

A tasty time machine



JAMES STEFFECK
REAL ESTATE

HHA: Low profile, high achievement

The Helena Housing Authority is one of Helena's proudest accomplishments. This low-profile organization has been working to improve living conditions for our community's less fortunate members for over a half a century.

A 1988 HHA publication included a statement of purpose: "The purpose of the Helena Housing Authority is to provide the best possible shelter — clean, sanitary, housing with a quality of maintenance program and continuing modernization of structures in order to enhance the quality of life for the less fortunate, the victims of life's sometimes cruel turns, the handicapped, the disabled and the elderly."

The authority was started under the auspices of the Federal Works Agency of the Department of Interior, created by Congress in 1937. It is now under the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Organized in October 1937, the HHA was one of the first housing authorities established in this country. Construction of its first units began in 1939.

THE ORIGINAL PROJECT of 72 apartments is located on Montana Avenue just south of the Helena Middle School. At the time this was way out on the edge of town where the land was cheap. In 1952 another 60 apartments were added. Since that time, HHA apartments have sprung up literally all over town. Other locations on 26 sites are in the central, north central, south central, upper east, northeast, lower east, upper west, and northwest, parts of Helena.

In addition to these properties, HHA also administers the Section 8 low-income rent assistance program, also funded by HUD. Under this program instituted by Congress in 1974, low income participants receive rental assistance paid to owners of privately owned apartment buildings and houses. The requirements for the condition of these apartments is set out by HUD and compliance is closely monitored by the Helena Housing Authority.

ANOTHER MAJOR AREA handled by HHA is housing for the elderly. Some of the elderly receive assistance under the Section 8 program. And in addition there are 76 units at 100 South Warren. This building, including a seven-story tower, is called the M. E. Anderson Apartments. It included 70 apartments for the elderly and six units that will accommodate fully or partially handicapped tenants.

The Helena Housing Authority is big business and a substantial addition to the local Helena economy. The total 1991/92 budget is \$975,350. This consists of \$909,350 for HHA-owned properties and \$66,000 for the Section 8 program. HHA administers 366 of its own units and 275 Section 8 units. The amount of money generated for Section 8 subsidies is approximately another \$1.25 million a year.

The authority is operated by a staff of five administrative people and eight maintenance men. It is governed by a seven-member Board of Commissioners. Sherron Massman, executive director, said, "All of the commissioners that I have worked for have been very dedicated and gave a lot of their time and energy to make the Helena Housing Authority the success that it is."

The chair is Mary Beth Linder; the vice chair, Dick Kane. Two commissioners are residents of the HHA. They are Marian French and Karolin Jappe Stanger. Other members are Wilbur Rehmann, Bob Bartholomew and Jim Steffek.

Our community can be justly proud of over half a century of providing clean and decent places to live for those who find their economic condition not quite as favorable as others in our community and our country.

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Top, Dusty Duesing, Shirley Lindquist, Pam Duesing and Dave Duesing stand behind their product — and the counter — at the Parrot Confectionery on North Main Street. The store will mark its 70th anniversary with free treats and prizes on Thursday and Saturday. Above, Dave pours the cream as he mixes up a batch of caramels. Left, Pam practices the art of candy dipping, a way to mark the top of bon bons to identify the filling. (Staff photos by Gene Fischer)

By MARIE HOEFFNER
IR Staff Writer

Walking into the Parrot Confectionery is like stepping into a time machine that takes you back seven decades. Nothing has changed at the downtown candy store that celebrates its

70th anniversary Tuesday. It still looks the same, smells the same and tastes the same. Its owners and employees are still as accommodating and friendly as ever.

"The Parrot has never changed and its just like going home," said Agnes Hunter, who worked there 15 years from 1942 to 1957. "It looks the same as it always was. They maintained those high standards and that wonderful quality of candy that the Posts had."

Bill and Ianthe Post opened the store at 22 North Main St. in 1922 and moved it to its present location at 42 North Main in 1935.

After the Posts had owned it 35 years, Nancy and Arnold Duesing purchased it in 1957. And, for another 35 years it has been in the hands of the Duesing family. Dave Duesing and his brother, Dusty, purchased the store from their parents in 1972.

The Duesings have always kept in the tradition of the former owners.

"IT HASN'T CHANGED in 70 years," said Dave Duesing.

"The only things that have been changed are the floor and the ceiling was raised."

The soda fountain, the ceramic elephant collection, the knickknacks, the counter, the showcase, the Wurlitzer jukebox speaker, photos of the Helena of days gone by and the large mirror near the shop's entrance still decorate the shop as they did during the 1920s.

"It looks just like it did," Hunter said. "It even had the same green wood on the benches."

That's why Hunter still makes her way back to the Parrot at least three or four times a week.

"There are still my favorite chocolates," Hunter said. "The chili and the almond roco are still the

Parrot to celebrate 70th anniversary

mainstay that they have always had."

The chocolates are a favorite of people all over the world as well. The Parrot receives orders from several different countries and most states.

The Duesings hold the Parrot's original recipes dear to them. Still used for their candies, sodas, malts, ice cream and chili, the recipes are a well-kept trade secret.

"People really like the chili," Nancy Duesing said. "Gourmet magazine asked us for the recipe. We didn't give it to them."

"The only way to get our recipes is to buy the store," Dave Duesing said.

EVERYTHING AT THE PARROT is made from scratch from all natural ingredients. About nine tons of chocolate are made each year.

In the kitchen, experts Pam Duesing, Dave's wife, and Marsha Kessler hand dip the chocolate candies providing customers with a selection of 130 different types of candy. About 60 to 80 different types of candy are available on a daily basis. The combinations of chocolates with caramels, fruit fillings and nuts are endless.

To distinguish one candy from another the dippers give each a different mark. For example a chocolate with lemon filling has the symbol "L" on the top of it. It's no doubt that making the mark takes a steady hand.

The dippers have the most artistic job at the Parrot.

"You don't train people do dip," Nancy Duesing said. "It's an art form. Some people just don't know how to dip."

Although, the Duesings have been around chocolates for 35 years, they still have a great love for

sweets.

"I love it," Nancy Duesing said as she popped a chocolate in her mouth. "There are so many different types you can try."

THE STORE HAS SURVIVED fire of 1928, the earthquakes of 1925 and 1935, the Depression, the sugar shortages of World War II, and, most recently, a bout with hepatitis A.

In August 1990, the Duesings disposed of about 2.2 tons of chocolate candy worth at least \$21,000 to avoid the a slim possibility that it might be infected with hepatitis A.

"You just have to go on," Dave Duesing said. Nancy Duesing seems to be the inspiration behind the shop's longevity.

She said the secret to lasting long is "buying the best, doing the best and giving all the quality and personal service you can give."

Although retired, she just can't seem to keep a way from the store. Customers can find her behind the counter measuring candy or at the cash register just about every day.

She has worked there a total of 39 years, counting the four years she worked there as a youth. She recalls carrying boxes of candy down Main Street when the store moved.

THE DUESINGS ARE THE PERFECT family to have purchased the store, according to Hunter.

"They've been through so many things, but always came through and did even better," Hunter said. "They are ambitious and hard working yet they're always laughing."

The familiar faces that customers see day after day have always made the Parrot popular.

Several of the employees have worked there many years including: Carolyn Bryant, 15 years; Shirley Lindquist, 20 years; and Marsha Kessler, 14 years.

Longtime customers and newcomers are invited to attend the Parrot's anniversary celebration on April 30 and May 2. Free balloons, cakes, coffee, and small door prizes will be provided.

The confectionery is open from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Saturday.

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Mountain West re-elects board

The shareholders of Mountain West Bank of Helena, N.A. recently held their first annual meeting.

At the meeting the following were re-elected to serve on the bank's board of directors for the coming year:

Dick Anderson, Lowell Bartels, Rick Blessinger, Doug Boutillier, William Groff, David Jackson, Jerry Mergenthaler, Clint Rouse,

Dick Sims, M.D., Mike Well, Randy Williams and Robert Zucconi.

The shareholders reviewed the bank's operating information from the bank's opening on Feb. 4, 1991, through December 31, 1991. At year end 1991, the bank's total deposits were \$21,982,955. Loans, generally to local individuals and businesses, totaled \$16,174,756 at that time. The bank's assets at year end were \$24,497,686.

At a Board of Directors' meeting the following were appointed to serve as officers for the com-

ing year:

Doug Boutillier, president; **Dick Morgan**, vice president and cashier; **Mike Dalton**, vice president; **Julie Begler**, assistant vice president; **Tom Scheider**, assistant vice president; and **Julie Wiebe**, real estate loan officer.

Helena firms win concrete awards

Three Helena buildings were among the winners in the annual Excellence in Concrete Awards,

presented by the Montana Concrete Producers, a statewide trade association of concrete and ready-mix firms.

Winning first place in the Commercial/Industrial Division was the Helena Community Federal Credit Union. Concrete producer for the project was Helena Sand and Gravel Company.

The honorable mention award in the Public Buildings Division went to the Helena Regional Airport Lower Level Tunnel. Concrete producer for the project was Big Sky Concrete of Helena. Winning honorable mention for

residential use of concrete was the Alan and Nancy Nickolson home in Helena. Concrete producer for this was also Helena Sand and Gravel.

Other 1991 winners were in Billings and Laurel.

The Excellence in Concrete Awards are presented annually by the Montana Concrete Producers. Montana State University experts judge the awards.

Norwest reports record net income

Norwest Corporation reported

record net income of \$122.4 million for the quarter that ended March 31, a 29.7 percent increase over the \$94.3 million earned in the first quarter of 1991.

Net income per common share was a record 82 cents, compared with 68 cents in the first quarter of 1991, an increase of 20.6 percent. Return on common equity was 18.3 percent and return on assets was a record 1.24 percent for the first quarter of 1992, compared with 18.0 percent and 1.02 percent, respectively, in the first quarter of 1991.