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## 75th Birthday Party at the Round Up

By Cathy Tyson



Left: Mike Content and Bill McCabe, owners of the Round Up in the 70's. Right: The present owners, Karen and Mike Johnson, bought the bar from McCabe in 2004. Photo on left provided by the Historical Society, photo on right by Doug Kohen

The oldest continually operating saloon in Lafayette just threw itself a walloping good birthday party. Since 1935 the Round Up has been the community living room - a gathering place for locals to hang out with friends, play some shuffle board and enjoy a chilled adult beverage. Although the rail to tie your horse to is gone, ditto for Gibson Hardware next door, the interior is covered with dusty memorabilia and really hasn't changed much over the years. Mike and Karen Johnson, the owners since 2004, wanted to find a way to celebrate three quarters of a century of serving un-fussy cocktails and say thank you to the community with complimentary food, drink specials and a live reggae band on Saturday, August 28.

Originally called Lou's, then Johnny's Round Up, now simply The Round Up, surely in his wildest dreams the first owner, Lou Borghesani, couldn't have imagined that the saloon would have its own Facebook page and a cash machine inside the establishment. Maybe it's the creaky wood floors, decades in the making, that give the tavern a worn historical feel. Mike Johnson said the bar, "practically runs itself." His wife, Karen Johnson, used to work for the prior owner Bill McCabe. The couple bought it when he retired. Long time bar tenders Adrian Holt, Roxanne Smolkao and Blaine June have collectively had 32 years tending to thirsty patrons. They have a loyal following and remember all of the regulars' beverage of choice. Discretion is a valuable trait for bartender, when asked if Holt had any interesting customer stories over the years - he demurred.

"Still a cash only business, just like the old days," said Johnson. He's added some more TV's for sports fans, and Karaoke, but that's about it. Why mess with success? Although there's pool tables, shuffle board and ping pong, the ambiance of the vintage barstools and dusty elks give the Round Up its charming laid back character.

Prior owner Bill McCabe has retired and now lives in Soquel, but he owned the place for close to thirty years. You can thank him for the installation of the shuffleboard table; he used to play in college. Hint - it's lightning fast.

After a term in the service, McCabe moved to Walnut Creek and got a job at Macys, then spent six years in real estate business. He happened to be driving through town one day, and saw a 'for sale' sign in the window. "I bought it the very next day. I was dissatisfied with my job at the time." He recalls his tenure behind the bar as a, "great time" and describes the watering hole as "a working man's bar, blue collar."

Before McCabe's ownership, Harry Costa bought it from original owner Lou Borghesani during World War II and ran it for the next 28 years, according to the Lafayette Historical Society. Built in 1935, perhaps Borghesani figured there was pent up demand for beer a couple of years after Prohibition was abolished in 1933.

Although the time frame is a little vague, many years ago there were slot machines in the back of the saloon. Rumor has it there may have been some skimming from these illegal machines. But it's safe to say the statute of limitations has run out.

If these walls could talk, who knows the dirt they could dish. The mounted animal heads aren't commenting. What happens at The Round Up, stays at The Round Up.



Saturday's party Photo Doug Kohen

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