime Central Foods owner Gene Plaggemars wasn't thinking about retiring early, but when his Central Lake neighbors Kevin and Kelly Young approached him with a serious offer on Cen-

tral Lake's only grocery store, the prospect of re-discovering himself in a new career appealed to him.

59 year-old Plaggemars began working at the store in 1968 for his father, Vergil Plaggemars,

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## Sold

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and his father's partner Arnold Matthews, when he was 16 years old, the same year his father and Matthews purchased the business. In 1980 Don Matthews and Plaggemars bought out their fathers and took over ownership of the store. Ten years later, Plaggemars bought Matthews share and has been the sole proprietor ever since.

Although the Youngs, who own the Village Market south of Alden and whose family owns the Village Market in Elk Rapids, had shown interest in the store in the past, the recent offer was unexpected.

"It came on kind of quick," Plaggemars said, "So I haven't

had much of a chance to think about what I'm going to do next."

Plaggemars is confident that the Youngs will do a good job of running the market. "They'll run it somewhat like it is now, with a small town grocery store atmosphere. They're not looking to change any of that," he said.

The Youngs will officially take over day-to-day operations of the store on November 30.

When asked if he was going to miss coming to the store every day, Plaggemars responded, "No, not too much, after doing it every day for 43 years, but I will miss my customers and everyone I got to know so well."

And he will miss his employees, including Central Foods' butcher Steve Dawson, who is also going to miss his boss.

"I started (working here) while I was still in high school," Dawson grinned. "Gene and I have spent a lot of time talking socially-we're friends as much as employer/employee."

But Dawson is also looking ahead to the future. "It's going to be different, but I'm looking forward to working with the Youngs," he said, noting that he had worked for Plaggemars for 34 years. "The community is going to miss Gene, he did a lot that I don't think a lot of people realize."

Plaggemars, who with his wife Kathy has two grown daughters, is looking forward to having some time to themselves.

"I'm just going to kind of relax, and see what happens next," Plaggemars said.