

Adventures in McCloudland

By Marilyn J. Ogden

Chapter 21

October, 1993

Things are humming. A local glass company in Mt. Shasta replaced the 250 broken panes of glass. It took three full days for a two man crew. (By the time the hotel was finished another 200 panes had broken and had to be replaced.)

During this same week Mt. Shasta Electric's crew installed construction power boxes on posts in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd floor central areas. It wasn't until just a few weeks before we opened that we got the clearance to turn on new wiring in the building, so these boxes were to be our only source of power for large table saws, nail guns, drills, portable saws, heaters, lights, radios, Saws-Alls, a huge compressor.....and my computer.

The following Saturday Ron and Lee met with the hopeful contractors and walked the building and grounds with the men taking notes. I toddled along. Lee has often talked about walk-throughs and bid openings, but I had never been privy to the process. They all asked good questions and were surprised by the scope of the project and especially about time line we would expect.

The relocation of the original large double hung windows caused some confusion. They had been moved in the 1930's and haphazardly placed without regard for the exterior design of the building. Additionally, small bathroom windows had been added. We had counted the original windows and, by our count, they were all there; just in different places. We wanted the small bathroom windows removed and the large windows placed back where they started and asked the contractors to bid the project as though they would not have to purchase any new windows. If it turned out that we were short a pair, we would treat it like an add-on expense. (Add-on was another term I would learn well.)

The following Monday Ron and I met with the contractors who had submitted bids... and opened them. They were wildly divergent with the high estimate almost 100% over the low bid. Low bidder was Ray Pelletier, a contractor out of Mt. Shasta.

We reviewed his package carefully and contacted his references. They were glowing, whole-hearted recommendations. Admittedly he was a small contractor. He'd done mostly single family dwellings and spent some years in Alaska building larger projects.

He was about our age with a friendly open face. From the beginning we felt easy with Ray. We liked the way he talked about working with his workers; consisting for the most part of his son, Raymond and a carpenter named Bill. He was definitely a hands-on contractor who we were confident would work very hard and take pride in the project. He'd had family in McCloud for many years, and he and his brother had lived in the hotel at one time.

Ron, however, was worried. He'd known Ray for some time and agreed that Ray was a hard working, honest craftsman with excellent skills. But he had some doubts about the size of the project and whether or not Ray would be able to handle it. He suggested we exercise caution and consider a firm with more experience handling big jobs. He never told us not to hire Ray, but we heard his concern. He left the decision up to us, though, and we decided on Ray Pelletier. It was the best decision we ever made. The relationship was strained to the limit on several occasions. He put tremendous faith in us and must have thought the worst when we eventually ran into a financial brick wall. Conversely, our commitment to him would cost us thousands of dollars, but one we would repeat in a heart-beat. I can't imagine this project being completed with anyone but him.

So we were on our way. Work was to start immediately.