

The Village Inn

By C. Nicki Krom



THE BELLINGHAM HERALD

← Back

It takes a Village; Longtime pub and eatery easy on the wallet

*By C. Nicki Krom March 4, 2004 Publication: Bellingham Herald, The (WA) Page: 15S
Word Count: 855*

By C. Nicki Krom

Village Inn Pub and Eatery isn't the kind of place you would go to impress a date. Instead, its atmosphere calls for friends' laughter, rounds of beer (or whatever your poison) and kicking up your feet after a trying day.

A relaxed attitude and inexpensive grub has kept the Village thriving in Bellingham for 30 years. The drinks are stiff, the pints are chilled, and the food is served hot and tasty.

Ready for a night on the town, a few friends and I started our celebration at the Village. Walking past the 16-table dining room, we found a spot by the bar. Note: Those sensitive to smoke should pick a spot in the dining room, where the cloud is less pervasive.

With pool tables, pull tabs, televisions and video poker, the Village offers entertainment to anyone with spare change. On our Wednesday-night visit, we were serenaded by many a brave soul on the karaoke machine.

While an interesting rendition of Garth Brooks' "The River" was belted out in the background, we turned our attention to the menu.

Beer was our first order of business. Lydia, Misty, Nicole and I agreed on a pitcher of Mac and Jack's African Amber. Understaffing made the wait a bit longer than we hoped. With apologies,

our pitcher finally arrived, frothy and chilled.

The reddish-brown hue and Hefeweizen-like haziness makes Mac and Jack's African Amber an interesting brew, but it's the well-balanced hops and slightly fruity aftertaste that beg for encore pitchers.

After a "cheers" to good times and new friends, we focused on food.

The Village kitchen is open every day at 8 a.m. and typically doesn't close until the demand for pub fare dwindles, usually around 10 p.m. during the week and 11 p.m. on the weekends.

Asking about, we discovered a few Village favorites. For breakfast, diners like to delve into omelets, eggs Benedict (with crab, if you like), chicken-fried steak and two eggs with ham, steak or bacon. Burgers, dips and specials topped the list for lunch patrons.

Every customer we asked replied with the same thought: "The Village is one of the few places where you get more than you paid for."

Eager to test that compliment, we perused the dinner menu. Boasting soups, salads, "huge burgers," sandwiches, pasta, seafood, steak and fried chicken, the Village offers more variety than you'd expect from a pub kitchen.

Though the chicken fettuccine alfredo was tempting, and steak always sounds good to me, I decided to try the French dip with fries.

Lydia opted for the half-BLT with garden salad. The Village baby burger with jo-jo's and cheese worked its way into Nicole's heart. And Misty, who values beer over cuisine (grad students need their spending priorities), opted for the garden salad.

Seeming a bit frazzled by the heavy dinner traffic, our server delivered a second pitcher of Mac and Jack's while we patiently awaited our dinner order. We were five feet from the bar, but the refill took about 20 minutes. Luckily, with four girls at the table, conversation was not in short supply, and we laughed our way through the delay.

At last, and with apologies, our food arrived. It was worth the wait.

Served with a bowl of steaming au jus, my French dip was shockingly generous for the paltry

price. The white stoneware platter was heaped with golden-brown steak fries and a large sandwich.

The spongy roll, well-trimmed roast beef (too often stringy beef makes French dips a messy choice) and hot au jus paired well with fries and a third pint of beer.

Nicole's burger was huge, just as the menu promised. Trying a bite, I found the burger was juicy with melted cheddar cheese, mayonnaise, tomatoes, lettuce, pickles and onions. The only advice: The burger's center was a bit on the pink side, so those jumpy about underdone beef should specify a well-done order. Nicole's jo-jo's were wedges of potato bliss, well-seasoned and piping hot.

Golden toast, lettuce, tomatoes and crisp bacon highlighted Lydia's half BLT. Though I didn't get a bite (I didn't want to horn in on her smaller sandwich), it looked fantastic.

Lydia and Misty were impressed with their garden salads. Elevated from plain iceberg, the salad featured romaine, red bibb lettuce, cucumbers, tomatoes and carrots topped with sweet honey-mustard dressing. The crisp greens were well worth the ultra-reasonable \$2.50.

Empty pitchers and plates led to full and satisfied stomachs. The Village may not be counted on for ambiance or speedy service, but its customer compliments were warranted: We truly got more than we paid for.

I dine on my own dime. The opinions herein are mine alone, not The Bellingham Herald's. E-mail cnickikrom@hotmail.com.

Village Inn Pub and Eatery

Location: 3020 Northwest Ave.

Phone: 734-2490.

Hours: 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., Monday through Thursday; 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. Friday through Sunday.

\$-\$\$

Menu items sampled:

Pitcher of Mac and Jack's African Amber, \$9.50

French dip with fries, \$5.50

Village baby burger with jo-jo's and cheese, \$ 4.75

Half BLT with garden salad, \$3.75

Garden salad, \$2.50.

PETE KENDALL HERALD PHOTO

Mare Boyle (right), co-owner and operator of the Village Inn Pub and Eatery, delivers breakfast to regulars (from left) Misti Moore, Heidi Ault and Annie Wilfong. Waitress Kathleen Poyner follows Boyle with another plate.

Bellingham Herald, The (WA)

Date: March 4, 2004

Page: 15S

Copyright (c) The Bellingham Herald. All rights reserved. Reproduced with the permission of Gannett Co., Inc. by NewsBank, inc.