

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Entrepreneur Lives Dream with Clyde's

continued **▲** from Front

wife Adelaide Burt, former car dealers who owned the restaurant chain, were white and employed blacks as waiters, waitresses and cooks.

The restaurant closed in the late 1950s, perhaps because its racist trademark was becoming increasingly socially unacceptable.

Graham's descendents say that it was never the family's intent to demean African Americans, but that the images which also adorned menus and postcards were accepted as normal in their day.

Jenkins finds his restaurant's past "ironic," since it now showcases some of the best African American talent the city has to offer.

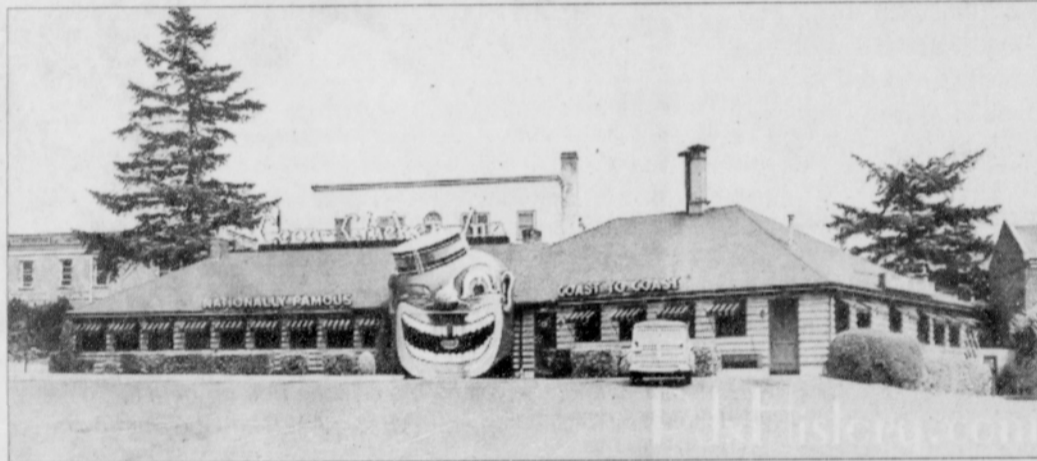
There are live jazz performances, with an emphasis on "old school Motown," on Thursday through Sunday nights. Also on Sundays, starting at 8:30 p.m., one of Portland's best jazz drummers, Ron Steen hosts an all-comers jam session.

Jenkins describes his dining menu as "American eclectic," with hamburgers, pasta, salads, seafood, steak, and of course, the signature prime rib.



PHOTO BY MARK WASHINGTON/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Clyde Jenkins fills his entertainment calendar with some of the city's best known jazz artists to help make Clyde's Prime Rib, 5474 N.E. Sandy Blvd., one of the city's hot spots.



A historic photograph from the 1940s shows the dehumanizing face that greeted customers of Portland's "Coon Chicken Inn." Considered one of the most insulting of all anti-black caricatures, the face was also a trademark for the same restaurant chain in Seattle and Salt Lake City.

A Portlander "born and raised," Jenkins graduated from of Central Catholic High School and spent much of his career in the high tech industry, including Kentrox Telecom.

Eventually he decided he wanted to go into business for himself by combing two of his passions. Jenkins said he had worked at Farrell's Ice Cream while in high school and "It was something I enjoyed, "while "All my life, I've enjoyed music."

He originally wanted to open a restaurant either downtown or near-in northeast Portland, but the Prime Rib was for sale.

"When you're looking for a business to buy, you have to take what's available," he says.

Jenkins did extensive work to remodel the interior. He changed the menu to "make it more affordable." He also consciously sought to build his customer base.

Regarding the Coon Chicken Inn days, Jenkins agrees that the former restaurant and its owners were not consciously hostile to African-Americans.

He notes that the large influx of black wartime shipyard workers to Portland had not yet occurred, and the city's African-American population was fairly small.

"It was probably not racist," he says, "just the way people saw the world, and now the world has changed."

In the present-day world, Clyde's Prime Rib opens at 11:30 a.m. daily except Sunday when doors open at 5 p.m.

For more information or to make reservations, call 503-281-9200.



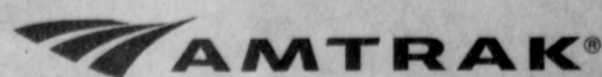
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