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CHRISTINA HENTON

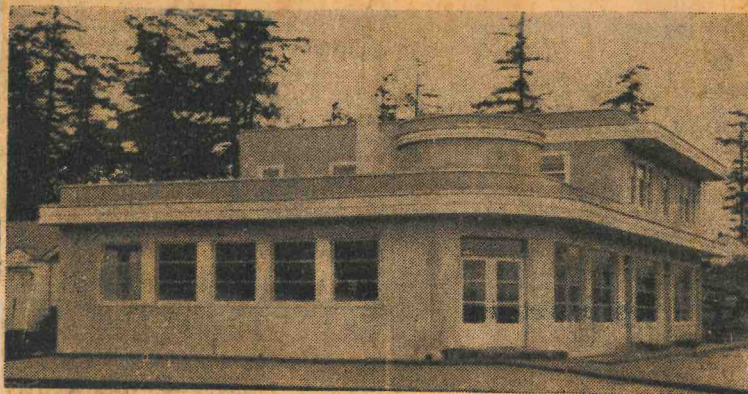
March 18, 1980

WHIDBEY ISLAND HISTORY CLASS

History of

THE CHIMES RESTAURANT

MODERN CAFE NOW OPEN TO PUBLIC



Pictured above is "The Chimes" new cafe owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. Chris Fakkema which opened last Saturday. An estimated attendance of 700 persons toured the modern new building, located at high school corners. (Whidbey Press Photo)

Dec 1946

PROPERTY OF
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THE CHIMES RESTAURANT

A building now standing on the corner of Midway Boulevard and 700th Avenue once housed a restaurant known as The Chimes. This establishment was once known as Oak Harbor's finest restaurant.

The Chimes, as a restaurant for families to eat, workers to gather and a place for entertainment no longer exists in Oak Harbor but was once known in the area over a period of thirty-one years. Its doors were opened in December, nineteen hundred forty-six and closed after its final meal on June 1, nineteen hundred and seventy-seven.

During The Chimes' thirty-one years in existence, there were several managers, different styles of operation, various clientele and some competition. There were many successful years and some not quite so prosperous, but they all hold some very unforgettable memories for the owners as well as its patrons.

The picture below appeared in the Island County Farm Bureau News Thursday, December 19, 1946.

MODERN CAFE NOW OPEN TO PUBLIC



Pictured above is "The Chimes" new cafe owned and operated by Mr. and Mrs. Chris Pakkema which opened last Saturday. An estimated attendance of 700 persons toured the modern new building, located at high school corner. (Whidbey Press Photo)



The Chimes restaurant was built in 1946 by Egbert Beekema for Mr. and Mrs. Chris Fakkema. The construction started in early spring, went through the summer and was completed by December. Most of the area surrounding the building was farmland. Both Midway Blvd. and 700 Avenue were dirt roads. The intersection at that time was called "High School Corner."

"The materials for the construction of The Chimes came from a lumber company in Canada. "I had to pay some duty on it, but I knew the man and trusted him," said Mr. Fakkema. "There was no special design for the building because the lumber company furnished the architect." The Fakkemas were shown several designs and chose the one that they thought was closest to what they wanted. Some excess materials were purchased from the local Columbia Valley Company, now known as Copelands. Included in the plans for the construction of The Chimes was an apartment over the restaurant which served as the Fakkema's home for several years.

"There were no fancy mixing machines," recalled Mr. Fakkema. "All that cement was mixed by hand and then poured for the construction of the building. We used plaster for all the walls and had Masonite tile throughout the building. The equipment was very modern at that time. All appliances were electric and the only thing missing was a dishwasher which was installed a couple of years later."

The legal description of the property on which this building was established is shown below.

Lot 8, Block B, Koorje Addition to Oak Harbor,
Except the West 61.50 feet, according to Plat recorded in Volume
3, pages 70 and 71.
(Parcel 2)

THIS DEED OF TRUST IS NOT ASSUMABLE WITHOUT THE PRIOR APPROVAL OF THE LENDER AND L.V.

Mr. and Mrs. Chris Fakkema named the restaurant "The Chimes." At the time they named the restaurant it was because they decided to have chimes mounted on the top of the building with loud speakers on the top round tower to play music according to the season of the year.

There was no special schedule for the chimes to be played, they were just played at various hours of the day. According to Mr. Everett, "You would be working in the yard or just digging in the garden and when you realized it, you were humming the tune being played on the chimes."³ Other visitors remembered the music played by the chimes and recollected it as a very pleasant experience.

The chimes were played for only a few years, and as time passed and the restaurant business became very busy the chimes were played less and less frequently and eventually not at all. By the time the building was sold to the next owners, the chimes were disconnected and past history for the building.

During the days the Fakkemas operated the restaurant most of the food was shipped from Everett by a company called Bargreen. A salesman would come by and check the shelves and tell you what foods were needed. The ordering was then left up to the cook, because the owners felt he knew more about the kitchen than they did. The restaurant specialized in home cooked meals, home made pies and ice cream. "I enjoyed making the ice cream," said Mr. Fakkema. "I got the mix and made ten to fifteen buckets at a time. all different flavors and stored them in the freezer. The soft ice cream was sold over the counter to the school kids."⁶ Only one waitress, one waiter, John Fakkema, the owner's son and the cook, Jimmy Flowers were on duty during during peak hours.

The hours of operation during the Fakkema years were from nine o'clock to five, weekdays. They were open later on Saturdays and earlier when

breakfasts were served.

"It was a good business, running the restaurant," recalled Mr. Fakkema. "I enjoyed it, but it was hard work and long hours even with a partner." The Fakkemas felt even the convenience of being able to go right upstairs at the end of the day or even slipping up for a couple of hours during slack time did not compensate for the exhaustion as a result of managing The Chimes.

In 1948 The Chimes was leased to Edith and Fuzzy Fassnacht. "Mr. Fassnacht had some knowledge of the business and felt he would enjoy managing and operating it," according to Mrs. Fassnacht. At first, he tried operating the restaurant on a 24 hour basis, but later had to cut back because of various problems. There were no changes or additions made to the business during that period from 1946 to 1952. The business and customers were basically the same as when the original owners operated it.

In 1953 the restaurant was sold to Don Rensink, who had been a cook and felt he could make the business very successful. His thirteen years of operation have been recognized as the most active and colorful period of the restaurant's history. The basement was remodeled for the teenagers who visited the restaurant at lunch time. It was a place which made it convenient for the students to buy a hamburger and soda pop. That operation was later closed after the remodeling of the main roads and the school administrators stopped the students from visiting the restaurant at lunch time.

After closing the business to the school kids it was then arranged as a convenient place for various groups to meet. The Oak Harbor Lions Club met there, several church and community groups met there and the Oak Harbor Jaycees initiated their charter there.

THE CHIMES

1945-1952

GOOD FOOD

PRIME RIB ROAST OF BEEF

- HOME MADE SOUP
- CRISP SALAD
- TWO VEGETABLES
- HOT ROLLS & COFFEE 1.00

TENDER BREADED BEEF LIVER AND ONIONS OR BACON

- HOME MADE SOUP
- CRISP SALAD
- TWO VEGETABLES
- HOT ROLLS & COFFEE 1.75

TASTY BREADED LEAN PORK STEAKS

- HOME MADE SOUP
- CRISP SALAD
- TWO VEGETABLES
- HOT ROLLS & COFFEE 1.00

TASTY SALISBURY STEAK 1.15

TENDER PAN FRIED GOLDEN CHICKEN

- HOME MADE SOUP
- CRISP SALAD
- TWO VEGETABLES
- HOT ROLLS & COFFEE 1.35

APPETIZER MENU PAPER - PATENTED
RESEARCH LABORATORIES, WEST COLUMBIA, TEXAS

Menu during Fasnacht operation
of "The Chimes" 7

As a result of advertisement and patronage The Chimes was referred to as "Oak Harbor's Finest Restaurant." The entire main floor was used for the restaurant.

At the time The Chimes was first built most people considered it an asset to the community. Mr. Everett, a neighbor felt the restaurant had quite an impact on the community because it was a place that several different groups and most people could visit. It was a place to take friends and family when they visited, therefore community people were very supportive of the operation. "As a neighbor," recalled Mr. Everett, "I was annoyed most by the parking of cars in certain areas, but the restaurant didn't bother me at all. I was glad to see the people because there were no neighbors. To solve the parking problem, I eventually bought the lot between the restaurant and my house." ⁹ The noise created as a result of lunch time visits to the restaurant by school children, even though some students passed by and across his property never disturbed Mr. Everett. "I visited the restaurant quite often myself, usually once a week to meet with other friends," said Mr. Everett. "I liked the place and the people running it. It gave my wife a place to go for lunch sometimes to get out of the house." ¹⁰

Once again in 1965 the restaurant business changed managers. Alice Pound operated The Chimes from the year nineteen-hundred-sixty-five until she sold it in nineteen-hundred and seventy-five. These were very productive years, but various circumstances surrounding the business prompted her to sell it to Pat Sullivan, its present owner.

The Chimes Restaurant was not without some competition during the 31 years of operation. During its earlier years there were no other restaurants

in the city but several coffee shops. In later years, several other restaurants had been established in the city and on the day of its closure, the fast food chains had begun their influx into the area.

The clientele during the Fakkema, Fassnacht and Rensink years were generally the same. The business times were lunch time with the school children and then Saturday evening dinner. Construction workers gathered in the mornings to discuss the day's work over coffee and returned in the afternoon to check things off and note plans for the following day. The evening meals were usually served to the local businessmen and military personnel. "A large percentage of our business was military people," remembers Mr. Fakkema, "but they never gave us any trouble at all. When the boys felt the need to raise Cain they went to Bellingham or Everett."¹¹

The Chimes served as a place for entertainment for some people. Mr. Everett, who was a native of Concrete recalls visiting the restaurant on Saturdays because he enjoyed visiting with his friends he had known and worked with in Concrete and then resided in Oak Harbor. The restaurant served as a perfect place for their wedding ceremonies and receptions for some of its patrons.

"I remember when The Chimes got one of the first televisions in Oak Harbor," related Mrs. Fassnacht. "People would gather around the bar and we would all enjoy the Milton Berle show and get tons of laughs. It was a lot of fun on those nights."¹²

After Pat Sullivan became the owner of The Chimes, in nineteen-hundred-seventy-six he remodeled the basement. As a result of the legalization of gambling in Washington, he turned the basement into a cardroom. It was called "Chimes Card Room." This operation continued and was relatively

successful until Mr. Sullivan closed it. "One day I received a telephone call," remembers Mr. Sullivan. "The unidentified man on the other end told me I was a wolf in sheep's clothing. I asked him what he meant and he immediately informed me that he had arrived in town and found his daughter and her children without food and in great need of clothing. My son-in-law, he said, has a good job, making good money, but its all spent in your card room. On the basis of that one phone call, I closed the card room."¹³

Several attempts were made to secure a liquor license at the restaurant, but each time it was turned down because of the nearness of the schools to the restaurant.

Even though some dreams for The Chimes Restaurant were never fulfilled, there are many unforgettable moments treasured by the owners and some of its visitors. Mr. Fakkema, the original owner related a few of his memories: "The high school lunch crowd was an unforgettable bunch. I remember Fridays as quite a decision time for many of the Catholics, the older ones trying to convince the younger ones not to buy hamburgers, but to eat a meat substitute. I have fond memories of many visits with the navy boys. One thing they all had in common was no matter where they came from, they always wanted to return home. Home to them was always better."¹⁴

Mrs. Edith Fassnacht remembers a frightening experience during their years of operating The Chimes. "The Lions Club was having their regular meeting in the basement and they had a guest speaker from out of town. We had prepared a special meal for them and all went well. Later that night, a large percentage of the people who had eaten that meal got food poisoning. It was a frightening time for my husband and me because some of the people were very sick."¹⁵ The food poisoning was finally narrowed down to some canned peas which had been used.

For Pat Sullivan, memories extended throughout the thirty-one years of The Chimes operations. In its earlier years, his grandmother had made the pies at the restaurant, so it was a memorable task, as a lad, to slip to the door, get her attention and get extra money to visit the candy store across the street. During the Rensink years, as a very young construction worker, Mr. Sullivan remembers the water hose fights and egg fights he had inside the restaurant with Mr. Rensink. Most memorable was when Mr. Rensink threw an egg at him and the egg landed on his new juke box. Many other treasured memories are shared by some of the people who were just visitors to The Chimes Restaurant.

From July of 1976 to June of 1977 the restaurant was operated by Bill Morris. He became underfinanced and by this time the competition was at its peak. During that time Sambo's, Country Kitchen and other eating facilities had moved into the area. The Chimes equipment needed repairing or replacing in order to compete with existing restaurants. Many people wanted to continue The Chimes Cafe, but on the basis of the condition of the restaurant and happenings in the area Mr. Sullivan decided to close it.

The Chimes Restaurant officially closed June 1, 1977. The building is now known as "Sullivan's Realty."

FOOTNOTES

1. Island County Farm Bureau News, December 19, 1946, Page 1
2. Personal Interview with Mr. Chris Fakkema, February 28, 1980
3. IBID
4. Island Title Company, Oak Harbor "Deed of Trust." 360653
5. Personal Interview with Mr. Leonard Everett, March 1, 1980.
6. Interview, Fakkema
7. IBID
8. Personal Interview with Mrs. Edith Fassnacht, March 3, 1980.
9. Interview, Everett
10. IBID
11. Interview, Fakkema
12. Interview, Fassnacht
13. Personal Interview with Mr. Pat Sullivan, March 3, 1980
14. Interview, Fakkema
15. Interview, Fassnacht

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Fassnacht, Edith, Personal Interview, March 3, 1980.

Island County Farm Bureau News, December 19, 1946

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Sullivan, Patrick, Personal Interview, March 3, 1980