



TOLLY'S IS BACK

An old favorite returns to Oakland, Oregon

BY CAMILLA MORTENSEN

North of Roseburg and a good 45 minutes south of Eugene, across a single lane bridge and down Locust Street, is Tolly's, a longtime Oakland, Oregon, staple that's come back to life.

I remember going to Tolly's back in the late '90s and sitting in a wingback chair in an upstairs dining room of a restaurant full of antiques and carousel horses. The Tollefson family sold it not long after, in 2001.

Opened in 1968 by Terry and Carol Tollefson, Tolly's isn't just a restaurant — it's a soda fountain, a candy store and a beloved anchor for Oakland, population about 900 or so.

Back in April of this year, Paul Tollefson, the son of the original owners, found himself on a trip down memory lane when his friend Rob Gandy posted a picture of a "for sale" ad on Paul's Facebook page, proposing — in jest — they split the cost. A thread ensued of memories and enthusiasm. On May 19, Tollefson responded "done."

Two months later, Tollefson was gearing up for a September opening.

After selling Tolly's in '01, the Tollefsons bought it back in 2003, and sold it again 2008. Another Oakland family, the Knights, bought it in 2013 in order to keep the mainstay going, even keeping the name. Not a restaurant family, Tolly's came up for sale in 2016 after the elderly Don Knight died and has sat empty ever since.

Now Tolly's is back. Tollefson says another old friend who grew up in Oakland, Rhett Woods, offered to go in with him on the restaurant as a kind of silent partner. Woods was one of the many Oaklanders who worked at Tolly's in his youth and got his start after Terry and Carol Tollefson sent him to community college, Paul Tollefson says, and that mission of employing local families and giving back to the community is something he's also bringing back.

The restaurant will stay a family affair. While Terry Tollefson passed away in June, Paul says that Carol Tollefson has been involved in Tolly's restoration and will be at the restaurant a couple days a week. Paul will be commuting from Tahoe where he has a mortgage business and Mill Valley where his wife, Abbey Tollefson, has a business and where they live with their three daughters.

In addition to outdoor seating, the area behind the restaurant is developing raised beds where Tollefson plans to engage local schoolchildren in the slow food movement and use what is grown at Tolly's.

The menu features old favorites many of them named for Oakland families like the Mode's Reuben and Creighton B. sandwich as well as more contemporary vegan and vegetarian offerings. Tollefson says that the food is locally sourced as much as possible, including a local ribeye steak, the cap of which is cured and featured on a charcuterie plate.

Tollefson is also working on live entertainment several nights a week where live bands will play on an outdoor deck, mainly folk and Americana, he says.

Tollefson says those old wingback chairs I remember from years ago are worn out, but he's ordered 50 more and his mother has ordered cases full of candy for the old-fashioned soda fountain downstairs. He's had the kitchen redone, the carpets cleaned and he's restored the charm that once made Tolly's a go-to destination not only for locals, but for travelers along I-5. ■

Tolly's is located at 115 NE Locust Street, Oakland, Oregon. More at facebook.com/TollysinOakland. Hours TBA.

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