

The Old Heidelberg: The beer garden that never was

By Brenda Stewart

The Hildenbrands wanted a German beer garden, a Greely Octoberfest.

The couple purchased a site with that in mind then discovered Ontario liquor laws were against them.

So they settled for a German restaurant and the Old Heidelberg

was born.

Robert and Irma Hildenbrand started serving full-course German meals to Highway 31 travellers about five years ago.

"We just scraped up some money and away we went," says Mr. Hildenbrand. "But it was tough for the first two years; people walked out left and right,

because we didn't serve steaks or hamburgers and hot dogs. Our menu was, and still is, strictly German food. People should be willing to try something different."

Three years later, with very little formal advertising, the Old Heidelberg boasts a raft of regular customers from as far away as Montreal. Now, reservations are a necessity. People do not walk out any more.

The Hildenbrands attribute their success to several factors. They take great pride in having a good relationship with their staff, some of whom are their own children. They believe that this leads to a comfortable rapport with customers and a "homey" atmosphere.

Mrs. Hildenbrand says customers have described their restaurant as "feeling like coming home and being served." She points out that there is only one right way to serve food and drink and that their staff has been trained to do "those little things" for customers.

She stresses the fact that she makes all the meals from "scratch." Nothing comes from a can. And the food is more German than you can get in many restaurants in Germany today.

"Besides it tastes good," adds Mr. Hildenbrand laughing.

Irma Hildenbrand describes her experience cooking *Rahm Schnitzel* on television in 1977. All went well even without rehearsal. Smiling, she remembers the crew waiting to swoop down on her food when the taping was over.

"Like vultures, they devoured everything," she says. "Oh boy, unreal!"

The couple recounts with humour the desperation of some of their customers at first realizing that there are no salt and pepper shakers on the table.

"Of course, they are always available," says Mr. Hildenbrand, "But Irma spices the food very

well and we want people to try it, before they decide they need more salt and pepper."

Special occasions like birthdays and anniversaries are an important part of the existence of the Old Heidelberg. Several couples return every year for their anniversary and some even bring their own special candle.

The festivities invariably included a special announcement over the microphone, a sing-a-long with Mr. Hildenbrand accompanying on his accordion, and a Black Forest Cake complete with name and candles. Dancing is always an option at the Old Heidelberg and those who are so moved by the festivities may dance along to the music.

Every year after the big New Year's Eve party the Hildenbrands close the restaurant for several months to rejuvenate themselves and the building. Then when they re-open in March they feel that they are "starting fresh" in every way.

Metcalfe Carnival big SUCCESS

By Julie Van Dusen

Most mortals have a predictable impulsive streak and that, according to Bruce Patterson, carnival chairman, is what made Monte Carlo Night one of the most popular events at Metcalfe's winter funfest. Thankfully the use of play money — 10 cents per \$10,000 — highly curtailed the risk of sinking into financial despair. The event was followed by an auction where the big winners invested their newly-acquired assets. One frenzied individual sunk \$28 million into an ordinary lamp.

Of course, the traditional choosing of the fairest lady in the land, is always a big crowd pleaser. This year's winner, selected from eleven participants, was Wendy Welk who along with her two princesses, Shelly Loubert and Brenda Armstrong enthusiastically participated in all major carnival events.

Mr. Patterson, noted that Teeny Bopper Night, catering to the 8-14 set, was attended by a very large crowd. In fact, he said, many youngsters had to be turned away. Next year he promised that the 15-19 age group, too old for the Teeny Bopper event but not quite comfortable with the adult folk would be properly taken care of.

Other gala highlights included the choice of the best costume won by Jason and Janice Isaac who made a very convincing Mickey and Minnie Mouse. The best costumed skating couple was Robin Hood and the Indian Maid adapted by Jill Patterson and Tracy McKeown.

The tricycle race was won by the Shilo Horsemen who defeated teams such as the Highway Men, The Councillors, The Smoke Eaters, the Skate Sharpeners and the Rock Throwers.



Robert and Irma Hildenbrand in front of Greely's Old Heidelberg.



Graduation

Beverly Morrice, granddaughter of Robert Morrice of Russell Village, has graduated from the University of Alberta school of nursing. Miss Morrice, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Doug Morrice of Edmonton, earned a medal and a \$200 prize for overall excellence in nursing. She is now working at the university hospital.

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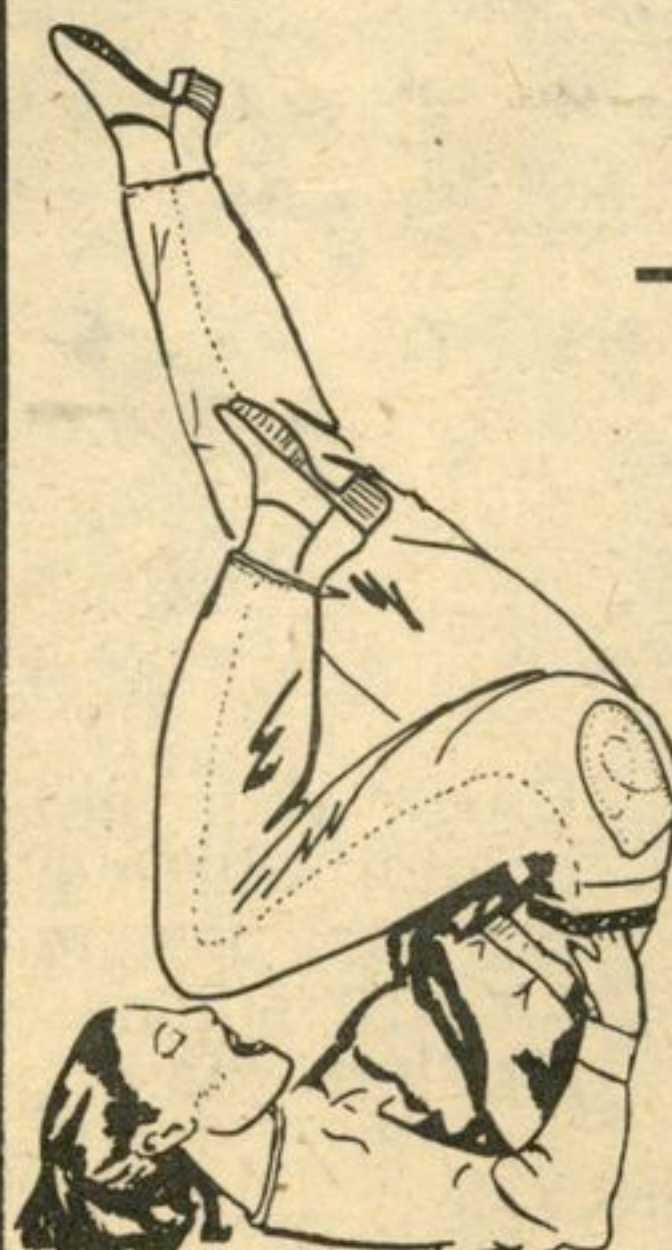
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