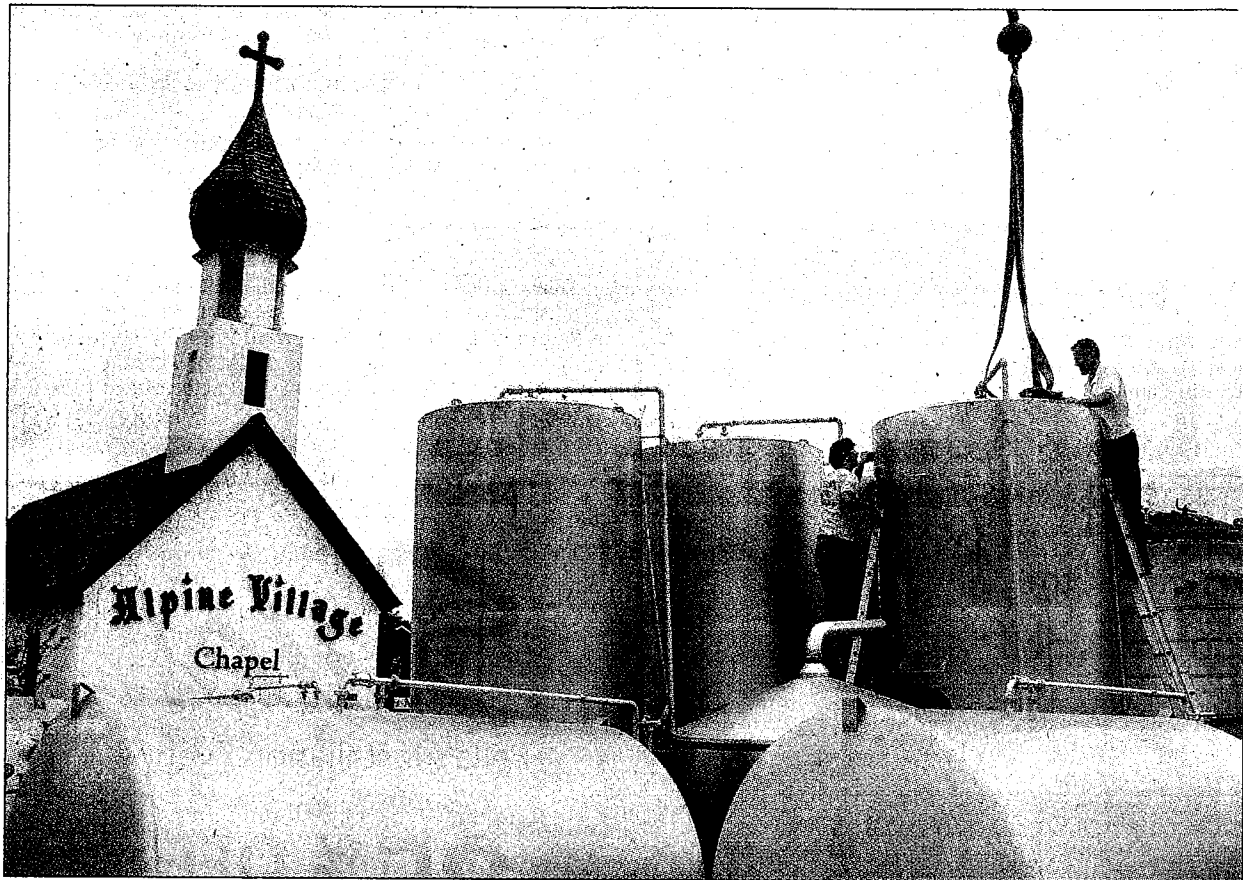


## SOUTH BAY. BIDDING ITS BEER GOODBYE



Brad Graverson Staff Photographer

Michael Bowe, far right, lashes his beer-making vats to a crane as his Angel City Brewery leaves Alpine Village for downtown Los Angeles after a long dispute over the lease with the landlord.

# ANGEL CITY TAKES OFF

Microbrewery loses battle with landlord at Alpine Village, moves to downtown LA

By Nick Green Staff Writer

A South Bay brewing institution has bottled its final beer.

Angel City Brewing, a fixture at Alpine Village near Torrance since 1988 and reportedly the oldest microbrewery in Southern California, is moving to downtown Los Angeles.

Owner Michael Bowe spent Wednesday hauling away 19 2,000-gallon fermenters and serving tanks, as well as 10 other pieces of heavy Bavarian-made brewing equipment, using a 40-ton crane and a half-dozen big rigs.

"This brewery has been here 22 years," Bowe said. "I've had

good years at Alpine Village.

"People have had great beers at Oktoberfest. And I'm sad to see that end."

But Bowe had no choice.

A long-running dispute between Bowe and his landlord — Alpine Village — ended Friday when a court ordered the brewery's eviction from the premises.

Indeed, two sheriff's deputies showed up Wednesday morning to let Bowe know he had until 5 p.m. today to remove his equipment, 24 hours earlier than he had initially believed.

Adam Sharp, a friend and cus-



The brew tanks at Angel City Brewery left Alpine Village for downtown Los Angeles through a hole in the roof. Sheriff's deputies showed up Wednesday morning to tell Michael Bowe that he had until 5 p.m. today to be out.

## "Losing all the Alpine Village beer business crippled the brewery's profitability and I learned that my beer was replaceable."

— Michael Bowe, owner of Angel City Brewery

# LEAVING

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tomer of Bowe's who owns Fern's bar in Long Beach, arrived Wednesday morning to find out what was going on.

"This is his love," Sharp said.

But Sharp also had more practical concerns.

"I hope we don't run out of beer," he added.

It has been a tumultuous couple of years for both Alpine Village and Angel City Brewing.

Alpine Village is on its fourth general manager since the summer of 2008, when longtime fixtures Hans Rotter and his wife, Teri, were fired by the board of directors, apparently after an ambitious redevelopment scheme went awry.

Since then, the kitschy South Bay landmark, which had been deteriorating for years, has completed a variety of improvements with varying degrees of success under a series of management teams.

For instance, a supposedly permanent tent meant to house Oktoberfest was removed last fall because it failed to comply with county codes, said Otto Radtke, the latest manager, whose father preceded him on the board of directors.

A temporary tent will house the 2010 version of what has long been billed as Southern California's largest Oktoberfest celebration. A new per-

manent structure should be in place by 2011, Radtke said.

Radtke hopes Alpine Village can reclaim its reputation as the best place to watch soccer in the South Bay.

Alpine Village will open early to show every World Cup game from South Africa live — the first games some days begin at 4:30 a.m.

And there are now 15 German-style beers — both imports and unusual microbrews — on tap.

Meanwhile, Bowe got into a conflict with a previous manager that began when he refused to remove some large shipping containers from the site. Alpine Village management contended the containers' presence violated the terms of his lease.

The dispute escalated when Bowe's beer was removed from the store and restaurant at Alpine Village and then from the lucrative Oktoberfest as well.

In April, Bowe conceded in a letter to the board of directors that in "retrospect I should have acted differently."

"Losing all the Alpine Village beer business crippled the brewery's profitability and I learned that my beer was replaceable," he wrote, while belatedly pleading for a one-year lease extension.

He didn't get it.

Radtke, who had stepped into a dispute that was not his creation, said it was unfortunate the parties could not find a resolution to the dispute that would have allowed a successful brewery to remain at Alpine Village.

"Unfortunately, the personalities, the egos and the businesses involved didn't work out," he said. "It's a shame — it really is."

Meanwhile, forced to seek other business outside Alpine Village, Bowe said he actually wound up having his "best year ever."

He added distributors and expanded the number of retail outlets that sold his products. He even managed to come up with \$39,000 in back rent.

But it was too late.

Bowe, who had bought the brewery off eBay in 2004 and always wanted to move to downtown Los Angeles, was out.

As of Tuesday he had found a temporary storage spot for his brewing equipment in the arts district; Bowe said he is in final negotiations for space nearby that will allow him to resume brewing. His liquor license also allows him to open a pub on site, too, something he had not done at Alpine Village on a large scale.

It's unclear whether Bowe's legal dispute with his soon-to-be-former landlord is over. Radtke said he arrived a week ago to find Bowe had ripped the roof off his building in preparation for the crane to remove the massive tanks.

But Bowe is already looking forward rather than back.

"We're going to be in that arts district," he said. "We're going to be in sight of City Hall."

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