

from the editor

Saying goodbye for good is never easy.

This month Vernonia's Voice is taking time to say goodbye to several, what I would call, icons of our community. And the landscape of Vernonia just won't be the same.

During the week of February 14th the Country Kitchen was demolished. Also known as the Pine Cone to many long time Vernonia residents, this business and structure was severely damaged during the 2007 flood and became another casualty of flood recovery and the changing face of our town.



I only knew it as the Country Kitchen, and certainly didn't know it as well as some folks--or hold it as close to my heart. One person called me during the demolition to make sure I was aware, and recounted fond memories of spending lunch time during school days there. I'm guessing that was about forty years ago, and I know there are many, many more people around town with similar memories. But the Country Kitchen does hold a special place for me as well.

The first day I visited Vernonia, looking to see if it might be a place I would consider for relocating, it was my first stop. I sat over a plate of eggs, potatoes and toast and then wandered around town on foot--Anderson and Hawkins Parks and Vernonia Lake, the Grey Dawn Gallery, Black Bear, Creatures, Sentry Market, Vernonia and True Value Hardware Stores, the Mini Mart, the Pioneer Museum, the Linear Trail--reaching the conclusion that, yes, I could give this place a try.

The other image of the Country Kitchen that is burned into my brain, mostly because I have a photograph of it, is of the 2007 flood waters reaching to the windows, as a truck sits stalled in deep water out in front. The photo was taken while working to salvage food



from the Middle School cafeteria coolers and move it to higher ground. It is an image I will never forget.

In the end it was those flood waters that signaled the end of the Pine Cone/Country Kitchen--it's doors were never reopened after that day and last

week it was erased from our landscape. But our memories cannot be erased.

In a letter dated February 4, 2011 Providence Medical Group Physician Phyllis Gilmore informed her patients that she will be retiring on March 4th. Although Dr. Phyllis, as many of her patients and community members came to call her, had not been established here for a long time, she has been an integral part of this community. She came to us from Louisiana, and her southern

draw and easy going manner cast a real charm over many of us.

And yet, she could also be tough as nails and all business when needed and that is what

I will remember about her. She was one of the real heroes of the 2007 Flood, wading through three feet of water at

the inundated medical facility to salvage medicines and supplies to run a make-shift shelter and clinic. And she strongly advocated for Providence to provide temporary tent structures so she could continue to see patients in the weeks following the flood while the medical building was repaired. She was also a strong advocate for rebuilding Vernonia Schools and instrumental in the passage of the Bond Measure that helped kick-start that project. She has become a respected and vital leader in our community.

She understood what practicing rural medicine was really about and did it with compassion, grace, and that toughness we all came to expect and respect.

She was an inspiration and a shining light in those dark days of December of 2007 and she will never be forgotten by those who saw her work.

On February 27 the community is invited to a retirement party for Dr. Phyllis Gilmore at the Vernonia Scout Cabin starting at 2:00 PM.

Bill and Carla Long shut the doors at Cafe 47 last month, ending a short but brilliant run as one of Vernonia's most interesting businesses.

A restaurant that looked and felt like a museum, Cafe 47 was a cultural icon, filled with images and collectibles. It was a business that Bill Long put his heart and soul - and hands - into long before he officially opened the doors.

Most of us remember the long wait, about one full year, as Bill readied the interior and exterior--hanging the decorations and hand building the booths. And WOW!, was it worth the wait. Even before you walked in the door you knew something special was contained inside from the hanging flower baskets, bamboo paneled exterior and handmade sign. Filled with movie posters, road signs, antiques, license plates, rock and roll album covers, photographs, and all other manner of memorabilia, paraphernalia,



art work and other knick-knacks, the place was stuffed with stuff, hanging from the ceiling and every other surface area. The restaurant was filled with atmosphere--and done in a way that was tasteful and, well, just plain cool. Every time I walked in the door I saw some-



thing new and was amazed. And by the way, the food was really good too!

Unfortunately bad timing and poor health were too much for Cafe 47--

Bill opened just as the economic downturn began and it proved too difficult for this small town restaurant to remain sustainable. Bill's health issues didn't help either as he was open limited hours at times. And though we all wanted to support Cafe 47, many of us just couldn't afford to go out to eat as often as we would have liked.

It was a short run. But in that short time Cafe 47 became a favorite. And now one of the businesses that really was the heart of eclectic Vernonia is no longer with us.

It's hard to say goodbye, especially to community icons. In small towns people and businesses come and go. Some leave more of an impression than others. And this month we say goodbye to three that will leave a lasting impression and should not be forgotten for a long time. From where I sit, the view in Vernonia has changed dramatically.

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VERNONIA'S
voice
reflecting the spirit of our community

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