

THE MARY MARY CAFE

For many years when entering Van Anda one couldn't miss the prominent sign across from the ballpark : COLONEL CARSON'S NORTHERN FRIED CHICKEN.

Joe and Mary Carson owned the popular Mary's Cafe which drew all sorts of islanders together through the sixties. It was a step up from their first venture - the wood-framed EATS takeout just above the ball field (see photo).

The 2-storey concrete block building was constructed in the early sixties and has hosted a huge variety of businesses, shops and community events ever since.

When the cafe closed Mike Zaikow bought the building and moved his real estate /notary public /insurance business there, renting part of the ground floor to a hairdressing shop.

The PRCredit Union later bought the building and opened its first Texada Branch. TACT followed hosting many cultural events.

Over the years community groups were welcome to make use of the spacious area upstairs. For example, meetings (TAN, TICS, unions, Boat Club, Water Board, etc), activities (Mine Rescue, First Aid courses, sewing lessons, Rock Island Players rehearsals, art shows, music performances, etc) and the list goes on.

Banquets were often held upstairs
Food service was provided from the kitchen below via a dumb waiter (the elevator, not the person!).

Today after 60+ years the building has come full circle back to its cafe origins.

Many have wondered if the current name is in honour of the two Marys who worked there - Mary Carson and Mary Gussman. Owner George Childress says yes and no. It also honours the two Marys in her and husband Gerry's families. In any event, the prospect of naming it the "Mary, Mary, Mary, Mary Cafe" according to George would have been "a bit much."

No matter its name the building stands as a reminder of the many Texadans who, over the years, attended and helped to create events for all to enjoy in this historic setting.



Peter Lock

Texada Island Heritage Society