

THE ROGUE WILD

Morrison's Lodge, Galice Resort have their own unique charm

Both built in 1945, the two lodges just four road miles apart but have distinctly different personalities

By Kathleen Alaks
of the Daily Courier

GALICE — In an area famous for its history of mining, two Rogue River lodges have become modern-day gold mines. The Galice Resort and Morrison's Rogue River Lodge both hold their share of nuggets, treasured by rafters and fishermen, tourists and sight-seers alike.

Both built in 1945, and both with longtime reputations for warm hospitality and good food, the two establishments, just four road miles apart, have distinctly different personalities.

A rustic structure built using logs from the area, Morrison's is the more mannered neighbor. Golden pine paneling, a sturdy rock fireplace and old photos of river guides and guests holding up steelhead give the two-story main lodge a stately, old-world feel.

"It's really just a little gem in this area," says Lowell Pratt, who begins his eighth season managing the lodge this spring.

To the west, the Galice Resort is the more raucous neighbor. A low-slung building built from salvaged lumber, the main resort houses a restaurant, store, gas pumps and boat shed that, come summer, is a bustling Grand Central Station of the river.

"It can get pretty crazy here sometimes, but that's what makes it fun," says resort owner Debbie Thomason, who first moved here in 1981 when her parents bought the place.

Lloyd Morrison, a 1925 Grants Pass High School graduate, river guide and lumber mill worker, got the idea for building a lodge from clients he took fishing out on the river. They suggested he offer his customers lodging in the remote areas he took them, instead of having to return every night to Grants Pass over the narrow, winding dirt Galice road.

In 1945, he and his wife, Ruth, built Morrison's Fishing Resort at the mouth of Taylor Creek. It opened the following year, with Lloyd working as a full-time fishing guide and Ruth earning a reputation for her good food and gracious entertaining.

Over the next 20 years, the place would undergo two name changes — first to Morrison's Fishing Lodge, and finally to Morrison's Rogue River



TIMOTHY BULLARD/Daily Courier

The rustic Morrison's Lodge can accommodate as many as 80 overnight guests.



TIMOTHY BULLARD/Daily Courier

Willie and the Poor Boys entertain folks on the deck at Galice Resort. Food, shuttles and live music are a part of the recreation on this part of the middle Rogue.

Lodge — and pass through two other owners.

In 1964, B.A. and Elaine Hanten bought the lodge, turning it into the destination it is today. It's still owned by members of the Hanten family.

Pratt is the day-to-day, hands-on guy. "We get rafters and fishermen. We get locals who just come out for din-

ner. We get people here for weddings and family reunions," Pratt says. "This place has real history and real flavor. People like it."

The Galice Store, as it was first known, catered to miners and homesteaders needing food and supplies. Lou and Lucille Robertson, who

owned the place from 1947 until 1952 were "the ones to make (it) famous," according to local history writer Claudette Morning Pruitt.

The small, unassuming business changed hands several times over the years, but for the past 32, it's been owned by the Thomason family.

When Gil and Mary Lou Thomason bought the Galice Store in 1981, it "was a pokey little business," serving limited breakfasts and lunches at five inside tables and renting out six rafts.

Now the Galice Resort has 85 rafts, 30 inflatable kayaks and 18 hard-shell kayaks for rent and the restaurant is open seven days a week.

"It's been quite a ride," says Debbie Thomason, who bought the business from her parents in 1993.

At Morrison's, the lodge has a rustic, folksy charm, with a rock fireplace, big picture windows and outdoor back deck overlooking a bend in the river. At full capacity, the lodge can accommodate 80 overnight guests and employs as many as 40 staff members.

There are four guest rooms upstairs in the main lodge, nine riverview cabins with fireplaces, two suites on Taylor Creek and four Tuck-a-Way cottages.

"And we're adding two more units this year," Pratt says. "We're turning the caretaker's unit into lodging."

The dining room can seat up to 80. The kitchen also turns out meals for guests taking rafting or fishing trips and for Hellgate Jetboat tours.

"Elaine Hanten was a home-ec major and her specialty was cooking," Pratt says. "She left a legacy of delicious recipes and we still use some today."

The lodge also organizes whitewater and daylong raft trips and hooks up guests with fishing guides.

"We work with an array of guides and fishing styles and I try to match them up the best we can," Pratt says.



"It's a fun business to be in. We get people coming back year after year. I like to be part of people's memories."

Debbie Thomason
owner, Galice Resort

At Galice, the "store" remains small, selling some groceries, cold drinks, fishing and rafting equipment and T-shirts. The original fireplace still stands: "Rumor has it that's the only thing that holds this building together," Thomason jokes.

The cafe is now a restaurant with a full bar and a menu that includes burgers named for different spots on the river.

The 4,000-square-foot outdoor deck has wireless charging stations and live music on Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays during the summer season.

Next to the store is the boat shed, where the rafting equipment is stored and rented.

"Whether it's do-it-yourself trips or guided trips, we can accommodate 300 rafters a day," Thomason says. The resort employs as many as 80 during the summer.

Resort lodging, which is out of sight on the hillside property across the road from the store, includes four cabins, a lodge, bunkhouse and riverview home.

"It's a fun business to be in," Thomason says. "We get people coming back year after year. I like to be part of people's memories."

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