

DANCING IS PART OF LOCAL HERITAGE

Pine City people love to dance. They have since the first settlers came and the furniture was carried outside to make room for dancing at neighborhood parties. The old folks danced, the children danced and in between dances they ate delicious lunches referred to in old newspapers as "sumptuous repasts".

The Crystal Ballroom was built by Walter Schwartzwald in 1934 on the site where Montgomery Wards is now located. In 1938 a bowling alley was added which proved to be very popular.

In 1945 Schwartzwald ~~eye~~ sold the property to Clem Gramer of Fairfax, Mn. and in 1946, Gramer made interior changes by installing ~~a~~ twenty-four booths which encircled the dance floor. A service window was cut in the east wall to facilitate waitress service in the dance section and the name of the establishment was changed to the "Topic Ballroom".

Eileen Connaker and Sylvia Hudak recalled good times they had dancing at the Topic.

"I particularly remember a big farewell party for all the guys in town that were leaving for World War II," Eileen said.

"In those days, the fellows bought a ticket to get in and the ladies were admitted free. That way, if the fellows didn't have a date there was always good picking at the dances," they laughed.

They also recalled dances at PineCamp pavilion on Cross Lake where the music was always good and the floor excellent.

The Leonard Pangerl's will never forget the confusion created on their wedding day in April, 1950 when the roof on the Topic

Ballroom collapsed and that is where they had planned to have their dance.

"I will always remember 1950 as the year of the big snows," she said. "I was teaching school in the country and had to walk because the plows couldn't get through. A crust had formed on top of the snow and as I walked with my students we were even with the top of the telephone poles."

Their wedding was scheduled for April and a heavy, wet, late spring snow caved in the roof on the Topic Ballroom. The couple wasn't notified until the day before the wedding.

"Leonard spent all day the day of our wedding running around trying to find another place for the dance. The roads were so bad we couldn't get out to PineCamp either. We finally were permitted to have the dance at the Armory although it wasn't used for private parties at that time because of insurance problems," she said.

The "Free Wedding Dance" was an ~~expected~~ event that was taken for granted and many memories are associated with them for they were an important part of good, old fashioned weddings.

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