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CHSM

Conifer Historical Society and Museum

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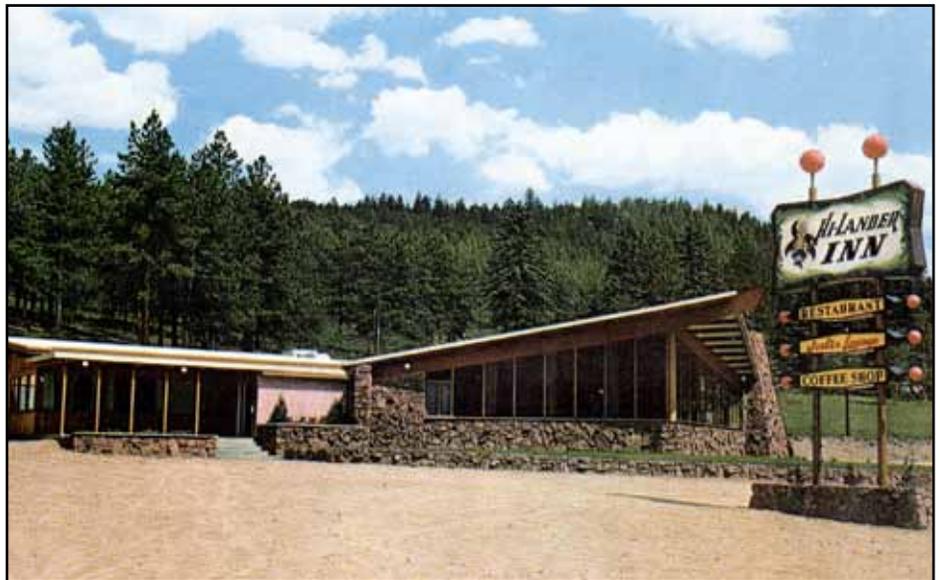
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Hi-Lander Inn

by Elaine Hood



“The Hi-Lander Inn was the best restaurant in the world!”

“We watched the Hi-Lander being built, but only dined there on special occasions. You know it was the *nicest* restaurant we had ever been to!”

“Clarence always met you at the door in a *tuxedo*.”

These were the first descriptions I heard about the Hi-Lander Inn restaurant, owned and operated by Clarence and Gladys Kunz. Long-time Conifer residents always rave about the Hi-Lander. When I finally met Clarence at CHSM’s 2009 Old Timers’ Picnic, I asked if it was true that he always wore a tux. “No, not a tux. But I did greet everyone in a sport coat and slacks.”

Restaurants come and go, but none has been held in such universal esteem as the Hi-Lander. Built in 1962 and opened for business in April 1963, it sat on the parcel of land where the highway 285 underpass to Pleasant Park Road now exists.

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*** DID YOU KNOW ***

You can now “friend” the
Conifer Historical Society and
Museum on Facebook

This issue of CHSM can be found at:
www.coniferhistorymuseum.org

From the President

Letter to the community

by Janet Shown, CHSM President

Conifer Historical Society & Museum (CHSM) is poised for a bountiful spring and summer!

Throughout the winter, the Board of Directors huddled to evaluate past activities, envision new opportunities, and plan strategies for reaching exciting goals. Now, like the spring flowers and vegetation in our mountain communities, we're busting out all over with a packed event calendar and two separate opportunities to establish museum sites in the 285 Corridor.

With great generosity, the Norman Meyer family has agreed to collaborate with CHSM to conduct a feasibility study that will help determine the viability of the future establishment of a museum on the Meyer home site, which includes the Meyer family's iconic yellow two-story house, barn, airplane hangar and 10 surrounding acres. The study will be funded by a non-competitive grant from the Colorado State Historical Fund, which will provide \$15,000 if the community and CHSM provide matching funds of \$7,500. CHSM has plans to raise the funds by the end of August, 2010, in order to submit the grant proposal by September. Watch your mail box and email inbox for ways that you can help us reach our goal!

An exciting opportunity exists for CHSM to collaborate with Staunton State Park and the Conifer Area Council (CAC) Historic Preservation committee to preserve historic cabins within the State Park and to assist in operating the cabins as museums and edu-



cation centers. Board members recently toured the cabins with CAC Historic Preservation committee members and park personnel, and will begin studying how to make this unique opportunity a reality.

As prospects grow for the museum to establish a site, we continue our primary mission to share the region's legacy by collecting, preserving and exhibiting historical and cultural materials and providing public access to services, collections, exhibits and a research library. Our season of special events and educational activities begins with a Mother's Day tea and quilt show Saturday, May 8 at St. Laurence Episcopal Church in Conifer. The following Wednesday, May 12, we'll begin our popular summer lecture series with a presentation by West Jefferson Middle School 7th grade students who interviewed local residents and wrote literary stories about the Myths of Conifer. This presentation and all other summer lectures will take place at 7 p.m. at Conifer Community Park at Beaver Ranch's Main Lodge on the second Wednesday of each month through October. Presentations are free to members and \$5 for others.

Fund-raisers for the Meyer Project feasibility study, the Old-Timer's Picnic, June, July and August, exhibits, oral history interviews, and educational activities will fill the summer months and provide community members with many ways to learn, share, and cherish our community's unique history and culture. We invite you to become a new member or renew your membership to enjoy discounts on CHSM's activities and products, and to visit our web site or Facebook page often to learn about our many upcoming activities!

Janet Shown

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CHSM is published quarterly for the Conifer Community, past, present, and future. It is intended to be an online publication with limited hardcopy distribution. Story ideas and contributions are encouraged. The photo of Norm Meyer's yellow house on the front page was taken by Lana Turner. Editor: Elaine Hood hood1959@yahoo.com

Following WWII, Clarence and Gladys had owned and operated one of the largest Jeep dealerships in the Rocky Mountain region, located in Denver on South Federal Blvd. It evolved into the largest Toyota dealership in the western U.S. When asked why they decided to build a restaurant in Conifer, Clarence explained, “We had built our home on Shadow Mountain Drive so were commuting from Conifer to Denver everyday. Gladys and I would work at the car dealership until 8 at night and there were no restaurants open that late in the west metro area. So, we decided to build one!”

They continued to operate both businesses for several years, but eventually sold the car dealership to focus on the restaurant.

The Hi-Lander was open for evening meals, complete with white linen tablecloths. It was a first-class venue. “I don’t remember any occasion when anybody came in wearing jeans.”

Clarence would greet everyone in his trademark black suit and seat them. When pressed about his attire, Clarence laughed, “Virginia was my cocktail waitress. I’d be at the restaurant before 5 pm without my sport coat on. All of a sudden she’d say, “People are driving up! Get your jacket on!”

Clarence’s other task was to open the wine bottles and serve the first glass of wine. “In those days, nearly every table would have a bottle of wine.” There was an extensive wine list, with detailed descriptions of the region from where each wine originated. But, as if to set the patrons’ minds at ease, on the bottom of the menus was the phrase, “The correct wine is the wine you like.”



The Hi-Lander bowling team won many trophies. Clarence is standing on the left rear and his wife Gladys is on the right rear. If you know any of the other people in this photo, please contact CHSM.

The German cuisine reflected Clarence’s heritage, with beef stroganoff, sauerbraten and wiener schnitzel, but there was also room on the menu for African lobster tail and many other items.

Clarence claims the majority of their patrons were people who would drive up from the city just to dine there. But, they also came from farther away. “We had people come from all over the world. Eunice Shriver and that whole Kennedy bunch would stop by after snow skiing at Geneva Basin [south of Guanella Pass].”

Clarence and Gladys sold the Hi-Lander in January 1976. They spent their retirement years traveling through 13 countries and around the United States. After a few years in Arizona, they moved to Silverthorne, Colorado. Gladys passed away in 2007 Clarence remains active and if you’re lucky, you’ll get a chance to reminisce with him about the Hi-Lander.



The Hi-Lander and Tire Center, both owned by Clarence Kunz, were located where the Pleasant Park Road underpass goes under highway 285.

All photos in this article are courtesy of Clarence Kunz.

The
Conifer Historical Society and Museum
presents

My Mother's Quilt

A Mother's Day Tea and Quilt Show

Saturday May 8

St. Laurence Episcopal Church
26812 Barkley Rd., Conifer

Free Admission
for the
Quilt Show
10 am - 3 pm

Reservations recommended for Tea
Seatings at 10:00, 11:30, 1:00, 2:30

Tickets purchased before May 1
\$10 CHSM member; \$15 non-member

Tickets purchased after May 1 and at the door
\$15 CHSM member; \$20 non-member

\$10 for children 10 yr and younger
(advanced purchase or at the door)

Call Elaine Hood for reservations: 303.816.0638

Proceeds benefit the
Conifer Historical Society and Museum
www.ConiferHistoryMuseum.org

Please join us in welcoming our newest board member, Jacque Neal. Jacque is a Senior Commercial Loan Assistant at Conifer's Mutual of Omaha bank and a wonderful addition to our active board.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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| April 14 | CHSM meeting, 6:30 pm, ReMax building, Aspen Park |
| May 8 | Mother's Day Tea and Quilt Show, St. Laurence Episcopal Church |
| May 12 | CHSM Summer Lecture Series, Beaver Ranch, 7 pm |
| June 26 | IMHS Dog Walk, Meyer/Motorhead Ranch |