



The Havana Cafe recently moved into a new steel building (far right) and is now called The Farmer's Inn.

Fargo Forum Photo

"YOU DON'T KNOW HOW VITAL A CAFE IS UNTIL YOU DON'T HAVE ONE"

By Bob Lund

Community Spirit Operates Small Town's Only Cafe

"There's no unemployment in this town. If you're out of a job, you can work here!" So says Murdean Gulsvig of the Farmers Inn, the cafe that's run by and for the community of Havana, N. Dak. (population 148).

The sign in the cafe is loaded with comments, including, "First one to complain works tomorrow."

Gulsvig, a farmer, says the cooks tried to get him to complain by baking Saran wrap into his pancake.

Gulsvig is on the cafe's board. So is Gordon Phillips, owner of an oil company, who's waiting on tables. "Gordon is your waitress today," one of his customers tells another man. Phillips grins and takes his order.

"Wait! We need more coffee over here!" someone yells. Retired farmer and construction worker Walter Barbknecht hustles over with a pot of coffee.

The Farmers Inn is in a new 32 by 56 ft. steel building. Thanks to community funding and volunteer labor, construction began last September and it opened Jan. 13.

It replaced the old cafe building that was -- well, Havana folks tend to both moan and chuckle over it. "One wall goes this way and one wall goes that way," according to Brummond. "It was

one of the first buildings in town," Barbknecht says. "It's a sick building."

But it was better than nothing. It had been the privately-owned Havana Cafe, but it was shut down for a few years.

Then the Havana Community Club swung into action. "We've got a great Community Club," Barbknecht says. "They got to wondering what they could do to improve the town. Opening the cafe was the No. 1 priority in everyone's mind."

With volunteer help and money from the Community Club, the cafe reopened just before Christmas in 1984. "When we first started out, it was pretty crude," Barbknecht says. "We had a pretty small menu the first day. But the cafe took off and it turned a meager profit from Day 1. We weren't scooping the money in by gobs, but we were making a little."

The community had picked up some remodeling experience, along with self-confidence, when it earlier had overhauled its civic center. Now, with the tiny cafe in the run-down building doing all right, Havana began to think big again. It decided to construct a building for the cafe.

"Then we got into big-time stuff," Barbknecht says. "We got a board."

The board ran the show, the Havana Development Corp. sold \$100 shares and

volunteers constructed the building. Much of the kitchen equipment was salvaged from the closed Havana school. Only the framework required hired construction workers.

Now the cafe is humming six days a week, and on Sundays, too, if someone feels like opening up and serving coffee to the congregation.

Board member Jack Brummond, Bev's husband, says the Community Club sponsors the cafe. "We got a board of six, seven guys who meet every Wednesday and make all the hairy decisions," he says.

Wives of the board members, who are kiddingly called the Auxiliary, make up a monthly schedule listing the cooks for each day along with the meat of the day, such as roast beef, ham or torsk. "The cooks who work that day can do anything else they want -- salads, desserts, anything," Bev says. The cafe serves only breakfast and noon meals -- no suppers.

From 30 to 40 volunteers man the kitchen and wait on tables, receiving only meals for their efforts. "There are people working here who you never dream would do it," Jack Brummond says. "But they want the place to go, and they enjoy doing it, too. You don't realize how important a cafe is to a com-

munity until you don't have one. There's no place to meet."

Still, there were some who thought that building a cafe and running a sidewalk in front of it, in what was seen as a "dead town," was like "putting in a cemetery."

"Well, if they bury us," Phillips likes to tell folks, "they'll have to bury us face down, or we'll dig our way out."

Gulsvig admits that "When a couple of guys suggested opening the cafe, I thought they were out of their tree. But they were right. This place really pulls the community together."

"These small towns -- it's a struggle to make it," Brummond laments. "But we haven't lost our pride."

"Wait! More coffee!" someone yells. "Bev, you got more meatloaf?" someone asks.

The Farmers Inn is in high gear.

And on the bulletin board, Havana's Mayor Orville Bergh has posted a semi-official notice. It proclaims the parking space in front of the cafe as his. Anybody parking there, the notice says, must buy coffee for His Honor.

(Excerpted with permission from The Fargo Forum)

EACH MACHINE TAKES 2,000 TO 3,000 HRS. TO COMPLETE

He Builds Scale Model Tractors As A Hobby

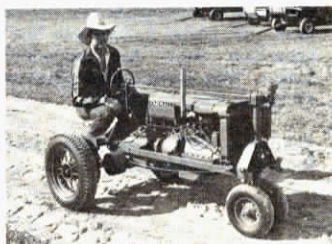
"Each one takes 2,000 to 3,000 hrs. to build," says George Erbe, Monona, Iowa, who builds scale model tractors, threshers and semi-trucks as a hobby.

So far, Erbe's built 11 mini machines -- including 10 tractors and one thresher -- and he's just begun work on a 3/8 scale model semi truck and trailer. They're built to exact scale with parts machined to exact specifications so that they're fully operational.

Machines built include a 9/16th

scale 1930 McCormick Deering 15-30, a 1/2 scale F-20 1935 Farmall, a 15-30 Townsend, a 1/2 scale Rumely Oil Pull, a 1/2 scale Waterloo Boy, and a 1/3 scale Case Thresher. Erbe shows his machines at antique power shows throughout the Midwest.

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, George Erbe, Box 402, Monona, Iowa 52159 (ph 319 539-2649).



The 10 operating scale model tractors Erbe has built include an F-20 Farmall, 15-30 Townsend, a 15-30 McCormick Deering, and a 16-30 Oil Pull.