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## Deleta owners to retire in August, business up for sale now

By Shelbie Harris sharris@journalnet.com 20 hrs ago



Art and Jackie Foulger display historical posters for the Deleta Ball Room. The Foulgers recently announced an August retirement and plans to sell the popular Pocatello skating rink.

Kyle Riley/For the Journal



POCATELLO — After remaining a family business for about eight decades, the Deleta Skating & Family Fun Center will soon change hands.

Deleta has been operated by the same family for five generations, but the current owners, Art and Jackie Foulger, are preparing to hang up the skates for good after about 30 years and retire.

The couple told the Idaho State Journal on Wednesday that they will continue to own the historic building at 520 Yellowstone Avenue and are currently entertaining offers for a buyer to purchase the skating rink business.

“My wife and I are going to retire in August,” Art said. “The rink is going to be up for sale and we hope that there is someone in the community out there that is interested in continuing the tradition of Deleta and keep the business running.”

Art says he and his wife plan to retire around the first week of August and if a sale has not quite materialized by then, Deleta will temporarily close.

The history of the Deleta skating rink is as storied as the countless memories families and local youth have made over the many years the business has graced the Gate City.

Art says the rink got its name from a combination of the names of his wife’s grandparents, Dell and Leta Holland. The building that houses the rink was first built in Montpelier sometime in the 1930s, Art says, adding that when Pocatello joined the effort of constructing materials and supplies for World War II in the 1940’s the building was actually dismantled and transported to its permanent home on Yellowstone Avenue.

“In the ‘40s during wartime all the activity was happening here in Pocatello and not much was going on in Montpelier, so Dell Holland actually dismantled that building stick-by-stick so to speak and labeled everything before rebuilding it here in Pocatello.”

Art added, “Dell’s daughter, Virginia McCloskey, also my wife’s mother, used to tell a story about how when they were traveling with the building’s trusses the trailer overturned near Inkom and as a young child she was left there to watch the trusses while Dell went to go get help loading them back up.”

Deleta wasn’t always a skating rink, however. It was first a dance hall that actually attracted some world-renowned guests over the years, Art said. The biggest name to have performed at the Deleta dance hall was none other than Louis Armstrong, Art said.

A poster advertising the legendary jazz performer at Deleta won a blue ribbon at the Eastern Idaho State Fair a few years ago.

As interest in dancing waned, Deleta eventually began alternating between dancing and skating nights — even setting up a ring occasionally for pro wrestling matches. The owners eventually leased the building and moved to Arizona. After that, Deleta had incarnations as a bar, an Army surplus store and a grocery store.

“The Crystal Ship was the name of the bar as some of our older folks in town may remember,” Art said. “But when Jackie’s dad retired from the Air Force in the early ‘70s they decided to move back to Pocatello and convert this old building back into a roller skating rink again and it’s been that way ever since.”

It’s also undergone a few expansions. Today, Deleta offers a snack bar, a play area, Lazer Tag and an arcade in addition to the rink.

Art credited McCloskey for being heavily invested in building Deleta into what it is today.

“As important as Dell and Leta were, Virginia’s vision was amazing,” he said. “She was a force of nature. Anyone who knew her, knew that. So many of the traditions and the things that we do came from her.”

Virginia was instrumental in coordinating a partnership between Pocatello-Chubbuck School District 25 in the 1970s, said Art, adding that back then the program was called community education and was intertwined with an actual district department.

When the community education department was disbanded years later, Art segued the existing infrastructure of the program into his After School skate program.

Foulger said over a dozen elementary schools participate in his After School Skate program, including several from District 25, the Pocatello Community Charter School and one school on the Fort Hall Indian Reservation. Students are required to bring permission slips and get reduced, \$4 admission — and free admission is offered to any parents who wish to participate.

Between 800 and 1,200 children participate in the program each month during the school year. Foulger said it’s worked out well both for his business and for the community though it remains unclear whether a similar program will continue under whomever becomes the next owner of Deleta.

Art says anyone who is interested in keeping the Deleta skating rink alive and well in the Gate City community is encouraged to contact the business at 208-233-0431.

“Thank you very much to those who have supported us over the years. We really appreciate everything this community has done for us, especially post-COVID. The relationships we have formed over the decades are just fantastic and will be memories that we cherish forever.”



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