

Rembrandt Ballfield Food Stand Boss Hanging It Up

-- From the Storm Lake Times, July 19, 2008

Janet Haraldson, 80, Will Miss Stuffing Spuds

by Joe Cullen

Janet Haraldson of Rembrandt is retiring after 20 years at the George Engebretson Field concession stand in Rembrandt.

"I really had a feeling for it," Haraldson said. "I hated like the dickens to back off, but the old body tells you just to quit some stuff."

Haraldson is 80 years old. For 20 years she served the concession stand every game. She will leave the concession stand once everything is packed up, which won't be too long, she said. The baseball season in Rembrandt this summer is over.

Haraldson's stand got a name on July 4. Instead of the Rembrandt concession stand, the stand is called The Home Plate. Haraldson was presented with a plaque with "The Home Plate" imprinted, which will hang on her stand.

"It was a really nice gesture," said Haraldson. "It's good to have a name for it."

The hottest selling item at the concession stand was her baked potato. A potato with sour cream and bacon bits costs \$1.25. A deluxe potato costs \$2.50. Included in the deluxe potato are cheese, onions and a choice of meat, either a hot dog, polish sausage or taco meat.

"It's really popular," Haraldson said. "We sell out every night."

Haraldson got the idea for the baked potato from her daughter Valerie who coached girls softball in Rembrandt at the time. Valerie suggested selling a special other than hot dogs, such as a baked potato. Her mom took her up on her offer and started the baked potatoes in 1989.

The concession stand serves Little League players. Janet wanted to keep her prices cheap so all kids and consumers could get food and drink.

"They put their money on the table and they said, 'What can I get for 25 cents?' Haraldson said. "'What can I get for two dimes and a nickel?'"

Prices had to be raised this year on the deluxe potato because of rising food prices and costs of living. Originally, her deluxe potato was \$2. She kept the price of the regular potato the same.

"A family of four can eat for \$10," Haraldson said. "They could have a deluxe potato and a small pop besides. This year they can just have the potato and the pop."

Janet's husband is Ron Haraldson, CEO of the Rembrandt bank. She has four kids, Vaughan, Jim, Valerie and David. Valerie's husband, Rolf Mosbo, farms. All four kids work at the bank. Janet works as a part-time teller.

Concessions for the Rembrandt baseball field started in 1988, the year her son Vaughan acquired the land for George Engebretson field. Before then, town teams and Little League played at the high school field.

Haraldson volunteered to serve food with her friend Jane Larson. At first no concession stand existed. Sometimes Jane Larson and Haraldson did concessions in the community room of the apartment complex across the street from the field.

Vaughan came up with the idea of the concession stand and the field. He saw trash all around a lot coming into Rembrandt from the north and decided to clean the place up. Janet got a concession stand in 1992. The concession stand building was originally Grace Jensen's antique building near Rembrandt

The baked potato and ice cream are Haraldson's favorites at the concession stand. She served hard ice cream because she liked it better than the soft kind.

The concession stand made over \$120,000 in gross income in the 20 years it existed. The profit was about \$50,000.

"That profit sustained that ballfield," said Ron. "She never took a penny out of that."

Four years ago Haraldson stopped batting in annual pickup games on July 4. She has batted in nearly every pickup game since 1988. She enjoyed playing softball on and off.

When Janet's daughter Valerie went to state in 1970, Janet and players including former Rembrandt teachers Bonnie Rath, Bonnie Waldstein and Jan Morse compiled a pickup baseball team. Rath lives in Fremont, Neb.

The pickup team was called the Rembrandt softball team. Janet played first base. They beat Linn Grove, Truesdale and Sioux Rapids to go 3-0. In the last game the Rembrandt high school softball team beat the pickup team.

"Apparently, I wasn't as bad as some of 'em," Janet said. "I was in it strictly for the fun, as were all of us."