



Caraway Ford Gonzales
405 E. Sarah DeWitt • Gonzales, TX 78629 • 830-672-9646

CONTACT THE EDITOR

The Alcalde: Another chapter begins for Gonzales landmark

By Juliana Mathews/Special to The Cannon

Stay at The Alcalde and you could be sleeping in the same room as Elvis once slept. Or even Bonnie and Clyde.

There has been a hotel at the 614 St. Paul St. location for almost a century, and the name hasn't changed: It's always been The Alcalde. The hotel has seen many changes over the years, many operators, and more than a few famous guests.

The Alcalde's newest owners are ramping up for a July 1 opening as a restored and historic hotel. The owners, Rick and Kara Green, are preserving as much as possible of the old hotel, such as an old phone booth in the lobby and the fancy tin ceiling tiles. They're adding a high-end grill, and outdoor dining patio, and they've put a new sidewalk out front.

Ninety Years a Hotel

Aref Droupy was a tailor in Beirut when he and his wife, Helena, emigrated to Gonzales in 1909. In 1925, Aref and Helena bought the property where The Alcalde now sits for a mere \$4,150. For another \$40,000, they built and furnished the 3-story, 40-room hotel. But, according to their granddaughter Deidra Droupy Voigt, the project went over budget and cost another ten-thousand dollars.

As one of the few businesses in town able to proclaim "hot and cold running water", the Droupy's had a tough time keeping the sinks and toilets in place. Before the doors and windows were installed securing the premises against weather and thieves, the new sinks and toilets would be stolen at night.

That is, until the Droupy children were given "sentry duty". The Droupy's had seven children: Joe, Emma, Friedman, Fred, Roger, Rosalle, and America. It surely wasn't their intention to start a small workforce, but with seven children, that's what they had. Until construction progressed to a point where they could secure the building, the Droupy children were given a two-hour shift and a hand gun to deter any would-be plumbing thieves.

Many Hands

When it initially opened for business in the spring of 1926, Mr. and Mrs. J.S. Hood were the first to lease and run the hotel, and did so for about a year. The Thayers leased and ran it for a year after the Hoods. Mr. Wruck ran the business until the 1930's, the longest of anyone to date. Specific information about who ran the hotel and when is a bit vague after that.

It wasn't until sometime in the 1930's when the Droupy family took over the business.

Deidra said, "From what I remember the restaurant portion of the building was closed for a while; I believe my Grandmother, Helen S. Droupy, and the kids still at home ran the hotel for a time.

They contracted-out each portion of the business (restaurant and hotel) is what I can understand to different people or families over the years. This period is unclear and no one ever could remember for sure the sequence of events for the many contractors.

"The hotel operation was successful for Mrs. Droupy, so she decided to open the restaurant for business. Sometime before the war ended she sent \$40 and a grocery list across the street to Bubba Menking's family's grocery store. I am not sure the exact building it was located in, however Mr. Menking used to laugh and tell me he, 'carried bags of groceries across the street all afternoon so Mrs. Droupy could open the restaurant for business again!' It was their biggest order ever."

Elvis Slept Here

Believe it or not, Elvis came to Gonzales – twice. The first time he came through, he slept at The Alcalde. He and his manager were passing through town on their way to the Louisiana Hayride in Shreveport, LA and needed somewhere to sleep for a few hours before hitting the road again.

Clarence Vyvjala saw the new convertible Oldsmobile parked in front of the hotel that night. As he was admiring the car, Elvis and his manager came out of the hotel and put their luggage in the trunk. Vyvjala told them it was the prettiest car he'd ever seen. Elvis introduced himself and said he was going to do a gig in Gonzales in the summer.

It's unclear if Elvis stayed the night at the hotel when he returned in August of 1955 for the concert at Independence Park. There are some reports he was seen 'making out in the backseat' of that shiny new car right after the concert. Perhaps he didn't need a room that night.

Bonnie and Clyde also stayed at the Alcalde in the 1930's. Deidra recounts her father's story, "My father remembered when it was. A lady came in requesting to see a room. People asked to see rooms before renting in those days. My father remembered her because single women didn't rent rooms back then. She requested to see room 207. After seeing it, she said she'd take it. Odd for the times, she did the whole transaction herself.

"A few hours later, a man came in and asked to see room 208. It just happened to adjoin to 207. They didn't spend the night, but stayed a few hours.

"Knowing Bonnie and Clyde were in the area, the Sheriff had been searching all the local hotels and boarding houses. Then he came to the Alcalde.

"Dad said, 'I think those are the two people in 207 and 208.' When they went to check, the rooms were empty. They think Bonnie and Clyde jumped out the window and went down the fire escape."

Deidra added, "Many famous silent movie stars stayed there, too. They were helping promote the new theater in town."

Fred Droupy, Deidra's father, took over the hotel after the war.

Deidra said, "My Dad, Fred Droupy, was a well-respected cook in the Navy during the war. He used to laugh and tell me about when they would send him to cook special menus when secluded meetings were held with several Admirals and upper-rank officers. They would always request him to cook for their meetings and often recognized and personally thanked him for the delicious meal. I believe he was the only one of his siblings to have gone into the military service." Fred ran it until his passing in 1977.

Then Deidra took over the hotel from 1978-98. In 1982 the hotel first got air-conditioning. Deidra ran the coffee shop – people still fondly remember her pancakes. She said, "It was the grill. I tried, but I just can't make them the same way at home." Deidra closed the hotel in 1998.

Deidra said, "When asked why I closed the Alcalde, [I tell people] 'I made a mid-life decision before it became a mid-life crisis.'

Around 2004 Richard Green, Sr., bought it from Deidra. He used it for office space for a while, and then sold it to Lucas Energy in 2004.

Richard's son, Rick Jr., and Rick's wife Kara bought the hotel from Lucas Energy in 2013.



The Alcalde Hotel circa 1927.
Courtesy of Gonzales County
Historical Commission.



They didn't register under their own names, but Bonnie and Clyde (above) are believed to be the two people who took rooms at the Alcalde but mysteriously disappeared as law officers closed in one night in the 1930s.



Elvis Presley (below) did sign his name to the register during a one-night stopover in Gonzales in the early 1950s.