

INTERVIEW WITH CHRISTINE PESOLA

INTERVIEWED BY RUSS MAGNAGHI

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Russ Magnaghi (RM): The interview this afternoon is with Christine Pesola, the owner of the Landmark Inn and will focus on the history and recent development of the Landmark Inn under her ownership. The first question I have for you is, what is your birthday?

Christine Pesola (CP): 4-9-53.

RM: Could you tell us a little about your background? Are you from Marquette? Did you move to Marquette?

CP: Well, I actually came to Marquette in 1971. I moved here from downstate Michigan, Birmingham. I always think this is kind of an interesting part of the story because I came to Northern because it was far away from my parents. Some people might think, 'Well, that's kind of rude,' but I was one of those wild children at that time. I knew my parents couldn't just be "boppin'" in on me, you know. I came to Northern and my father was a doctor and so, I was kind of on what you would call the "pre-professional health" track. I was, you know, biology. I didn't last on that track very long. What happened was as I would date a different person, I would get interested in a different subject. I've always really enjoyed learning. So, I started dating this guy that was into econ, so I started taking macro and micro-economics, money and banking, it was really fascinating. We loved it. Well then I ended up with a sociology major. I started taking psych classes and sociology and that. I think really, you can laugh about that but I think in a lot of ways, it made me more well-rounded to be able to handle something like this because you know, just even being a general manager. I mean, I'm the mother to some; I'm the shrink to others. You know, it's always quite interesting with employees. Then you have the guests, of course. So, that's kind of how I ended up here. I did end up in a commune out in Deerton. I was out there by '73 or '74 and I was there for five years. Then my parents were starting to get a little frustrated and my dad said, "What are you going to do with yourself? You've got to do something. You've got to learn how to make a living." So, I went back downstate and he got me into a radiology program.

RM: Were you still going to Northern?

CP: I was when I first went to the commune but then I quit going. I had children and got kind of waylaid in that "communal children and farming" kind of life. When I went downstate to go into radiology, that's a lot of physics that helped yet again and as soon as I got out of school, I graduated. So, that was a two year program. I came right back up north because I did love it up here. I've been up here ever since.

RM: How did you get involved with the Landmark and maybe briefly talk about what the Landmark was like?

CP: What ended up happening is, my husband and I were living in Marquette in the summers and we were in Florida in the winter. We were kind of retired in a lot of ways. I mean, he would work on little projects but I didn't work outside the home. Quite frankly, I was too young to be retired. It was really boring. I mean, your house can only be so clean and you can only golf so much. So, we started looking around for a project in Florida, like an old "junker-fixer-upper." I've always loved to fix things up, you know, refinished furniture, whatever it is, take something that's a mess and make it orderly. As we started looking around, we thought, 'Well why don't we look in our own backyard', in Marquette. He had looked at the hotel one other time when it was still empty because it had been empty since 1982, I think was when it closed. We got it in '95. We got the place.

RM: You were looking at it when it was—

CP: Empty, empty. It was literally—well, Ed Havlik, who had had it, he was going to turn it into a Radisson. He was on NMU's Board of Control. He was a developer. He actually put quite a bit of money into it. I mean, he gutted the thing. He spent almost a million dollars gutting it. When we got it, it was literally the outside walls, there was nothing on any floors, except the concrete and the pillars and there were no windows. There were birds and animal parts and stuff living in here and it had been like that for 14 years, basically abandoned. The lobby was completely saturated with water. When the water comes in, it would all roll downhill and congregate in the lobby so the wood was rotted about four feet up with water damage. That's what it was like when we got it. In a lot of way, that was really—I mean, I've seen Ed Havlik a couple of times since then and I know that he's thrilled that it ended up working for us but I've thanked him because really, that was an extra million dollars of demolition. You know, there's a big hole in the backside of the building and he'd scrape all of the crap, take everything off the walls and just push it through the holes and it would go down through all the holes and then out the back door and that was just an incredible amount of work that we didn't have to do.

RM: So then what you're saying is, all of the rooms as we see them now—

CP: Are brand new.

RM: Are all new, all the walls, everything is new.

CP: Everything is new. Plumbing, electrical, everything is brand new. When you see how thick this is, that's actually insulation. So there is an outside layer of brick and how they used to insulate then they'd put these clay cylinders, well they're kind of square-ish but they're round and that was like an air pocket and then a little insulation and then the wall. Well, we kept the clay and then we put the insulation. That's why these walls are so thick.

RM: So then, you got the place as an empty structure full of birds and parts and such.

CP: Right.

RM: Now, how did you view the place in that state?

CP: Well, the interesting thing was that my husband bought it without telling anybody. He came home and said, "I bought the hotel." So, I didn't see it until after we owned it. I didn't have a say in this thing. You know, that was interesting. He had looked at it before. He'd always kind of thought about doing it. It was definitely a bigger project than we had ever tackled. I mean, we were home-builders. We had built a few commercial properties. I mean nothing to this magnitude.

RM: So, your husband had had a certain construction ability for houses?

CP: Yes, he did for houses. He had built houses and he had built a twelve unit apartment building. I think the pivotal, kind of turning point or the thing maybe that would, you could say, helped make us successful was the fact that we hooked up with Karen Larson because Karen is definitely into historic preservation. My husband was not necessarily along those lines. We were thinking small lobby, divide up that big space and you know, the rooms were going to be so-so. Karen came along and said, "No, no, no. We have got to redo it. It has got to be a restoration. The lobby was fabulous." So then we set about trying to find people that could do that kind of woodwork and really that's where the history comes into play because it would not have been the same property if we hadn't kept that beautiful lobby and had our nice little quaint pub.

RM: Now, could you explain who Karen Larson is?

CP: Well, she's an interior designer here in Marquette. She sat on the Historic District Study Committee as I did. What we were trying to do at the time was get a historic district extended. I mean, we already have the Ridge and Art Street District and we were trying to get all the homes documented so that there would be grant monies available and such. So that was kind of how I got to know her was through that. She's really persuasive and it really was the way to go. If we had really just looked at this building as four outside walls and not really looked at what it really meant to the community, what it meant about our past and all the history here, it wouldn't really be anything that great. I don't think.

RM: But now you were on the committee, so you did have an interest in historic buildings and so on?

CP: I did have an interest. So, it was at that point that Karen and I kind of—because she's a lot like me. We get very excited and we started talking about all the rooms being different and, "Yeah, it'd be like the largest bed and breakfast." So, that's really how it all came about and obviously for her, this is a great decorating job because you don't have to pick on color palate and buy 75 bed spreads that all match. I mean, everything the curtains are all custom made, the

drapery, the bedding all matches the drapery. Every room is individualized, custom, different wall paper for every room. So that obviously, was a great job for her being in the decorating business.

RM: So, she was in charge of the interior decorating?

CP: Yup, her and I, we'd sit down, we'd go through fabrics, we'd go through colors and so she would come and put stuff together. "What do you think about this? What do you think about that?" We did go on a buying trip down to Savannah. We knew we were going to have fireplaces in some of the rooms. All of the corner rooms actually have fireplaces. That was by design.

RM: That wasn't in the original building.

CP: Nope was not part of the original building, as a matter of fact that was one of the things that Bruce and I had to go to Washington D.C. and please our case because the entire renovation was 6.2 million and we had up to, which Ed Havlick had negotiated, 25% historic tax credit and that is a substantial amount of money. Well, we got turned down by the Department of Interior because you cannot change more than 1% of the outside of the building and they did not like those vents because they were gas fireplaces and we had vented them on the outside. So, we went and we pleaded our case and it was so funny because I said to Bruce, my husband, I said, "I'll just cry if I have to." So, I get in there and you're scared. Anytime you deal with government people, you're scared. We're these little developers from Marquette, Michigan, we got in there and we the tears kind of came naturally. I said, "We are just small developers in Marquette, Michigan. We don't know how we're going to pay the bill anyway." They wanted to know why we didn't put a big HVAC system on the back wall and run the pipes to the rooms, instead of the grills that we have underneath the windows which it would've been better. We said, "But our view of the lake is on the back and we didn't want to take that away." We promised that we would get rid of those gas fireplaces. So, we put electric ones in and bricked up the holes and they said it was okay then. That was just crazy. That was good because those first 5 or 6 years were *very* stressful. I mean, we were so close to bankruptcy, you can't even believe it.

RM: You talked about the interior decorating, who came in and did the—

CP: Like the woodwork? Bruce would do the construction management. We had drywallers. Basically, once we had the floor plan, you know, you got the lobby, you're not going to change the floor plan. The restaurant is here, the bar is here, the lobby is here. We did have, originally, a little gift shop in the front, right off of Front Street and then we had that boardroom. When we first started, I don't know if you recall, we were going to have four condos up here. They were going to be 2500 square feet each and we actually had them framed in. We thought, well that would be a way to make the project go. We'd sell them each for say, \$250,000. There you got a million dollars right off the top to take off of your mortgage but none of them sold. We brought people in and they'd look and "Oh, the view is beautiful but..." I think people didn't really trust—who's going to buy something on top of building that is gutted. You want to make sure—

RM: Well, this was before anything.

CP: And what happened as we were bringing people in, they kept saying, “Well, bring back the crow’s nest.” So, we ended up ripping all those, they weren’t walls, they were just the studs but we ripped everything out and that’s when we came up with this little bar here, The North Star. We came up with the Sky Room and we put some more rooms up on top and then we had that big penthouse down at the end which is a beautiful room. That’s about 2,000 square feet. We decided that we were going to live there for a while, which we did when we first opened. We lived there. It was too valuable of space to be taken up by us.

RM: So that went on in—

CP: That was ’95, ’96, we opened in May of ’97. So it took 18 months.

RM: So everything was together and then you had the dining room and that as called—

CP: That was called the Heritage Room. I don’t know if you remember it, it was all white. I have a book and I’ll let you take that album and you can look through it. That was called the Heritage Room. Then we always had the Northland Pub, we’ve always called it that. We had the Landmark Inn Gift Shop and then we had 63 rooms. We have since added the penthouse as a room. For a while we used it for banquet space but what was happening was when you’re having a banquet, it was bothering too many people that might be sleeping. So, we just turned it into a real swank suite and we rent that all the time now. It’s really popular with wedding groups and family reunions and that type of thing.

RM: I have a question that you might fill me in here. What is the history of the little room above the pub?

CP: Well, that was the old office. That’s very interesting because if you go up there, you’ll see that there is old ceramic tile. That was actually the office where the general manager sat and there was a little hole and he could actually look down over the lobby. He could see people checking in and stuff. Well we knew we wanted the pub to be a little bigger so what we did was we extended that roof out and made that front entry hall a lower ceiling. So, we extended the floor out and just made that mezzanine area up there. We can fit an extra 15 to 20 people up there. So, that makes it kind of nice and we also use it as a little extra meeting room. You’ve used it. It’s kind of nice.

RM: It’s delightful. So, that isn’t the original space?

CP: No, where the tile floor is is the original space, so we extended that floor right out to the outside wall and then put that wall that looks out over the pub and made that a half wall so it would seem like it was a part of it just so we could make it bigger.

RM: I see, so that was the manager's office so he could see what was going on. It's a very nice room but then when people go up there its like, "Oh my God, this is delightful."

CP: Well, we have that little computer up there now. If you go upstairs and you go into the mezzanine area, there used to be, where that little room is now, that was all open and we had chairs up there with couches like this and you could sit up there. So, it was another little seating area. Being a historic hotel, you're always trying to find ways to modernize your property and today's travelers, they want to be able to have a business center, they want to be able to get to a computer where they can print their boarding pass or whatever. So, that's why we built that wall then and put that computer in there and turned that into a little place where guests can go and check things.

RM: Is it downstairs or upstairs?

CP: It's upstairs, off that mezzanine. Most people travel with their laptop but they don't have printers attached to them.

RM: That answers the question. Now, when you opened up in May of '97, how did you feel about this now? The grand unveiling?

CP: Well, I was afraid really. The stress of doing the project had started to really take a toll and we were only half done when we ran out of money. So, we originally thought it was going to cost 3 million. I mean you got to keep in mind that we are just small little developers. This was just way beyond our financial capabilities so they had sent up, I call him the "terminator," but a guy that handled problems loans. We were considered a problem. It was a risk. The discussion was, "Well, if we don't lend them more money, we're going to lose the first 3 million." So, that's when we went to my parents and said, "We have to have another million dollars or we're going to go down." So they gave us a million dollars. We went back to the bank and said, "We have a million," so they loaned us two more so we could get the thing finished. So by '97-'98, the stress is really starting to wear on you because again, we didn't know the hotel business. You know, when they open the Bellagio in Las Vegas, they had been marketing the Bellagio for a year before. We didn't even think about marketing, how to get the word out. We were more like 'build it and they will come' mentality, not thinking.

RM: And this is before the internet and all that electronic advertising.

CP: I mean obviously people coming in town would see it but I know we were running at like 20% occupancy. You need 50-60-65% to really pay your bills. Especially then when the mortgage was 6 million and we've been paying down now for all these years so you know, now I can get by on less occupancy because we've been paying down all these years. So, I would say that I was a little overwhelmed to say the least. I was very scared and sick. I mean I had to go see a shrink and she said, "You're sick and you have to take care of yourself or you're going to get sick." I blame it on the hotel but my marriage went south and the stress was just unbelievable.

RM: The other thing is, you can't go out in the street and ring a bell to drive people in.

CP: And you can't act like you don't know what you're doing either. I mean, that was one of the things. I ended up getting hooked up with this gal who lived in Boston, she was from Marquette. Michelle Butler hooked me up with her and she says, "You have to call Laurie." We called her and she came back as a consultant. She'd come back two weeks a month and she helped us set up our sales department and showed us how to do inquiries and call sheets and how to set your roving files and all this. Some of the best advice is "fake it till you make it." She said, "Nobody wants to be associated with a loser and when people ask you how it's going you tell them that it is fantastic." You just smile and tell them that everything is great. I do believe that is a good philosophy. I mean, people don't want to be associated with—

RM: I'll just make a comment here. When it opened, we were divided. Then at least for us was the concern and fear, is it going to make it?

CP: You know what, Russ? It's very interesting because we had, I think, many university people, hospital people, just rallying behind us. They wanted it to make it and I am so appreciative of that because I know that our service wasn't great in the beginning. We didn't know how to train people. I do thank god that we got some great people that happened to know what they were doing and happened to have great personalities. I think what we made up for in knowledge, maybe our personalities and our willingness to work hard and try kept them coming back. I know people, they did want to see it go and I think people are very happy that it is here.

RM: I think the other thing that happened was, I forget know how much it was but it was the prices. I would say, "Well, people coming up on state business are going to stay here and I bet they come back." That's basically what I've seen is that different people will come up here and there's no other place, even families with kids at Northern come here and stay at the Landmark.

CP: I think being close to the downtown, there's other options for dinner, you can go to movies, you can walk down to the lake, so you know, we're kind of right in the hub. We're a few blocks from Northern, a few blocks from the hospital, all the banking and institutions downtown. So, I think we're really in the heart of it. I think that was good, the library, you know.

RM: Then you went and got the tax credit—

CP: Yes, we got the tax credit.

RM: Now, how did that work?

CP: Well, what they made up do—so, we got, I think it was maybe a million dollars, maybe 1.1, I can't remember the exact amount. The bank wouldn't just let us have the money. So what happens when you get historic tax credits is they give you a recapture period of five years. So, they put it in the bank and every year, we got to take \$250,000 out and pay down the mortgage. It was great. I mean, it was a blessing really because if Bruce would have had his way, we

might've taken the money and then we would've really been in trouble. By the time that 5 years was over, we had a million dollars paid off of that mortgage.

RM: Now, I remember there was some talk that you had sold that credit.

CP: Oh yes, oh yes, we did sell it but we got 97 cents on the dollar. We sold it to National City, the National City Community Development Corporation. We were with National City at the time, so these banks were making huge, huge dollars. So, they can take my tax credit because I'm not making any money and they can buy them. So, that's how they work. We had Exxon wanting to buy our tax credits but they were only willing to offer us 60 cents on the dollars. So, the government will say, this is your dollar amount and you put it out on the open market and people who need the credits will buy them. So, I guess it's the government's way of giving you the money without giving you the money but they'll take less money from an entity but that entity is the one who gives you the money. So that is how that works.

RM: So then at that point—

CP: Still had 5 million to go, yeah.

RM: So you started out with three, your family gave you some and the bank gave you some. Now, you're in 6 million.

CP: Right, 6.2 is the total project minus the million to start paying down, right.

RM: And then there was a moment of panic when you open the hotel.

CP: And your occupancy is so low, you know, that first year I think we made it to about 35%. The first year we lost about \$600,000. The second year we lost about \$300,000. The third and fourth year we kind of broke even. Well, what happened is Bob Cowell came on board as our CFO and financing on these projects—it's not like you're paying your bills at home. It's big and there's different laws and rules and he kind of got us straightened out to where we were actually on a fixed rate loan. We knew what our payments were going to be and so, ever since, we've just been kind of plugging away and getting fiscally in shape.

RM: When did you start seeing a change in terms of occupancy and then what about the pub and the restaurant?

CP: Well, let's see. 2006 and was our absolute best year so far. It had steadily started building up from there and we run at about 62%. What that means is, in the summer, we're slamming. We're absolutely busy, it's hard to get a room. We're at 89-95% for days and days on end. Then, like right now in January, last night we probably only had 6 rooms in house. So, you have to make all of that money in the summer in order to keep paying the electric bills and heat bills and stuff during the winter. So, it all kind of evens out but you know, we've been paying down for all these years now. So, we're good now. Everything's good.



RM: Now, when there are various events, you do see—

CP: Oh yes, we love our events. We love the events. It's real interesting because when you look at Northern, for example, we support Northern athletics. Why? Because when Northern has sports in, you know, we fill. We love graduation. We love the spring and winter commencement. We love parent's weekend, we love sled dog, we love Art on the Rocks. It's all has to do with bringing people in.

RM: So, by the time you get up to '06 then—

CP: We're good. I would say, probably, by 2002 or 2003, I'm starting to feel better. I'm starting to understand what it means to be the owner of the Landmark, what it means to be the GM, what it means to my community and I think that was kind of a big turning point for me too. At first, I was just scared. I was kind of mousy and I'd always want to hide behind my husband and not get in the limelight. It's not really about limelight and attention for myself but it is about being able to give the message. I feel like right now, I am a good message deliverer of what it is that we do here. I sit on boards and committees and I try to give back to my town that has really given me so much. I mean because everybody rallied around us and said, "I know they screwed up but we're going to keep going there because we want them to make it." I really believe that I owe people for that.

RM: Just from my impression, you are a well-organized business woman.

CP: It's interesting, yeah I'm there. I'm in. I do feel very lucky that people gave us a chance and they did keep coming back, time and time again because we goofed up in the beginning. You know, it was funny because we had originally more grandiose ideas. I don't know if you remember, we had the doorman with the top hat. I was thinking of these New York properties where you have the doorman and all that. The Yoopers don't want to give up their cars. They do not want to open the door for them, they don't want to have them park their car for them. So, I just got rid of that top hat. It's been in the closet for years.

RM: I'm thinking out in San Francisco, there's the Sir Francis Drake, they're downtown. They have the doormen dressed with the Beefeater thing and the little hat. So, since the opening, it's moved.

CP: What happened? Dennis McCann, he's a travel writer for the Milwaukee Writers Journal and he happened in on us. It was that first summer, he happened in. He was shocked to say the least and wrote this blazing article on the front page of the travel section of the Sunday paper. You cannot believe this place that he discovered because every year he takes a trip around Lake Superior, shocked. Because they had been to Marquette before.

RM: He had seen the place before.

CP: Yeah and so, he was thrilled and the article was incredible and then what happens is—cause you know, all travel writers are reading everybody else's travel column, and so then, you know, the Detroit News—and then we start getting all these travel writers starting to write articles and so that's just advertising that you can't afford to pay for.

RM: How did you come up with the idea of dedicating the rooms?

CP: I guess, just the fact that it was a historic restoration and that history is so important and what do we have to tell people about our area? We knew we were doing all these rooms in different themes and stuff and that's how that came about. We said, well let's pick some famous people in our history and we will do the rooms for them. So, we have the J. M. Longyear and we have Peter White and we have some that were still alive. We had Fred Rydholm. He has a fantastic room that's very rustic. William Austin Burt, Amelia Earhart. We have a cute room, The Dandelion Cottage, that is just darling for the book. We have one room—the first room that was not named after a dead person was Mary Tavernini and people go, "Well, why does Mary get a room?" Mary was working at Cellular One at the time and she was the first one to really have faith in our project and got us a contract with Cellular One to have a cell tower on top and they were paying us a thousand dollars a month and we thought, "It's a thousand dollars towards a mortgage." So, we gave her a room named after her. So, that's how that it and of course, she's long since been gone from Cellular One but Cell One is still there, now they're AT&T but there was a nice yearly increase. So, that dollar amount has gone up.

RM: So that's kind of another example of the community help that you got. I just want to make a comment here. I remember when they were discussing—or Ed Havlik was going for a loan. They were going to get a federal loan and then the money would come to town. He would use it to develop the hotel and then when the money was paid off, the loan would stay in Marquette and somebody else could get this loan. I remember there was a discussion from part of the city commission and he was going to do suites.

CP: Yeah Radisson right?

RM: Yeah and at that time suites were little known and I remember there was a hotel owner in Marquette vehemently attacking the whole idea. It was on T.V. and vehemently attacking this crazy idea of suites. I seen the whole progress of this.

CP: Well yeah and you know, you're afraid because everybody's got their little niche. I'm cruising along feeling pretty good and now I have to be kind of afraid but I don't really. I think what happens is you have to be confident in what you sell, what you offer and anytime—and this is what I was trying to tell other property owners I know because they were a little upset about the new guy in town and what's going to happen. You know, it's natural but anytime you have one more person, spending money, marketing outside of the area, is going to be good for everybody so that's the way that you have to feel about it.

RM: You can't handle all of the tourists that come to Marquette. At one point, you're going to be full.

CP: And look what happens when the EMS conference happens on Parents Weekends in October and people can't get a room. So, we need the rooms because then people get frustrated. "We're not going to Marquette, you can never get a room there." So, there's really a fine line from the selling and marketing aspect to get these events coordinated so that they aren't all happening on the same weekend.

RM: Does anyone coordinate?

CP: Yeah, well NMU, Cindy Paavola and that usual marketing department there and the CVB and the partnership are trying to coordinate a community wide calendar so that somebody isn't planning a big event when there's a huge event at Northern or there's a huge event at the hospital. Spread it out.

RM: I think there was talk at some point and I don't know at what level it was that you would think of digging out the parking lot and putting in a pool or doing something.

CP: You know, we had two really nice hot tubs and a sauna and an area for massage therapy downstairs but we just did not plan properly for all the space that we would need to do our business. Some unit went down and it was going to be \$20,000 to replace the unit and so you have a unit fighting to keep the air less humid but you're putting humidity into the air. It was just stupid, such a waste of energy. Our customers—we get every once in a while—somebody is disappointed that we don't have a pool but we have a great relationship with Northern. We buy tons of passes and we give them to our guest for free and our shuttle takes them over there, picks them up. So, we let them work out in the state-of-the-art facility and its way better than anything that we could ever do. So, that's how we settle that.

RM: So you really have a super... with Northern property.

CP: I'll tell you what. Our corporate guests love it, especially these traveling guys, salesman and stuff that really like to work out but don't want to work out on a couple little crummy things that we have there. They'd much rather go there. A lot of times a hotel isn't that great, it's alright. It's less than ideal.

RM: At this point, where do you see the future going?

CP: Well, we're always open and looking. There's something that I regret. There was that house over next to the church...

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## START OF SIDE B

RM: Okay.

CP: That house was beautiful and it had six or seven bedrooms. The woodwork was stunning and when that got torn down, it was kind of at the time when we were just starting to feel like we were going to make it. They wanted \$120,000 for it. I mean, shoot, we should've bought it. We could've fixed that up, we could've had the cutest little B&B type situation over there. So, looking for opportunities where I could maybe expand my revenue reach. Right now, this is it. I can't do anymore. We're busy when we're busy and when we're not, we're not. You've been here on a busy Friday night, you know, you see it. We can't do any more than what we're doing.

RM: Well when you have a wedding downstairs...

CP: Yeah, it's crazy.

RM: I guess I'd say this about it, at least from our viewpoint, even if we have to park down the street, you'll still want to go to The Landmark or the pub. I don't know if I told you but my mom was in her nineties there and onto a hundred and we had her birthday here and we were coming in one day and said, "Do you want to go to Capers?" And she was from the other side of the tracks growing up and what not and she said, "No," she wanted to go to the pub for a beer and burger.

CP: You'd take her after church sometimes.

RM: Yeah well after church we went to Capers then if we took her in the evening or something or for lunch, we would go to the pub. We have all sorts of pictures of her in the pub with a glass of beer and a big hamburger. You become an institution now, you know. I do promote you, in case somebody doesn't know about you and then I usually start my tour of the city in the summer time, a walking tour, and we always start from the lobby.

CP: Well, you've seen those pictures that I have down in the pub and behind the front desk, the pictures of the dining room in the different eras and the lobby in the different eras. You'll have to look at them sometime. I'll point them out to you.

\*Looking at pictures

RM: So now this did survive, the brass?

CP: That is the only thing, this and the marble on the stairs, and this is building the fireplace in the Sky Room. That's the only original thing.

RM: See like this looks like it had been there forever.

CP: I believe that this is the icky stuff. That's why it looks so funky. It was rotted half way up. They built the bar to make it look old. You can take this book. My mom and I made that well, my mom made that, I made all of the front doors. We did stained glass. We were down buying rugs, you know, Karen and I spending money. This is after it's all done. Look at how shiny that floor is. Then the furniture starts coming in.

RM: Now, this must've been very exciting for you, all of this coming from the empty mess.

CP: Yeah, a lot of parties. It was fun. Oh, hanging those dang chandeliers too. It took seven hours for each chandelier to get all of the crystals on there. And Paul Grant had painted this painting because there was only going to be one painting in the lobby and he wanted to do it. Yeah it's just kind of fun. It just gives you an idea of how bad it was.

RM: I do have a question, I was thinking here. What were some of the specials? I know you had at one point a number of years ago and we came here. You had like the 4<sup>th</sup> of July dinner.

CP: Well, when we first opened, we had dining up here every Saturday night. Well, that was when Deb Pierce was cooking for us which was really great. It was great to have her here. But what was happening is, we've already got the pub competing with, well it was the Heritage Room then, and then with the Sky Room. It's just spreading your customers too thin.

RM: And then you also needed personnel.

CP: Right. Payroll is your single most expensive thing here so, we stopped every weekend and just went to once a month. Even then, it's just sparse. So now, we just do Christmas Eve, we always have a big dinner up here, the 4<sup>th</sup> of July which is always full because people can sit here and watch the fireworks.

RM: Oh, so you still have the 4<sup>th</sup> of July one?

CP: Yeah, it's nice. Especially, you're going to know people in there. The same people come almost every year.

RM: When we came, quite a while back now, we had dinner and there were some people that we got to know from town were there and we sat there drinking brandy as we're watching the fireworks. Years before, we had been sitting out in the mud and rain and what not. It was a mess. You can still enjoy the evening. That was how you got back those specials. And what are some of the special events that you do now?

CP: Well, like I say, Christmas Eve. We use that a lot for banquets so we have little small weddings in there but we always do Christmas Eve. We do a lot of graduation parties up there. Then the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, I think, that's really about it. I think you guys came to one. The one Paul had done a whole bunch of new work and we were going to do an art auction and auction off a painting after each course. Do you remember that? I think you guys were here?

RM: Oh yeah.

CP: They're just fine. Or sometimes we might do a full moon dinner and usually we just get that out. We've got a lot of contacts on our Facebook and are in constant contact so we will get it out that way or we'll put it out in the Marquette Monthly when we're going to have one. We usually fill them because we don't do them that often. People hear about it and then they want to go.

RM: So then are you open to ideas?

CP: Always open to ideas. Yeah, yeah and we've talked about—well remember Deb Peirce used to do that sushi night. Did you ever come to the sushi night?

RM: No.

CP: I don't really like—I mean I like some sushi but yeah, she had beautiful presentations and great food but what happens is, it's hard to charge what you need to charge to get it to work.

RM: Wasn't that really the problem with that restaurant that, what was it--The Water Stone.

CP: It's really hard. You know, for us Russ, right now, I am so grateful that our restaurants are inside of the hotel. Even though a lot of people, you know, it's not like if you're going for a special meal, you don't think "Oh, let's go to the Ramada," say for example. It's not something that you think about. People don't think about going to a hotel restaurant for a special occasion but I think we're a little different but I do have my rooms to fall back on because my profit margin in my rooms is more than the food and beverage. Like for every dollar that you spend, I might be only making eight cents.

RM: In the restaurant?

CP: Yeah, so say your meal was \$42, you know, I might have made a couple of bucks because your labor: you got cut it up, you got to, you know, keep it cold, you got to cook it and you've got to buy the product and so all of a sudden, your profit margin is low. Now, on your alcoholic beverages, your profit margin is a little better but on the rooms, it's really good because after your stuff is depreciated out, your rooms still look good. I mean, I redo rooms, I redo five or six every year.

RM: But there isn't that much cost?

CP: Well, it costs about \$15,000.

RM: Per room?

CP: Mhmm. Well, you get new furniture, you get new carpets, new wallpapers, new bedding.

RM: Oh, you're doing a complete remake?

CP: Yeah because you want your linens to always be fresh and look good.

RM: Well, that's interesting.

CP: Yeah, I've got a couple dogs right now we're working on.

RM: So, we're not going to come here and get a room that has the old musty carpet smell.

CP: Hey, we're redoing the boardroom, wait till you see it. It's fabulous. I'm putting fabric on the walls but it's like thick beautiful tapestry. I'm putting a fireplace in there. We're putting the wood but the woods only going to be up to about here and then the fabrics going to come down, big thick beautiful drapes with big bouillon fringe. It's going to be fabulous.

RM: It'll be a very warm and inviting kind of room.

CP: It'll be very warm and inviting. It'll be a place where you want to have a little dinner meeting, I think or you know, a family party. I mean, I remember one Christmas eve, my mom and my dad was still alive. We had our whole family and there was about twenty of us at a big long table and we had a nice dinner and then you can talk and laugh and then if somebody swears or something it's okay, you know.

RM: But you're in your little—

CP: Cocoon, yeah. It's really nice. So, we're working on that now.

RM: Do you feel that the, just to get your comments down, has the Pub become a social center of Marquette?

CP: I think so. I do. I mean what happens is, you look at people our age and I think maybe some of the younger, what are they, like the mid 35-40 year olds, below 40 or whatever, maybe might meet somewhere else but if you look at some of the attorneys or RNS, you know, we get doctors, we get professors. It's just a nice place to come in after work, have a drink with a few friends before you head home for the evening. It just seems to have become that local hangout. I actually haven't been to Black Rocks and everybody says its great but I guess it's really crowded in there and it seems like the Pub is just more, even though it's crowded and kind of loud, you can still get in and you can still find a seat and eat.

RM: You can still get a table and what not. Yeah because for us the Pub, you know, we will be we will be talking and, "Well, we want to go out to eat tonight." "Okay, where are we going?"

CP: You've got your places. I mean, I like the Vierling. I have my places that I like to go, you know, I like to go to the Rubiat. I like to go to Lagniappe. I actually really like that little Thai bistro. I heard he's closing. Well, the wife is a doctor and she's going to retire and they're going to move to Thailand.

RM: And then the Rubiat, they closed. But for us, yeah.

CP: Yeah, you know, Vango's. I always have to go to Vango's.

RM: But it's always, I'd say, three quarters of the time, we come there.

CP: Yeah and Paul and Mona (?).

RM: Yeah, they're there.

CP: All my people are here.

RM: And then you pass through—

CP: Yeah and say hi.

RM: There's one story and I'll tell it so it will be on here for the record. But there was a story about how the president of Northern and you can see how things have changed because today the President has to be out and interacting with people and so on. Well, Henry Tape who was president in the 1940s and 50s was totally clueless of interacting with people and so on and I guess the faculty and what not, people would come to the...I don't know, what was that name of that before?

CP: The Hotel Northland.

RM: No, but I mean the pub area.

CP: Oh, I don't know what it was called. It had a name.

RM: I think it was like Santa Fe something.

CP: Oh yes. Yeah, they did have kind of a southwestern thing.

RM: Yeah, the Cactus Lounge or something like that. So anyway, this was you know, the watering spot so they came over here and I guess the governor was here visiting and Northern's president comes over—they got him out of his house to come over and he meets with the governor... doesn't know who the governor. So here he is in the heritage and it's this big social event and so on and so on.

CP: Yeah, that's a good story. We get a lot of politicians here. That's what is kind of fun too. You know, you're in there and all of a sudden you see Mariucci or you'll see Izzo or somebody you know.

RM: You also had a guest here... here's a story for you. That's why I would like to go and put together a little book like that and then put a lot of these stories in there. There was this fellow Kurt Von Schuschnigg and he was the Chancellor of Austria when Hitler took over in about



1938. After the war came to the United States and he taught and I had him as a student. So, at this point in time, you feel very good and so there was earlier years when there was this kind of big...

CP: You know, I guess what I could say is that I'm finally able to be proud of what we've done and you know, that good. I wasn't for so long, I was afraid of it. And now I just think, hard work gets rewarded. I think good work gets rewarded and I'm proud of what we do and I know that we make mistakes but we try to accept them honestly and just move ahead. That's how I feel and I think the Landmark is always going to be here now which is really good. I don't think anybody would let it fail.

RM: Because at one point, I think they wanted to make a parking lot.

CP: Oh yeah, they wanted to rip it right down. It was ready for the wrecking ball.

RM: Now, who's the guy, I forgot to ask earlier, who's the fellow, did you ever interact with him \_\_\_\_ Houg?

CP: You know, no but he was very negative on it. He was very negative on it even after we got going.

RM: Yeah and there'd be these little letters to the editor. I mean if you went back and pulled those letters to the editor saying "it's never going to happen" and so on. And that was kind of a concern. So you've had quite a time and now I think you are an institution of Marquette.

CP: I think you're right. I think we get good kids that want to work here because they've heard about it and you know, we have good employees, we don't have a lot of turnover once they get in, they stay. So, that's good.

RM: And I know that you've had some people that have left and then they come back. You know, they sort of want to come back and work. Okay well, very good. Thank you for the interview.

CP: You're welcome.

RM: This is the history of your time.

END OF INTERVIEW