

**KATE'S DINER WAS THE SCENE OF MANY AN OLD-TIME
PRANK
9/26/95**

Do you remember the Icicle Inn? I for one had forgotten, but my memory was jogged during a visit with Jim and Kate Luvera.

Icicle Inn was the appellation given by Roy Schmuck to the Luvera's first venture into the restaurant business in Old Forge. The year was 1957, and the restaurant was located directly in back of the Triangle Building, facing Main Street.

Roy arrived at the tag because the building was constantly draped in huge icicles from Old Forge's traditional cold winters.

A year or so later, they built a new restaurant which is now the Black Bear Inn and it was named Kate's Diner.

Some of my fondest memories of my early years in Old Forge originated there. It was there I met many of my present friends and learned much of the history and lore of the Adirondacks. It was no place for anyone who did not have a sense of humor.

Jim reminded me of the time he passed off a bowl of bear stew for venison stew because I had expressed my aversion to ever eating bear.

He crowed long and loud after the truth was revealed. The fact that I enjoyed it was testimony to Kate's culinary skills.

Then there was the time Clayt Villiere conspired with Jim to play a huge joke on Kate.

Clayt's brother-in-law was the well-known actor Hal Smith, who played Otis on the Andy Griffith Show. Smith flashed a phony badge at Kate and announced he was there as a health inspector and proceeded to "inspect" in a highly officious and critical manner. Kate was a basket case before they let her in on the scam.

It was Chuck Gebhardt who proclaimed Jim and Kate "a willing couple." He said Kate was willing to work and Jim was willing to let her.

Jack Lindsay was witness to a real Jimmy classic one time when he attempted to cure a pain in her back. Jim placed his arms around her from the rear and gave her a mighty lift upward. Jack heard her scream and her ribs cracked simultaneously. To

make a long story short, the pain in her back was gone, but the one in her ribs was far worse! Dr. Bob told Jim not practice any more medicine.

Remember the steer Jim had outside the diner? When Paul Morin was young he asked Jim if it was real. Jim assured him it was not, but had a hard time explaining that to him after Art Baker and Buck Smith placed some straw and real manure in the appropriate places.

As an aside, they had a good story about their next door neighbors, Noel and Elaine Gish's cat. It seems the 20-year old cat went blind and Noel suggested to the vet that it may be better to put it to rest.

The vet allowed as how they would not suggest Ray Charles to be treated in that manner. Well, Noel replied, the cat can't play the piano.

Kate never lived down Reg Villiere's parting shot. Reg showed up at the diner obviously quite ill and indicated that he had not felt well all night and was waiting for the Health Center to open.

Brother Clayt accompanied Reg to the Center and he was rushed to Utica suffering from a stroke. As they drove by the diner, Reg gave one last quip: "If I don't make it, tell them Kate's coffee did it."

I am sad to state he didn't make it.