

VEHICULIS

Rutland Daily Herald ♦ Thursday, August 7, 1997 ♦ Page 5

All in the. Family



Staff Photo by Albert J. Marro

From left, Roz Rogers, Red Poremski, Val Poremski and Bernie Poremski continue a family tradition at Lake Bomoseen.

THREE GENERATIONS KEEP BOMOSEEN BUSINESS BOOMING



BY YVONNE DALEY

R

oz Rogers has paused for a moment from her non-stop pace to survey the view from the wide porch of the Trak-In Restaurant. Ahead of her are harbored the tidy buildings of her family-owned Edgewater Resort, and beyond lies Lake Bomoseen, cradled by rolling green hills.

As if on cue, the sunset spreads bands of pink across the western sky and a bevy of sweet-faced children — twins in their strollers and a young blond girl — as well as the children's parents, their aunts and uncles and grandparents arrive for dinner.

Rogers turns to greet the extended family warmly. After all, members of this family have been coming to the Edgewater Resort since Rogers' parents, Valerie and Bernard "Red" Poremski, bought the resort 40 years ago this summer.

"If you hang out here long enough, you'll see there's a consistency here, a continuum," says Rogers. "I've worked for my parents my entire life. My brother has worked here all his life, other than the nine years he worked for CVPS.

"Our customers are family, too. They send us birth and wedding announcements. I waited on the mother of those twins when she was a teenager. This is a huggy, kissy relationship, not some chain hotel," she says proudly.

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Indeed, it was family interest that led Valerie and Red Poremski to buy the Edgewater Resort in the first place.

The couple's parents had both immigrated to America from Poland about 1911, attracted by work in the marble industry. After a marble company strike in 1938, both sets of grandparents purchased dairy farms. Valerie's family, named Taranovich, purchased a farm on Route 3 in Proctor, while Red's family purchased a farm on the Whipple Hollow Road in Florence.

After the couple married in 1938, Red Poremski worked at the Hollywood Barber Shop in Rutland until 1944 when he and Valerie moved onto a farm located next door to Red's parents' farm that they had purchased two years previously.

Meanwhile at the Proctor farm, Valerie's mother had been taking in tourists. Once her daughter was ensconced in her 17-room house in Florence, she began sending overflow guests to Valerie. Soon, hunters and people of Polish descent heard of the big farm in the country where ethnic food was cooked and Valerie found herself with regular guests.

She also found she enjoyed making people feel comfortable in her home as much as hearing stories about their lives.

Meanwhile, Valerie and Red had their two children — Roz, whose real name is Rosemary although no one calls her that, and Bernard, known

as Bernie. As Bernie grew, it became increasingly clear to his parents that he had little interest in farming.

"That created a problem for us," Valerie said in an interview earlier this week. "Being from our heritage, we always work for the family. So we start looking for some work we can do that our son might like, something he can take over someday. We're fervent Catholics so I made a plea to the Virgin to find another life for us. This is where she led us."

As the story goes, Valerie took Roz and Bernie on a drive to Lake Bomoseen one summer day in 1957. Quite by chance, the family ran into Grace Grunnell, the children's teacher at the Florence two-room school house, who happened to be staying at Lake Bomoseen.

Also quite by chance, Grunnell introduced Valerie to the owners of the Edgewater Inn, who promptly told her they were interested in selling the business.

"We were frightened but we took the bull by the horns and bought the lodge. Forty years later and we're still here," Valerie says.

Today three generations of the family work at the lodge during the summer season. As the family has grown, the resort has grown to include the original lodge, along with a restaurant, a pub, efficiency rentals, motel units, suites and cottages.

Roz manages the Trak-In Restaurant, part of the Edgewater complex, with her brother Bernie and husband, Charles "Jolly" Rogers. The couple's daughter, Karen Rogers, is office manager at the Edgewater Resort. Their son Matthew Rogers is a waiter and bartender and daughter Michele Rogers lends a helping hand at a variety of tasks. Bernie's son, John Poremski, is chef at the Trak-In.

Valerie, now 78, still works at the resort, running the front office, bak-

ing bread that's served daily in the family's Trak-In Restaurant and, in her spare time, washing a few windows or attending to guests' needs.

Red is 83 now. A quadruple bypass operation in June has slowed him "down a bit. But, earlier this week as he walked the lodge's grounds, The older Poremski said he was anxious to get back to his project of building Adirondack chairs for the lodge.

"We're workers," says Roz, an understatement for sure.

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Once upon a time, about the turn of the century, Lake Bomoseen and the properties now owned by the Poremskis were part of a bustling resort community. Rutland area residents rode trolley cars to a trolley station located just up the road from the Edgewater Motor Lodge. Visitors from out of state traveled to Rutland by train and then took the trolley to Bomoseen.

The tourists stayed in five big hotels located here, took part in boat races and strolled the manicured grounds at the nearby Gibson Ballroom. At night, Big Band leaders like Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey and Glenn

Miller brought their orchestras here.

For all intents and purposes, that era had ended by the time the Poremskis bought The Edgewater in 1957, but one of the era's last vestiges, the Tra-Ken-Seen Hotel, was still doing business on the lake.

Located across Route 30 from the Edgewater, the Tra-Ken-Seen was a large hotel with two annexes that had been named after two men, Tracy and Kennedy, who had bought it in the early 1900s and expanded the business. They did so by filling in the lake with slate and building a four-story extension onto an older structure known as the Lake House, which had been built in the 1880s.

In 1959, when the Tra-Ken-Seen came up for sale, the Poremskis bought it. In 1981, when the couple tried to do repair work on the old structure they learned that the slate upon which the building had been built was unstable and the newer addition had to be torn down. After it was demolished, they built one of the first motels in the area on the grounds. More recently, they added efficiency rentals to the back of the complex.

The original part of the building has been retained and now serves as the complex office. It's also a repository of the accumulated mementos from the establishment's long history, including postcards and photos that tell the history of Lake Bomoseen and the Edgewater complex.

For the first 16 years of operation, the Poremskis were only able to serve meals to inn guests. They had always dreamed of opening a restaurant that could serve both their guests and the general public. That became a reality in 1973, when the family built the Trak-In Restaurant, which took its name from the old hotel.

In the years before television became so pervasive, the Poremskis provided the entertainment at the lodge. Red sang songs and told stories about the fish that got away. Some nights there would be sing-alongs. Other nights, the guests could play Bingo or Wheel of Fortune. Some nights there were even weenie roasts by the lake.

"It was great, wonderful fun. I loved the formal dinners and the informal get-togethers," said guest Bob Begy of Yonkers, N.Y., a retired retailer who has been coming to the inn for 40 years. He was quick to add that "it's still a wonderful place to come and rest and see old friends."

Most recently, Roz Rogers and her mother purchased a nearby pub and restaurant that in the 1940s was known as Uncle Charlie's Tavern and, more recently, as Captain John's Dockside. The new establishment, named The Lake House Pub and Grille after the original name of the old hotel, is managed by Roz and Jolly Rogers' son, Dave Rogers, and his partner Greg King. Jeff Poremski, one of Bernie's sons, plays music at the pub.

Because this is a family that believes in wasting nothing, doors from the old Tra-Ken-Seen have been recycled, complete with door knobs and hinges, into a bar and wall at The Lake House Pub and Grille. And, at the Trak-In Restaurant, those menu tents that adorn individual tables were made from old dressers that were found in cabins located above the present-day restaurant.

With that attitude of always expanding and a philosophy of trying to hold onto the past, the Poremski-Rogers' family this week purchased the extensive property that was once the Gibson Ballroom and began clearing it of the brush and trees that have grown up over the last decades.

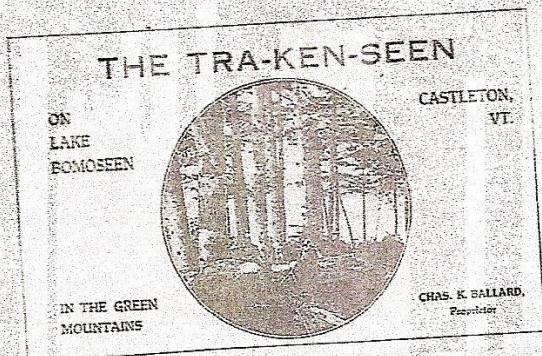
The family isn't sure what they will do with the property. "We have always heard of how beautiful it was with its manicured lawns and gardens. We're now the only commercial property on the lake, other than the marinas, the only restaurant and lodge," said Roz. "We'd like to use it in a way that would celebrate the past and help us prosper for another 40 years or longer."

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Hotel Trakenseen, Lake Bomoseen, Vt.

The old Tra-Ken-Seen hotel (no longer standing) as seen from Lake Bomoseen.



The Edgewater and Trak-In complex seen in earlier times.