



ADOLPHE PIERRE-LOUIS/JOURNAL

Mary Alice Higbie, one of the owners of St. James Tearoom, sits in 18 Duke Street and enjoys a cup of tea. The table is one of the nook seating areas at the tearoom and features a working fireplace.

BY BETH TRUJILLO
ASSISTANT FEATURES EDITOR

Mary Alice Higbie was advised to not follow her dream of opening a tearoom in her hometown.

It was a suggestion that fell to the wayside.

"I knew there were people here who would enjoy this," Higbie says.

Twenty years later, Higbie is not only living her dream, but has cultivated a feeling of family at The St. James Tearoom.

It's a feeling of satisfaction felt not only by her, but by many of her customers.

Take for instance, the Ed Norton Gang, who come together at The St. James Tearoom once a month.

They will tell you they are there for matchmaking and investigations.

But really it's for camaraderie and friendship — all enjoyed over a pot of tea.

Often, the Ed Norton Gang — Rita and Jim Peaslee and Sally and Bob Lowder — are tucked into 18 Duke Street at The St. James Tearoom, sipping Indian Assam, and well, spilling the proverbial tea.

The Ed Norton Gang — whose nickname is a nod to the classic TV show the "The Honeymooners" — consider the staff at St. James as more like family.

"We've been through a lot of wait staff," says Rita Peaslee. "They go through high school, college, marriage."

Bob Lowder echoes that feeling.

"The young ladies on staff are like family," Bob Lowder says. "We watch them grow up and get married."

Higbie, co-owner of The St. James Tearoom, notes that is a common sentiment among guests.

"We have so many like that (the Ed Norton Gang). They feel like a real part of the family. Over 20 years, that's a long-term relationship," says Higbie.

Twenty years of tea

The St. James Tearoom opened on Dec. 4, 1999, at a location near Old Town.

Growing up in New Mexico, Higbie's love for tea started early, her childhood was filled with time spent indoors because she was ill. This was when her imagination began to foster the idea of a world filled with tea.

"I didn't go outside and play," Higbie says. "I played tea party in my bed. I had tea with Queen Elizabeth and the Queen of Sheba."

She opened The St. James Tearoom with the purpose statement of "grace, civility, beauty, gentility, and excellence," giving another opportunity of British afternoon tea to the Duke City.

"All of my furniture, all of my china, went to the tearoom," Higbie says. "When we first opened, there were six or seven seating areas."

At night, she would take everything home to wash in preparation for the next day.

"For me personally, just the joy of being able to do what I wanted to do. My little thing to give to the world," says Higbie, describing what she considers one of the highs she's experienced at St. James. "...

IF YOU GO

St. James Tearoom offers a two-hour tea time with a monthly fixed menu, with options for vegetarian, gluten-free, or children ages 4 to 10, by reservation only.

Seating times are 11 a.m., 1:30 p.m., 4 p.m. Tuesday-Wednesday; 11 a.m., 1:30 p.m., 4 p.m., 6:30 p.m. Thursday-Saturday; 11 a.m., 1:30 p.m., 4 p.m. Sunday; closed Monday

For reservations stjamestearoom.com or 242-3752

CIVILITY, BEAUTY

AND 20 YEARS OF EXCELLENCE

The St. James Tearoom brings British high tea served with years of friendship and laughter to its customers



From left, Mary Alice Higbie, one of the owners of St. James Tearoom, is toasted by longtime patrons Victoria Candelaria, Bob and Sally Lowder, and Jim and Rita Peaslee as the restaurant celebrates its 20th anniversary.

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The longest mile

Donation of piece of land from Coors family in mid-1940s has turned into major West Side thoroughfare

WHAT'S IN A NAME?



Elaine Briseño

Editor's note: The Journal publishes "What's in a Name?," a monthly column in which staff writer Elaine Briseño will give a short history of how places in New Mexico got their names.

Every time I zoom along Coors Blvd. I pretend I'm rafting down a river of beer.

That's because one, I'm weird, and two, like many others, I immediately think of the well-known brewery when I hear or see the word Coors.

But the main north to south thoroughfare on Albuquerque's West

Side has absolutely nothing to do with beer or the Colorado family who began brewing it more than 140 years ago. It's named for New Mexico's own prominent Coors family, specifically that of attorney and judge Henry George Coors III.

A 1988 Albuquerque Journal interview with his widow, Rowena, and their son Henry G. Coors IV, explains how a street named Coors became a thing. Coors III and his wife Rowena owned 600 acres in the South Valley and getting home was tricky. Coors' marriage to Rowena was his second. He had married his first wife in 1910,



BRIGHT SPOT



JOURNAL FILE PHOTO

In 1988, Henry G. Coors IV stands behind his mother Rowena Coors Marsh, the widow of judge Henry G. Coors III for whom the well-traveled Albuquerque road was named.



JOURNAL FILE

Clippings of old newspaper articles featuring the notable events in the professional career of Henry G. Coors III.

See COORS >> B5

ALT unlocks the magic, love story of ‘Beauty and the Beast’

BY KATHALEEN ROBERTS
ASSISTANT ARTS EDITOR

In the enchanted world of “Beauty and the Beast,” real love falls for what is within. Based on the classic French fairy tale, the musical tells the story of a cold-blooded prince who has been magically transformed into an unsightly creature as punishment for his selfish ways.

The Albuquerque Little Theatre will stage Walt Disney’s classic musical version beginning Friday, March 6. The show will continue through March 29, at 224 San Pasquale SW.

The story begins with Belle, a young woman in a provincial town.

“She likes to think outside the box,” director Laura Nuzum said. “She walks her own path. She lives in a world where people give her a hard time.”

This non-conformist beauty meets the Beast, who is really a prince trapped under the spell of an enchantress disguised as a beggar woman. If the beast can learn to love and be loved, the

IF YOU GO

WHAT: “Beauty and the Beast”

WHEN: 7:30 p.m. Friday, March 6 and Saturday, March 7; 2 p.m. Sunday, March 8. Repeats on weekends through March 29. Additional performances at 2 p.m. Saturday, March 14 and 7:30 p.m. Thursday, March 19

WHERE: Albuquerque Little Theatre, 224 San Pasquale SW

HOW MUCH: \$17-\$25 at 242-4750, albuquerquelittletheatre.org

curse will vanish.

“They both come from different worlds, but they find love,” Nuzum said.

Belle is the book-loving daughter of an inventor named Maurice who dreams of adventure and spurns the advances of an arrogant former soldier named Gaston. On his way to a convention, Maurice seeks refuge in the Beast’s castle. The Beast imprisons him for stealing a rose from his

garden as a gift for Belle. Belle searches for him and finds him locked in the castle dungeon.

“The Beast was once a prince, but Belle doesn’t know this,” Nuzum said.

The famous song “Be Our Guest” frames the ball scene.

“It’s a huge dance number where we get to meet all the characters and objects that live in the castle,” Nuzum said.

Turns out the enchantress has turned the Beast’s servants into household objects, including a candlestick and furniture.

“We have a wardrobe who used to be an opera singer,” Nuzum said.

The director will lead a cast of 30.

“They’re building a castle on stage,” she said. “We have a fountain on stage. We have to build drawers in the person who plays the wardrobe. There’s a grandfather clock.

“The expectations with anything with a Disney title is very big.”

Nuzum directed the ALT version of “Footloose” two years ago.



COURTESY OF JASON PONIC PHOTOGRAPHY

Stuart Neef is Gaston and Megan Chavez is Belle in “Beauty and the Beast.”



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Tea cups and rose almond scones await guests at a tea session in February. St. James offers a themed fixed menu that changes monthly. February’s theme was “La Vie en Rose.”

Group bonding over cups of tea at St. James

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We started growing. I get to work with the neatest people, creative and dedicated.”

Ten years ago, co-owners Mary Alice Higbie, and her son, Daniel, decided they needed their own place, and build it to their needs. St. James now exists at 320 Osuna Road NE, Bldg. D.

It features nine seating areas in nooks and eight seating areas in the library, as well as a market that sells teas and tea time accessories.

“(St. James) provides what people really need. In a screen world, it’s hard to find ways to connect face-to-face,” Higbie says. “The thing I did right from the beginning was making sure it was a two-hour reservation time. It gives people time to connect with the people they bring.”

St. James offers a rotating fixed menu tailored to a monthly theme. This year kicked off with “Welcome to the Roaring 20’s,” a “Downtown Abbey”-inspired menu that was a nod to St. James’ 20th anniversary and the beginning of the 2020s. The March menu is “Dublin’s Fare: Cheers to Arthur Guinness!”

“People love our themes,” says Higbie. “... People love to dress up. There’s that child-like fun.”

As for her personal favorite of the themed menus?

“One of my favorites, Christmas, of course,” Higbie smiles. “Every month I say, ‘This is my favorite!’”

Lace curtains and laurels

Victoria Candelaria remembers when St. James first opened its doors. She was working on alterations at a shop next to the fledgling business, with her granddaughter at hand.

“She (her granddaughter) pressed her face in the window. She loved the lace curtains,” said Candelaria. “Mary Alice let us in.”

Candelaria and her granddaughter, who was nine then, still come for tea regularly after that fateful encounter. Candelaria says the tearoom is a special place for herself and her granddaughters over the past 20 years.

“They still want to come with me at 31 (years old),” she said. While her own children have expressed interest in coming to tea, Candelaria explains to them. “Sorry, this is just for granddaughters.”

Higbie embraces the close personal relationships that are built at the tearoom.

“One of the joyful things about the tearoom is



A photo opt area of The St. James Tearoom is decorated for February’s theme of “La Vie en Rose.”

people can be their own unique, quirky selves. Everyone is unique,” she said.

In 2008, St. James was featured in the book “The Great Tea Rooms of America,” by Bruce Richardson and was listed as one of “Five great American tearooms” by CNN.com. It was also the 2014 winner of Best Tea Room Website from the World Tea Awards.

“I just want people to enjoy tea. I don’t want my guests to worry which spoon,” says Higbie.

Finding friendship

Bells chime throughout the tearoom signaling that tea time is coming to a close.

“Uh-oh!” the Ed Norton Gang and Candelaria say almost in unison.

Sally Lowder talks about the usual end of tea time.

“Our muscles are so tired from laughing,” Sally Lowder says. “Hours of smiles and laughing.”

“They’re rascals,” says Higbie with a smile. “You guys are in the handbook.”

“Most of the ones (the servers), when they figure us out, they give it right back,” Bob Lowder tells Higbie. “They do a fantastic group of hiring. Not a bad apple in the bunch.”

Eventually the group stands and gives Higbie hugs and words of love. The staff of St. James gets the tearoom ready for the next session.

As for the Ed Norton Gang, well, once a month you know where to find them.



“Enchanted River” by Phil Hulebak will be on display at Sumner and Dene, 517 Central NW, during a reception and book signing for “Phil Hulebak: Journey Through the Land of Enchantment” landscape paintings from 5 to 8 p.m. on Friday, March 6.

Galleries

ALBUQUERQUE OPENINGS

Thursday

Exhibit 208, 208 Broadway SE, continues “Confluence: PLANT/LIFE” encaustic and mixed media by Alison Green from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Through March 7. 450-6884.

Friday

Amapola Gallery, 205 Romero NW, reception for “Juxtaposition” new work by Ann Tidrow Connely and Sally Rugala from 4 to 7 p.m. 242-4311.

516 ARTS, 516 Central SW, opening for “Cromática” by Tania Candiani from 5 to 8 p.m. 242-1445.

Carla Forrest Fine Art Studio and Gallery, 404 San Felipe NW, Patio Escondido, reception for “Light on This Land” paintings by Nancy Davis from 5 to 8 p.m. 410-2444.

Freestyle Gallery, 1114 Central SW, reception and art discussion for “Roses are Red, I Love You” from 5 to 8 p.m. Through March 28. 948-3840.

The Gallery ABQ, 8210 Menaul NE, opening for “Women’s Visions and Ventures” from 4 to 6 p.m. 292-9333.

Gallery with a Cause — New Mexico Cancer Center Foundation, 4901 Lang Ave NE, reception for “Movers and Shakers — Work by Artists Who Teach, Lead and Inspire” curated by Regine Held from 6 to 8:30 p.m. 828-3791.

Ghostwulf Gallery, 2043 South Plaza Street NW, opening for the “Fourth Annual Women’s Work Exhibition” from 5 to 8 p.m. Through March 31. 246-9653.

Matrix Fine Art, 3812 Central SE, reception for “Burque Manifestation” by Trenton Janssen, Makayla Baca,

Robert Houston and Julia M. Salazar from 5 to 8 p.m. 917-8054.

The Next Best Thing to Being There, 1315 Mountain Road NW, reception for “Birds of Burque” monotypes and origami by Vicki Bolen from 5 to 8 p.m. 433-3204.

OFFCenter Community Art Project, 808 Park Ave. SW, open house for “Make Art, Buy Art, Make Friends” from 5:30 to 8 p.m. 247-1172.

Sanitary Tortilla factory, 401 Second SW, reception for “Family Resemblance” multi-media installation by Sallie Scheufler from 6 to 8 p.m. Through March 27. 228-3749.

Sumner and Dene, 517 Central NW, reception and book signing for “Phil Hulebak: Journey Through the Land of Enchantment” landscape paintings from 5 to 8 p.m. 842-1400.

Tortuga Gallery, 901 Edith SE, opening for “Cross Pollination” from 5 to 8 p.m. Through March 31. 506-0820.

Weyrich Gallery, 2935 D Louisiana NE, reception for “Placeness: Reflections of Place in Clay and Ink” new prints by Will Singleton from 5 to 8:30 p.m. 883-7410.

Yucca Art Gallery, 206½ San Felipe NW, open house for “New Beginnings” by Susan Finch, Christine Couvert and Benjamin Sears from 2 to 4:30 p.m. 247-8931.

Saturday

Harwood Art Center, 1114 Seventh NW, reception for “Encompass” from 5 to 8 p.m. 242-6367.

Weyrich Gallery, 2935 D Louisiana NE, hosts an Artist’s Meet and Greet for “Placeness: Reflections of Place in Clay and Ink” new prints by Will Singleton from 1 to 3 p.m. Artist talk at 1:30 p.m. 883-7410.