

Now & Then in Ripon ...

Looking back with the Ripon Historical Society



A YOUNG KIM and Diane Shady stand by the bar at their Food & Spirits Co. restaurant in 1985. *submitted photo*

Food & Spirits Co. restaurant built upon innovation

The Ripon Fraternal Order of Eagles organization was a part of an international non-profit organization which at one time had its meeting space in an old house with land located along Eureka and Blackburn streets.

The Eagles decided its old building was limiting its success serving Friday night fish fry dinners and drinks, plus the building's maintenance was becoming too expensive.

They razed that building around 1980 and built the more modern structure that stands at 404 Blackburn St. today, currently the home of Yeomans-Edinger Chiropractic services.

At that time, the new Eagles' building included a large oval-shaped bar, a small stage for live music and a 200-seat banquet room, and this may have been the most modern banquet room in Ripon.

Due to inflation, in 1982 the American economy was in an uproar when federal loan interest rates escalated to 20-plus percent, which contributed to the Eagles club filing for bankruptcy.

The bank carrying its business and operations loan decided to operate the bar and restaurant under the name "The Place," hoping to keep everything afloat until the economy became more balanced.

The Food & Spirits Co. restaurant eventually opened in the former Eagles building.

How the dream became a vision

In 1981, Kim Shady — a college graduate who had grown up in Ripon — wanted to return to where he was raised with his young wife, Diane, as he dreamed of owning his own business.

His father had managed the Pin Bowl on Blackburn Street before building his own local bowling center, the "Double R Lanes" on Fond du Lac Street (currently the Plaza Bowl).

Shady's entrepreneurial spirit

and bachelor of science degree in hotel and restaurant management from the University of Wisconsin-Stout led him to meet with Art Egbert Jr., president at Ripon Federal Savings and Loan. Shady also had just completed an additional business class about how to start a business and wrote a plan that won praise and approval from the bank president.

With that, the Shadys opted to lease the 7,200-square-foot former Eagles' building that seated up to 200 people as a start for their Food & Spirits Co. restaurant, while the bank remodeled the interior as part of its commitment.

Shady believed that uniqueness would always be important to his success. He worked 70 to 80 hours per week and constantly was reviewing the restaurant's successes, plus adding new concepts.

He invented specialty dishes, unique food items, a 32-foot Sunday brunch buffet offering, first-ever low-calorie meal selections, lunch sandwiches and the best hamburger in town that included fresh-baked buns. Lunch was usually served to 100 patrons who only had one hour to eat, including their travel back to work, and dinner service started afternoons well into evenings.

Uniqueness in service and offering fueled success.

Innovation didn't stop with food as the Food & Spirits Co. restaurant started the only local "I'm Driving Club" for designated drivers (DDs) of groups of three-or-more drinkers who would be driving their friends home from the bar and restaurant while staying sober to avoid accidents and injuries.

The DDs were issued a card identifying them as a "DD" that enabled them to drink free, non-alcoholic beverages on the house for the night. Friday nights at the restaurant included

live music. Tuesdays featured tenderloin steak specials. All-you-can-eat tacos were served on Thursdays.

Large and ample parking at the Food & Spirits Co. made banquets, special events, holiday parties and New Years' Eve special.

"These were happy times for all; some of our most joyous occasions were during the holidays and also wedding receptions we hosted for our customers," Shady said with a smile.

The Food & Spirits Co. not only served great food, it supported the community. R-Line Foods was just one of its best suppliers. And the restaurant's food offering catered to local customer's expectations.

After five years of hard work, which included raising two young children and Diane working at Ripon Printers plus an additional 10 to 15 hours a week at Food & Spirits Co., the Shadys sold the business to Leonard Quinn (1938-2121) of Green Lake.

Quinn, who had formerly managed the Mascoutin and Tuscumbia country clubs, went on to run the Food & Spirits Co. restaurant for a number of years.

Kim Shady joined Alliance Laundry Systems to pioneer selling its laundry equipment into the hospitality industry, and Diane continued her career growth path at Ripon Printers. Both Kim and Diane are still here in Ripon today supporting the local community via volunteer work.

If you have any pictures taken at the Food & Spirits Co. or memories to share, email the Ripon Historical Society at riponhistsoc@gmail.com or call 920-748-5354.

The Ripon Historical Society is the oldest continually operating historical society in Wisconsin. It is open Fridays and Saturdays 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

For more information follow us at Facebook/riponhistory or www.riponhistory.org

Applications are being accepted for Ballweg Leadership Scholarship

State Sen. Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan) once again is offering scholarships to qualifying high school seniors in her district.

Up to 12 \$500 scholarships will be made available. Applications are being accepted now through Friday, March 31.

Scholarship eligibility is open to graduating seniors continuing their education in a 2-year technical college program or a 4-year baccalaureate degree program. Students must graduate with at least a 3.0 average on a 4.0 point scale and reside in the district.

Those unsure whether or not they reside in the 14th Senate District, may visit the Legislature's website at www.legis.wisconsin.gov and then type in their address under "Find My

Legislators" to determine their home district. Districts have shifted beginning January 2023 due to redistricting.

"I began this scholarship program to empower young leaders to continue building upon their skills in college and beyond," Ballweg said. "Each of the over 100 scholarships I have awarded have gone to students who value community engagement and have excelled inside and outside of the classroom. I look forward to what this year's recipients will accomplish."

Scholarship packets are available in area high school guidance offices, online at www.legis.wisconsin.gov/senate/14/ballweg, by calling Ballweg's office at (608) 266-0751 or e-mailing sen.ballweg@legis.wisconsin.gov.

FdL County seeking help in redesigning county flag

Fond du Lac County is beginning the process of redesigning the Fond du Lac County flag.

The current one was designed by Donna Heldt of Campbellsport many years ago.

Fond du Lac County residents may submit their designs for the flag that will then be adopted as the new county flag. Designers are encouraged to incorporate their own thoughts on what appropriately represents the county.

Only submissions from Fond du Lac County residents will be accepted. Required criteria for flag submissions include representation of parks and recreation within the county, representation for agriculture in the county's communities, and representation of businesses and manufacturing

in the county. Submissions must be in a digital format (a vector, PDF, PNG, or JPG format).

Fond du Lac County reserves the right to reject submissions, including those that may be deemed by county administration as offensive and/or discriminatory. The winning submission will become property of Fond du Lac County. The designer of the winning submission will be recognized at the May County Board meeting, as well as receive a \$100 Envision Greater Fond du Lac gift certificate.

Submissions should be emailed to Stephanie Dahlke at stephanie.dahlke@fdlco.wi.gov by April 1, 2023.

For questions or more information, call Dahlke at 920- 929-3154.

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