

FALL CITY NEIGHBORS

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Photo courtesy of Irene Pike

Photo of the month: Riverside Tavern circa 1933

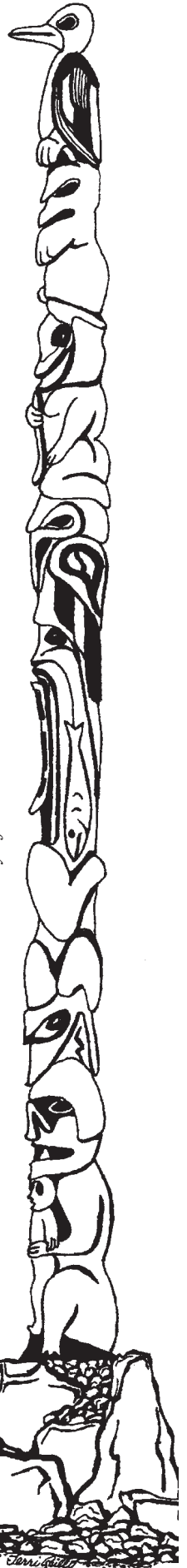
A second story was later added, to make the building we now recognize as the Colonial Inn. (See interview with Ed and Helen DeGrace and some history from Jack Kelley, pages 8-9.)

 ★ **LIBRARY ELECTION COMING UP ON SEPTEMBER 14TH (SEE PAGE 13)** ★
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IN THIS ISSUE:

- Totem Garden—p. 2
- Community News & Notes—p. 3
- Fall City Web Site—p. 4
- Summer Water Safety—p. 4
- Patterson Creek Camp—p. 5
- Sponsors—p. 6, 7, 10, 14
- Ed and Helen DeGrace—p. 8-9

- Colonial Inn History—p. 9
- Garden Corner—p. 11
- Natural Neighbors (rerun) - p. 12
- Ollalie Meadows Hike—p. 12
- Valley Girls Choir Forming—p. 13
- Library Election—p. 13
- Natural Neighbors—p. 15
- Classifieds / Calendar—p. 16



Ed and Helen DeGrace and the Colonial Inn by Sharon Brown



Before Fall City took on a life of its own, there was one place that truly stood out as a landmark and it was what drew the outsider to at least consider driving through our small, quaint town. Most would offer the Colonial Inn as that establishment.

Ed and Helen DeGrace bought the Riverside Inn in 1966 and changed the name to the Colonial Inn. Ed, as a real estate broker, decided to buy the Inn and take on the challenge. Ed had never cooked a day in his life, but he remembered his mom's home recipes and thought he would take the risk.

If we had met Ed back in 1946 at Fort Lawton, where the army stationed him for three weeks, we would have heard him vow that he'd, "never come back to this God-forsaken country again, for not once did he lay his eyes

on the sun or the mountains!!" After the service, in 1958, he decided to swallow his pride and give the Northwest a second chance. He has been here ever since! He bought 23 acres between Fall City and Carnation which he has since sold after his first wife passed away.

One evening Ed noticed this beautiful woman coming into the Inn for dinner. She appeared week after week and Ed began making small talk as he set her order of veal cutlets in front of her. One night she came in with her best friend Dottie. Ed approached their table and said, "If I had a driver I'd go out tonight." When Helen and Dottie got home they called Ed to ask him if he was serious. That evening Helen picked up Ed and out they went all over Seattle looking for a pianist. That was the beginning of a courtship which has lasted in 33 years of marriage.

Helen bought a home in Fall City in 1963. She rented it out to the people who owned Anderson Hay Company until she sold her house in Lake Sammamish in 1966. She had 29½ acres, two horses and several greenhouses where she grew all her own flowers. Helen enjoyed riding and was the Secretary Treasurer for the Raging River Riders until 1973. At that time she was commuting to Seattle working as an Ophthalmology Assistant. She began going to the Colonial Inn for dinner on evenings when she was too tired to cook.

At that time, being the romantic (and according to Helen, he still is), Ed would send a dozen red roses and two white carnations to Helen's work each week. When she finally quit that job to go work at the Inn, her boss told her that he wasn't so sure he would miss her, but he was sure going to miss those roses!

The DeGraces got hitched in 1973. The organist that played live music at the Colonial on weekends stood up for them and though their Justice of the Peace did not show up when they got there, they found another one in Burien and tied the knot. They made their way to Harrison Hot Springs in Canada for their honeymoon at which time they ran into six of their customers from the Inn!

The Colonial Inn became a "happenin' place!" Ed and Helen raised 14 head of beef on their property, as well as a garden full of vegetables which were harvested for the Inn. They had 45 boxes of apples from which were made homemade apple-sauce and pies by Bernice Cowin, their baker for 25 years. Ed made his own corned beef and each Wednesday evening would run a special where everything that was served was from their garden and property.

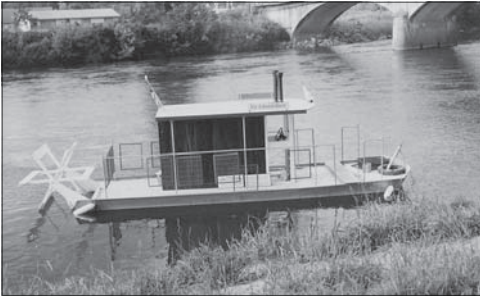
On Sundays they offered a champagne breakfast, as well as live music all weekend long. This was Ed's opportunity to shine. Though he got dismissed from the church choir in third grade, he had always had a secret desire to sing. Here at the Colonial he had a captive audience. In fact, he and Helen used to sing a medley including, "It had to be you!" Their organist made the place come alive and though people told Ed if he would stop singing he could double his clientele, he didn't seem to think it mattered since the place was already busting at the seams!

"What put the Inn on the map was our 'all you can eat crab night' for \$2.25. The meat man had 70,000 pounds of crab from which we bought 3,000 pounds at a time. We set 5-gallon buckets on each table and everyone dug in," says Ed. People came from all over to indulge in the fresh shellfish!

"We also had three hayrides a year," says Helen. "One of them was at Christmas time. We could take up to 70 people. Each couple received a hot brick wrapped in a canvas bag to keep them warm during the ride up to the DeGrace's home. There they were served hot-buttered rum. When they all piled back in the wagon, they were serenaded down to the Colonial by Walt Martin on his banjo. At the Inn they were served a fresh sizzling steak and a baked potato,



Ed and Helen as Grand Marshals in the 1995 Parade



and there was a serve-yourself salad bar. It made for a very memorable night.”

The Inn hosted benefits, Christmas parties, banquets; sponsored local girls’ baseball teams, three golf tournaments, and many other events. For the Fall City 100th year anniversary in 1972, Ed built the Colonial Queen (photo at left), a 35hp outboard, to take people up and down the river as far as the golf course.

In 1917 the Inn was built and in 1933 there were 11 rooms put on upstairs for the local school teachers to stay in. When Ed and Helen took over they ran the Inn as a bed and breakfast. The restaurant started getting so busy they had to turn the upstairs rooms on the north end into a banquet room and bar. The others that were still available were fixed up with new brass beds and antique furniture.

Ed and Helen served Fall City through the Colonial Inn with their whole hearts. They gave of themselves 100% and had a real love for their customers. In 1990 they sold the business and equipment and began spending more time enjoying themselves on extended trips in their motorhome to Alaska, Quebec, Florida and even as far as Cabo San Lucas. They also enjoyed fishing at Sekiu and have never missed a year.

In the past Helen did all her own canning, putting up a variety of pickles, pears, and peaches, made her own jam and jellies, and one year canned 70 quarts of tomato juice from Ed’s surplus of tomatoes from his garden.

Each says, “These last 33 years we’ve had a beautiful life. Since we had to work on Sundays, Wednesday mornings was our day to go to Mass. We have depended on God and He has seen us through all our ups and downs. Our home has been like a little piece of heaven.”

“I enjoy the deer, flowers, crossword puzzles and traveling. I love to watch the trees turn colors. It reminds me of so much that I have to be thankful for, even though I have been ill the last few years,” says Helen.

“What’s gotten me through,” says Ed, “is my ‘singin!’ And of course Helen, who has been the most important one in my life.” Helen dittoed that from across the room about Ed. These two sure love and enjoy one another.

Now, if you see this couple hanging around Fall City, stop them and thank them for all they’ve brought to our fair town through the Colonial Inn and be sure and have Ed sing for you. If you ask him, he will. At least he did for me, and it was his own original rendition of “I left my heart in San Francisco.” He will definitely bring a smile to your face!



Photo courtesy of Irene Pike

Riverside Tavern-Lodge circa 1956?



Colonial Inn today

History of the Colonial Inn building

by Jack Kelley

Unfortunately, history of the Colonial Inn has been hard to come by. According to the assessor’s records, it was built in 1925, but there was a small cabin out back that was built by May Brown in 1923. May Brown wasn’t the original owner, though. I’ve heard somewhere that the original Riverside Inn was built by a man named Holtzheimer. My guess is that Holtzheimer built it between 1920 and 1923, although Mrs. Haines told Ed DeGrace that it was built in 1917, after moving the old house that was there to 4329 339th Place. May Brown was the second owner, and with no place to live, she had the cabin built. (Note that in the picture on the front page of the newsletter, the sign on the roof says “Riverside Tavern.” That picture was taken just prior to the addition of the second story. I concluded that the “Inn” was renamed the “Tavern” following the repeal of Prohibition to attract the drinking crowd.) The second story, consisting of eleven rooms for school teachers and travelers, was designed by Hugh Hinds, who also carved the totem pole. Construction of the second story was complete in early 1934, at which time May Brown changed the name to The Riverside Tavern & Lodge. My dad was in the electrical/plumbing business and he came home one day complaining that Hinds had specified 2 by 3 studs instead of 2 by 4’s for the second floor. Shortly before World War II, it was bought by Harvey and Elza Zepp. According to Elza’s obit in the 3/7/51 Valley paper, they purchased the business in 1932 and owned it for five years. (This doesn’t fit because the assessor’s work sheet has the Zepps owning it in 1940.) My recollection is that the Zepps owned it from c1938 to c1945 and that Harvey Zepp was a real chef. In spite of the wartime shortages, he had a large following of customers. After several more owners/operators, Ed and Helen DeGrace bought the Riverside Lodge in 1966 and changed the name to the Colonial Inn.