

# Boulder Creek's tough little bar gets homey for the holidays

By TOM LONG  
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**I**T'S NOT exactly the kind of place yuppies go to sip white wine. You don't see too many BMWs parked out front and the dress code is decidedly casual.

In fact, the Boulder Club in downtown Boulder Creek has a bit of a reputation as a rough-and-tumble, down-and-dirty type of place. It has been decried at town meetings as a place where "unspeakable" acts go on — so unspeakable, apparently, that no one has ever actually described them.

When times were tough for Boulder Creek business owners last year, the Boulder Club was blamed for many of the problems; its patrons were accused of hanging out — drunk — along the street, of hassling shoppers, scaring away business and just generally making the downtown area look disreputable.

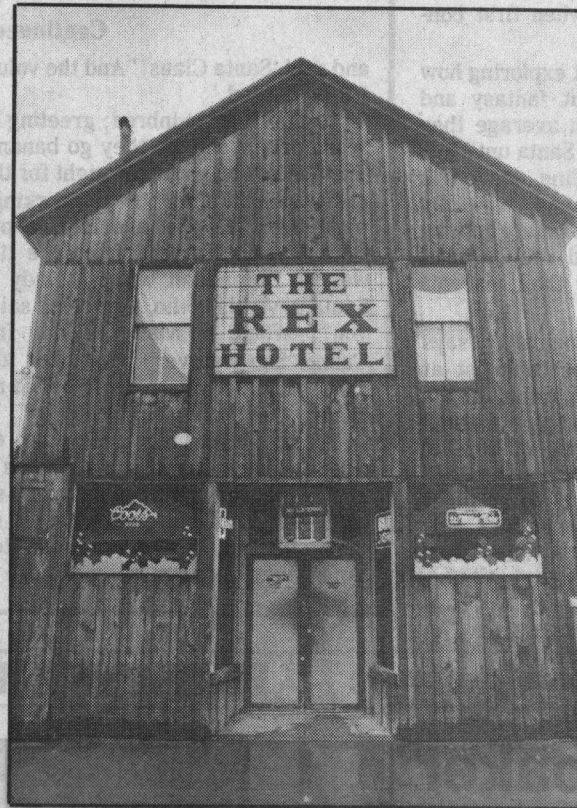
Sounds like a tough joint.

And yet ...

Every Christmas and Thanksgiving for 16 years, club owners Jack and Frances Gualtier have hosted a free dinner at the club. And for 16 years, a crowd of friends, neighbors and even occasional strangers have shown up bearing dishes of sweet potatoes and cranberry sauce, appetizers and pumpkin pies.

The Gualtiers spread a cloth over the pool table and the feast is laid out for all to enjoy, with the club providing the main course. Anyone from the town can come.

Sounds pretty sleazy, huh?



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"I usually have a ham and potato salad for Christmas, with all the trimmings," says Frances, a mother of six. "Olives, some deviled eggs. One of the girls always brings a bean salad."

Thanksgiving usually means turkey, of course. This past holiday, Frances served two 22-pounders and a crowd of almost 40 people showed up. She expects about the same number for Christmas.

"It's mostly for people around Boulder Creek, and it's mostly ones who frequent the bar. There's nothing open in Boulder Creek on the holidays," she says. "A lot of people when I came here didn't have any place to go."

**N**OT THAT the Boulder Club doesn't have some very real problems.

"I've heard about problems with the Boulder Club ever since I've been on the job," says Bill Avey, district supervisor for the state Alcoholic Beverage Control agency. "Their file is so thick you wouldn't believe it."

The club has had an unspecified accusation filed against by the ABC that it will appeal at a hearing on March 7. The accusation is based on nine separate incidents witnessed by an ABC man at the club in May and June. Those incidents included fights, excessive drunkenness and loud music, according to Avey.

"Nine is just a little bit too much," says Avey.

"We haven't had shootings or the heavy type crimes there," he says. "It's more of a nuisance to the neighborhood and to the Sheriff's Department to have to run out to the club all the time."

Avey says the club's owners explained all the tumult easily.

"They indicated their patrons were hard-working people and they also drink hard," Avey says.

"We don't get white collar people," says Frances. "I have the lumberjack people, the blue collar people."

**I**N RECENT months, complaints about the Boulder Club from local businessmen have toned down. In fact, a number of business owners has gone on record recently, saying they thought the problems with the club



Bill Lovejoy/Sentinel

## Boulder Club regulars know they'll have Christmas dinner.

were exaggerated and it had been used as something of a scapegoat for the community's economic problems.

Avey says he thinks the annual holiday celebrations at the club are a positive thing.

"It's great," he says. "It's a very good gesture on their part. You have people going in to have food with

their liquor."

"In my situation, I have a family and a wife. But if I didn't have someone ..."

It might not be so bad to go down to the local pub and share Christmas with friends.

Even at the Boulder Club.