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## Betty and the Titlow

Betty Rogers Karwatske is a Uniontown native who is celebrating her 30<sup>th</sup> work anniversary at the Titlow Tavern & Grille this year. At the age of 18 she waited tables for Charlie May, but she was already familiar with the historic hotel. When Betty was 16 years old her parents went through a divorce. "Mom wanted to work. She was going by the Titlow one day and stopped in. She knew nothing about bar tending. Charlie May and Mom hit it off and he gave her a job. That was in the early 1970's. She was here at least 25 years." It was a great hire.

Charlie gave them a suite overlooking Main Street where they resided for a year and a half. Betty remembers, "I could never sleep there. I had nightmares. Mom always said that there was nothing in the room, but I would hear knocking on the door when there was nobody there. People would be walking around and talking on the balcony, but I could not see them. I practically lived at my friends house because I couldn't be in that room. I always had an awful feeling there was someone watching me. One day around 4 o'clock in the afternoon I was watching TV. I could see something out of the corner of my eye but didn't want to look. I finally turned and saw a hand on the closet door, opening it. It was all wrinkled up. It looked like a woman's hand. I couldn't get out of there fast enough.

"I left the doors open, ran downstairs, and told my mother, 'That's it, I am out of here.' "A lot of people believe and some don't. But it was broad daylight. I stayed at my friends house until we got an apartment."

In 1920, Maude Powell, internationally famous violinist, died of a heart attack in that room, preparing for a concert at the Penn Theater. She was 52 years old.

Nonetheless, Betty soon found herself behind the Titlow Hotel bar. "They just kind of stuck me back there," she smiled. "I knew what a vodka and orange juice was, but that was about all. Someone asked for a Jack Daniels and I said, 'What?' I had no idea. I thought I would never get the hang of it. I can't believe I caught onto it," she laughed.

Betty has experienced many an era at the Titlow. The early days of the welfare hotel, the Main Street Deli, Minnie's Main Street Cafe, the Highland House rock and roll days, WDVE Morning Shows and all, and the Titlow Tavern & Grille of today. "Losing Charlie (May) was hard. He was a wonderful person. People still say how much they miss him. Everyday when he came in, no matter if it was raining or snowing or what, he would say, 'It's a beautiful day out there Little Girl, a beautiful day.'"

Betty is not a drinker, and when I asked her if she loves her career, she said, "Yes, there is always something happening, never a dull moment. There is always someone hilarious. You do have to be patient, be a shrink, a mother, a babysitter, but if you can pay people no mind it is a fun career. You meet a lot of nice people, hear thousands of stories, make good money, and get plenty of exercise. The Mays have been wonderful to me."

Betty did confess that she refused to do her job just once. Jeff needed fresh towels taken to the room where she saw the hand. She tried, but could not go down that hall. "Many people have had experiences here. Alan (Manager) and I both feel someone following right behind us when we walk down the hall from the kitchen at closing time. It makes the hair on the back of your neck stand up. Recently, a young lady saw an old lady sitting at the lobby desk, then she was gone."

Betty is proud of the way Jeff D'Maio has been remodeling the upstairs again. "The apartments are gorgeous. But I will still not go down that hall."

One of Betty's fondest memories through three decades is of Charlie feeding the homeless men who hung out in the old graveyard behind the hotel. "It's not quite the same without him. There is an emptiness. He was something," she smiled.

Charlie May's portrait hangs in the Titlow Grille dining room. Under it is a light that the staff turns off each night. Many say when they turn around, it is on again.