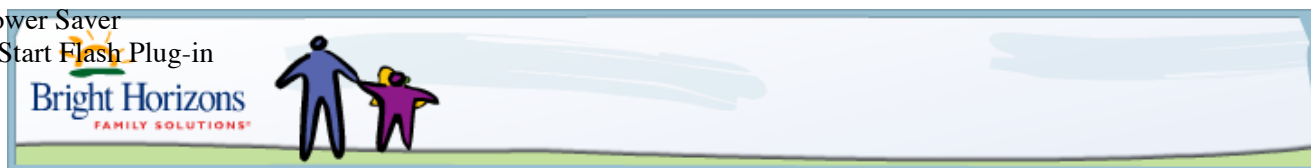


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Lounge act lives on in Winter Park

Dec. 4, 2008

By Jenny Andreasson
Observer Staff

Mark Wayne's fingers tumbled fluidly across the keyboard as his wife, Lorna Lambry, arm outstretched, belted out the chorus to Nat King Cole's "Unforgettable."

Guests sipping cocktails in the low-lit Red Fox Lounge snapped their fingers and slapped their legs to the beat, seemingly enchanted by the duo.

At the table nearest to the husband-wife act, Winter Park resident Curt Stanton, 90, swayed back and forth. He's been following Mark since 1968 and comes to the lounge weekly, he said.

"This is the place," he said. "My second home."

Mark and Lorna have been playing the cozy lounge at the Mt. Vernon Inn in Winter Park for almost 18 years, which Mark said he suspects is a national record. They play from 8:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. Tuesday through Saturday to a mostly standing-room-only crowd, ranging in age from 21 to 90. "It's very eclectic," Lorna said of the audience.

Another regular, Jo Ann Benti, sang along as they played a myriad of tunes ranging from the 40s to the 70s, with holiday songs thrown in.

"This is a lost thing here," she said of lounge acts. "I don't know where else you can find this kind of live music."

Lorna agreed that lounge acts have become unusual, citing that there used to be places where you could learn how to perform in front of a large audience. "Show business has really really changed," she said. "There was no TV when this started."

"You don't get personal interaction," Mark said of watching TV and movies. "That's what you get here."

The Red Fox Lounge opened in 1961. In 1991, hotel general manager Rick Frazee discovered the two performers. He had gone through a boatload of entertainers before they came along. "Entertainers are usually a pain," he said with a laugh. "But I've never had a problem

with them."

The spouses definitely don't seem like they're working, as they laugh and interact with the crowd and each other, Lorna tapping a tambourine against her blue sequin cocktail dress.

Their act is rumored to have inspired a Saturday Night Live skit, "The Culp Family Musical Performances," starring Will Ferrell and Ana Gasteyer. SNL denies the rumor, but Mark and Lorna say the skit's writer, Paula Pell, was a regular at the lounge when she lived in Orlando, and that SNL is scared the duo will take legal action because the show did not get permission to use their personas.

"We wouldn't sue; that would be silly," Lorna said. "I'm flattered she was inspired to do that and I knew she enjoyed us because she came a lot."

"In show business, everything is good," Mark added.

See the lounge act

Mark and Lorna play a medley of old and modern music with a signature style from 8:30 p.m. to 1 a.m. Tuesday through Saturday at the Red Fox Lounge in Winter Park. The lounge is in the Best Western Mount Vernon Inn at 110 S. Orlando Ave. (Highway 17-92) in Winter Park.

Their CDs, "Live at the Red Fox Lounge" and also a Christmas album, are available for purchase at the lounge. A documentary about their life together will be completed next year. Visit MarkandLorna.com for a snippet.

Call 407-647-1166 for more information about the Red Fox.

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