


**HINTS
FROM
HELOISE**

Brown sugar blues

Dear Heloise: Would somebody let me know what to do with a new package of brown sugar? After opening, it turns to rock and is not usable at all. Please help me as to what to do to keep it usable. I read your column in The Dallas Morning News. — **Kay S., Greenville, Texas**

This age-old problem is easy to fix. Place a slice of bread or some marshmallows (they both provide moisture) on top of the sugar itself, close the box, then put the whole box in a large, plastic zip bag. Also, you can keep the brown sugar in the freezer, because it thaws quickly when needed. In a pinch, if you've started cooking and discovered hard sugar, grate it, and you're set to bake. — **Heloise**

Keep fresh

Dear Heloise: Your column is one of my favorite articles to read. You mention using the wax liner in cereal boxes for storing items in the refrigerator.

I found different uses for storing vegetables in them. It's perfect for keeping fresh-cut onions. There is no smell, and I am amazed at how long it keeps onions fresh. I always fold back the liner and close with a clip.

These liners come in handy to store leftover sliced vegetables — carrot sticks, green/red peppers, cucumbers and celery.

The best is storage for heads of lettuce or leaf lettuce. Break and wash the lettuce, then drain and blot with a paper towel. Place in the bag. You can stack these bags, and they take up less space in the refrigerator. I no longer purchase plastic storage bags or containers. — **Jan Taylor, Hamilton, Ohio**

Jan, very good hints to share. Just one note, though: Do not use the plastic liner to heat or reheat food in the microwave. That wax paper is not meant to be heated. — **Heloise**

Honey hint

Dear Heloise: I have a hint about crystallized honey: If you're not in a hurry to use it, place it in a warm, sunny window. In a few days, it will be back to its original state. Or, if you live in a hot place like Texas, put it on a window ledge outside on a hot day, and in a matter of hours it will be good as new. — **Nancy H., via email**

Buffet bundle

Dear Heloise: We often host large buffets that necessitate plastic flatware. I liked to bundle the napkins and flatware to make things easier for the guests. I found that the spoons and knives often weren't used, but were thrown away. Now I just bundle the napkin and fork, and put the knives and spoons in cute containers on the tables. No waste. — **A Reader, via email**

Betting on the boom

Oregon entrepreneur makes major investment in Stanley restaurant

By **JOHN BECHTEL**
Freelance Writer
jbechtel
@thenewvoltaire.com

Tombstone, Ariz., is a boom town founded in 1879 because of the discovery of silver in the area. Within seven years the town burgeoned from a population of 100 to over 14,000. Besides a school, four churches and three newspapers, it boasted 110 saloons and 14 gambling halls, a theater, and — not to be overlooked — an opera house. If the name of the place sounds vaguely familiar to you, it was the location of the Gunfight at the O.K. Corral featuring the Earp brothers versus the bad guys. Maybe you've seen the movie. Sometime thereafter, the local silver mine penetrated the water table, the water pumping station burned to the ground, the mine closed down, and today, although the town still exists, it has a population of about 1,500 people, and its major industry is tourism. Folks come to see where the gunfight took place.

There might be some similarities, at least temporarily, between Tombstone, Ariz., and the town of Stanley. From a population a century ago of perhaps a couple hundred persons, Stanley grew to 1,500 in 2010, and with the subsequent Bakken oil boom, to over 2,500 a year ago. Then, like the closing of Tombstone's silver mine, the price of oil collapsed, and a lot of the Stanley population packed up and went home.

Our story today is about an entrepreneur who came to Stanley as a refugee from another boom and bust cycle, in Oregon. Mark Higgins, known all his life as Huggy Bear, was a carpenter and then builder of custom log cabins in the Great Northwest. He got his logs from Montana, and became something of a saw mill operator, cutting his logs at each construction site. He was known as the Dirt-to-Done log home developer, at least until the credit implosion of 2007-2008. No credit meant no buyers of custom homes. Huggy Bear hung out the "Temporarily Closed for Business" sign, bought some tank trucks, and came to Stanley.

Again business was booming. At the peak of the oil boom he purchased the ailing Two Way Restaurant and Inn, located at 300 N. Main St. in Stanley. Mark assumed management of the property in April 2014 as part of a work-out agreement, but the property didn't close until last August. For the next three months it was all they could do to keep up with the demand, both for housing and food. Stanley is not a big place, and there were thousands of new mouths to feed — people with big appetites. At 16,000 square feet, the Two Way was the largest restaurant between Minot and Williston. In case you haven't been that way recently, Stanley is about 55 miles west of Minot, and Williston is about another 73 miles to the west of Stanley — all oil country.



Owner Mark "Huggy Bear" Higgins shows off the Tombstone Steakhouse and Lounge in Stanley, which boasts custom wood tables like the one shown at top.

Photos by Carolyn Ferguson/
Special to MDN



The 16-ounce Ribeye Steak Dinner is shown at the Tombstone Steakhouse and Lounge in Stanley.

When the music died

Last October, the music died. Restaurant traffic dwindled. It was hard to find good help, and the Inn part of the enterprise closed. To make matters worse, the need for the tanker trucks shrank, and most of that fleet is waiting for oil to come back. Thirteen hundred miles from his home in Corvallis, Ore., Mark was digging in his heels. His Realtor girlfriend, Mindy Kingsley, was moving to Stanley from Corvallis to help out. He had two awesome helpers, who worked at whatever was needed, named Joyce and Tiffany. And Mark was increasing his investment in the place.

That was the state of affairs, unknown to us, when my wife and I rode into Stanley and asked two locals where we could get a good meal. Apparently there wasn't a lot to choose from, because it was a short conversation. They gave us directions, saying there seemed to be a lot going on at this place named Two Way. There was no address on the L-shaped red building, and it took us a couple minutes to find a dilapidated sign up near the peak of the roof saying Two Way. There were three doors and it wasn't clear which one, if any, was the entrance. Two women stood near one of these doors, and when I inquired if they were open, they enthusiastically said, "Oh, yes!" and directed me to a different door. My wife stayed in the car because she wasn't sure we were at the right place. When I walked in I met a guy coming out of the kitchen looking like maybe he was the cook. I introduced myself. He was Mark Higgins, aka Huggy Bear. And yes, that

night he was cooking.

We had an excellent meal. My wife ordered a 16-ounce ribeye steak, medium rare, and she got a beautiful steak cooked to spec. I ordered a Hawaiian Burger, with a slice of pineapple and teriyaki sauce. The French fries were crispy the way I like them. We were early, and gradually other patrons filtered in. Obviously local, they knew the way in.

The new Tombstone

They had new menus, and the first thing we noticed is that the place had a new name: Tombstone Steakhouse and Lounge. When traffic thinned out, and we had time to chat with Mark, we learned his story as related above. He took us through a door into the new lounge area, which is 4,500 square feet, completely under construction. Mark explained the huge logs behind the building, and the sawmill operation set up in the front parking lot. It wasn't just the name and the logo that was changing; he was in fact recreating an authentic Old Western saloon. The construction in the lounge was far enough along that we could tell it was quality construction and a lot of recent activity. Mark says the new lounge will open in time for the July 4 holiday. A new sign is on order, and will probably be up by the time this goes to press. So that we are perfectly clear on this, there is currently a bar open daily. The construction mentioned above will be a new, adjacent lounge area.

So what is Mark's plan, we asked him. First, he is betting that the price of oil will rebound. Secondly, his restaurant, the only full-size

restaurant and lounge in Stanley, is perched tight up against the nine-hole Stanley golf course. Stanley and Williston are the only two golf courses in the N.D. Bakken region, according to the North Dakota Golf Courses map. With five months of warm weather ahead, that is a significant benefit. You can park your golf cart at the restaurant and walk in to eat or drink with a full service menu.

The menu

Let's talk about the menu. The first and perhaps the most important thing you should know is that every Friday, Saturday and Sunday they serve prime rib (\$28.95).

Tombstone offers the usual assortment of burgers, sandwiches, wraps and salads. An unusual burger I noticed is the Ranch Hand Burger with sliced ham, bacon, cheese, and fried egg. The burgers range in price from \$10.50 to \$14.95. Two salads, a chef's salad and taco salad, are each \$12.95. The taco salad comes in a deep-fried shell with taco meat, lettuce, tomato, cheese, sour cream, olives, refried beans and topped with salsa. Sandwiches range from \$6.95 to \$12.95 and include a Patty Melt, and BBQ Slow Roasted Brisket, and what would undoubtedly be my favorite, Carolina Pulled Pork (house smoked pork and BBQ sauce). They smoke the pork on site for eight hours, and we even took a look at the smoke room. There are three wraps, including Chicken Bacon, Popcorn Chicken and The Mexican, from \$9 to \$10.50. They have a 14-ounce N.Y. Strip (\$22.95), Chicken Fried Steak (\$17.95), and a four-piece Chicken Dinner for \$14.95. And they have pizza and wings.

Mark says that periodically they have fresh, never-frozen fish flown in from a friend of his who runs a fishing boat. The catch includes fresh albacore tuna, Chinook salmon, and less often, halibut. Mark says the fish becomes available after his friend fills his local contract requirements on the coast, which get priority. He says the fish is vacuum-sealed and comes in packaged on dry ice, but in such a way that it is not frozen, and is delivered by Federal Express. If you are interested and are coming from Minot, feel free to call ahead and find out what is available (628-3398).

The plan

At the moment they have seating for 85, and by later in the summer that will be expanded to 130. They are putting in a new kitchen, and developing a more efficient floor plan.

They are handicapped accessible. They are open for the lunch trade from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., and they reopen for dinner from 5 to 9 p.m.

Every Thursday is Tombstone's Thirsty Thursday, with two well drinks or two draft beers for the price of one.

Because of their significant capacity, Mark is interested in wedding receptions, class reunions, charitable and corporate events. This is an undertaking in progress, and Mark is a hungry entrepreneur (no pun intended) and has some creative marketing ideas. The sawmill will be down, the new sign will be up, the 4,500 sq. western saloon will be serving.

Anyone with a work ethic and looking for a serious career in the hospitality/restaurant industry should call Mark. Literally all positions are open: servers, bartenders, cooks, chef.

One last thing about the golfing map referred to above. I counted 14 golf courses clustered around Fargo and Bismarck, and one in Dickinson, Williston, Stanley and Minot respectively. Does this mean it is mostly politicians who comprise the golfing population? And if I did my measuring correctly, it looks like Stanley has a monopoly on almost 10,000 square miles of North Dakota territory with no other golf course around. I am not a golfer (or a politician) but I have to wonder, does this mean that oil workers don't golf? Because if they do, I would expect both the city of Stanley and Tombstone Steakhouse and Lounge to be very busy in the next few months. Not everybody has gone home, out of state.

Would I ride an hour for a good prime rib, some might ask. It all depends. When I lived in Brooklyn, on Friday afternoons it took an hour to cross the Brooklyn Bridge into Manhattan. It all depends on your frame of reference. And of course, on the prime rib.

I welcome and respond to all reader correspondence. Thank you for reading this column and sharing your thoughts.