

Riehls sell R & W Drive-In

By April Hilton-Sykes
Tom and Helen Riehl will leave a big hole in the community after their move to the Portland area. But fortunately, a whole family has moved to Heppner to help fill that gap. The Riehls, longtime owners of the R & W Drive-In in Heppner, have sold the restaurant to Alex and Patricia "Patty" Rystedt from the Bend-Redmond area. The Rystedts' daughter, Carol Hollis, her husband, Scott, and their children, Brian, 17, Tasha, 11, and Cody, six, have also moved to Heppner to help operate the restaurant.

The Riehls bought the R & W in 1981 from Rita and Wayne Harris, who had bought the restaurant from his parents. The Riehls moved from Portland, where Helen had worked for U.S. National Bank off and on for 17 years and Tom worked 17 years for Hyster Company.

The Riehl family came to Heppner because they wanted a small community to raise their children, Rick, Bob and T.R., then 14, 13 and seven.

In addition to raising their own children, Tom, and Helen feel like they had a part in helping raise the community's children, because so many of them spent so much time at the Drive-In, either as customers or as employees. Helen taught many an entry-level high school employee. "It has been



Helen and Tom Riehl

a challenge, but far more rewarding than a challenge a majority of the time. I love it when my ex-school kids come in and say 'hi,'" says Helen. "It's like having your own kids grow up and come back to visit. I enjoyed helping them through their first jobs and seeing them make successes out of their lives."

The Riehls made sure that area kids had a chance to be successful—by stressing the importance of reading. Tom and Helen began a program which offered drive-in treats as incentives to read. If a child read a certain number of books and completed required reports, that child earned a certificate for an ice cream, pop or other treat to redeem at the drive-in. The Riehls conducted their

reading program through the schools for around nine years.

Helen also organized a food drive for Thanksgiving and Christmas food baskets. Cub Scouts, St. Patrick's youth group members and school athletes helped pick up the food and the Neighborhood Center distributed it. Helen says that she "stole" many of her ideas from bigger communities. "Whatever big communities could do, we could do better," laughed Helen.

For seven or eight years Tom and their sons gave area kids a healthy activity by operating a roller skating rink on weekends at the fairgrounds. "Tom always enjoyed being called the skate man," says Helen. "He helped the little girls tie their laces and now they've grown into young ladies."

Besides helping kids with their laces, the Riehls lent a sympathetic ear to teenagers who came in the R & W after hours just to sit and talk. The race cars that Rick and Bob built were a big draw to area teens, says Helen. "Everyone came in. It was a community project." The boys raced their cars in Hermiston at the race track for around three years. A couple who were race fans even called on Helen to be a witness at their wedding. The couple had come to Heppner to get married at the Morrow County Courthouse, but they didn't know anyone in town to act as a witness. They remembered the Riehls from the Hermiston race track and called the drive-in and, of course, Helen came through in a pinch.

Hunters passing through often got a helping hand at the R & W or found haven at the Riehls' mountain cabin. "We loaned hunters everything from ketchup bottles to an alarm clock," said Helen. "We had people sleep in our trailer and our cabin. It's a community where you can extend yourself. It's never been a regret. There's a bond and a sense of trust and loyalty in Heppner I don't know if you can find anywhere else. I'm really going to miss that part of it."

Helen says that her sons have been grateful for the opportunities they were able to get in Heppner that they might not have had in a larger community. She said that T.R. especial-



L-R: Scott and Carol Hollis and Petty and Alex Rystedt

ly commented on his participation in sports and leadership activities. "In large schools you don't always get those opportunities," she says.

Helen says that her faith is also an important aspect of her life in Heppner. She is a member of St. Patrick's parish and a member of the altar guild. She also chaperoned her church's youth group on a two-week trip to Rome.

Other activities she enjoyed in Heppner were walking and those too few escapes to the family's cabin on the edge of Black Mountain. Lately, however she has spent most of her weekends in Portland where Tom has worked for the past four or five years at Precision Cast Parts. A big draw of the Portland area is the couple's grandchildren. Rick has two children, Tyler, six, and Theresa, one, and Bob has three children, Julianne, five, Laura, three, and David, two. "We left Portland to raise our kids and now we're going back to Portland to help raise our grandkids," laughed Tom. "But my heart is in Heppner and it will always be in Heppner." Tom has eight brothers and sisters in the Portland area and Helen has 10 siblings there. T.R. is in Japan in the Air Force.

Helen, 52, says that in addition to being available for the grandchildren, she plans to get a job. She adds that since she is moving to Portland, Tom, 51, may be able to devote more time to his tractor business.

The Riehls welcome visitors at their home in Portland, 15934 S.E. Clay, phone 252-6350.

New owner Patty Rystedt, 53, has had a long career in the restaurant business. Working 17 years at the Tom Tom restaurant, which is similar to a truck stop, in the Bend-Redmond area, Patty knows the cooking end of the business inside and out. Her husband, Alex, 55, worked at a mill and also has some cattle.

The Rystedts had been looking for a restaurant for several months when a friend in Spray told them about the R & W. They liked what they saw and decided to pick up and move. Alex wanted some acreage for his cows, but hasn't been able to find anything in the area. Although he planned to stay at their home until it was sold, he says he may move to Heppner sooner.

The Rystedts' daughter, Carol, 35, and son-in-law, Scott

32, bought a house in Heppner near the courthouse. Their son, Brian, is home-schooled. Daughter Tasha is enrolled in the sixth grade at Heppner Elementary and son Cody is in the first grade. The Rystedts have another daughter, Angel, 28, who lives in Portland.

The Rystedt family are members of the Christian Life Center.

The Rystedts plan some

changes at the R & W. They will be open Mondays and plan to shorten Sunday hours, opening around 1 p.m. They are also opening weekdays at 6 a.m., offering breakfast until 10:30 a.m. Breakfast fare will include bacon, eggs, ham, link sausage, pancakes and French toast. Patty says that if it goes well, they will expand their breakfast menu.

Odd Fellow lodge has steak dinner



Dale Horton (left) and Jerry Hollomon

By Delpha Jones

Willows Odd Fellow lodge held a steak dinner at their hall on Wednesday evening honoring the State Grand Master of Oregon, Dale Horton and his wife, Pat. Approximately 10 invited guests attended from Lexington. Steaks were cooked by Rollie Marshall.

Following the dinner, Horton gave a talk on the aspects and works of the Odd Fellow lodge, including the Arthritis Fund; Friendship House; the Living Legacy (planting of trees); eye bank research which finances a chair at the school in New York and the U.N. Pilgrimage for Youth. Morrow County has had several winners in the past from local schools. Locally, help is given when needed, such as dinners for bereaved families, baskets for the needy and many other things.

Pat Horton was remembered as she had at one time been president of the Rebekah Lodges of Oregon.

Each of the grand masters and presidents have a project each year. This year they are stressing the educational loan fund, the Oregon Eye Program and the Arthritis Foundation.

Their flower is the sunflower and there was fun in selling neckties, some with large and

small sunflowers. The presidents and grand masters pins are sold to help finance these projects.

The Oregon Rebekah president will visit Lexington Oct. 14. The meeting will be held in Heppner as the Lexington lodge needs some repair work. Four lodges will take part in the district meeting.

Irene Swanson has visitors

John Swanson and his wife, Kathy, from Redding, CA, were weekend visitors to Heppner to visit his mother, Irene Swanson, and family.

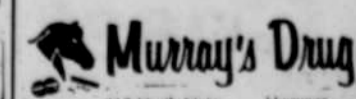
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