

# BAY VIEWS

WITH A SIDE ORDER OF HISTORY

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Just beyond the large windows of the Colonnade restaurant, skies over Tampa Bay slowly turn from blue to deep pink. Couples cozy up in corner booths, sipping peach daiquiris and eating blueberry muffins. Moms and dads order Captains Platters for the entire family to share while the kids color cartoon fish—far too busy to notice one of the best views in South Tampa.



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The view has changed quite a bit over the Colonnade's 73-year-old history, and the restaurant has kept up with South Tampa's evolution. Built on a white sandy beach before Bayshore Boulevard's defining sidewalk and row of mansions and condos even existed, the Colonnade once stood as a curbside burger joint in the middle of nowhere. Serving fries and Cokes with olives to Plant High School kids during the "cruising" age, the restaurant grew up with those teens to what it is now: a grouper lover's paradise, complete with rich history, familiar faces and that great view of the Bay.

The only thing that hasn't changed much is the old oak tree out front. It was there the day Lois (known as "Mamie" to her family) and Richard Whiteside opened the restaurant in 1935, on the lot where their two sons once sold lemonade. It has witnessed countless teenage couples canoodling in the backseats of convertibles beneath its outstretched branches. And more than once, it's been the site of romantic proposals in the moonlight.

Lois Whiteside had good reason to open her restaurant in the middle of the depression: she wanted to give her sons, Dick and Jack, a reason to stay close to home. But eventually, Jack joined the military and went off to San Francisco during World War II. While there, he became inspired by the west coast's fresh



Owner Jack "Smokey" Whiteside, and wife Mary Ann, enjoy lunch in the Colonnade's Ship Wreck Lounge.

seafood restaurants—so much so that when he returned to Tampa, the Whitesides added fish sandwiches to the Colonnade's menu.

Over time, Lois' grandsons Jack "Smokey" and Dickey Whiteside took over the family business. They had both earned restaurant management degrees from Florida State University, but their history at the restaurant has included taking on virtually every job—even the dirtiest. "If you think you're too good to be the dishwasher, you don't deserve to own a restaurant," says Smokey. Nowadays you can likely find Smokey inside the Colonnade's

Shipwreck Lounge, having lunch with his wife at their favorite corner booth.

Tradition is strong at this restaurant, and many employees have remained loyal for decades. Old black and white photos and Whiteside family fishing certificates hang from the walls. The key lime and coconut cream pies served daily are Lois' original recipes. Year after year, Plant High graduates return to their stomping grounds for reunions. And the old curbside burger joint-turned seafood restaurant also attracts today's school kids. They show up in tuxedos and formals on prom night, exchanging corsages and boutonnieres under the old oak tree.

With all this history, some of it has been lost in translation over the last 73 years, and every family member seems to tell the Colonnade's story a little differently. "You never think you're going to be around this long, so you don't know to save the pictures or write down the history," says Smokey's wife, Mary Anne Whiteside.

This is just another part of the Colonnade's charm. ■



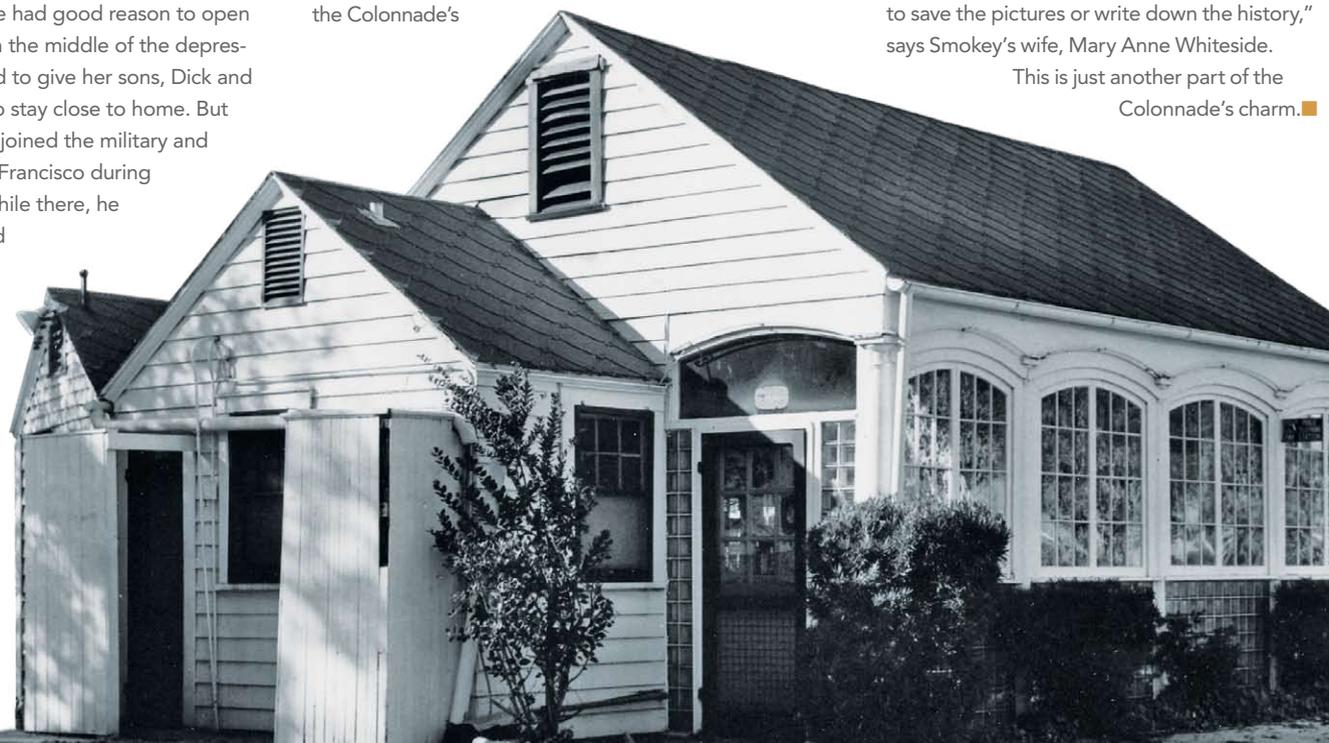
## HOUSE OF FRESH GROUPEL

When folks come to Florida, they think seafood. They think Grouper. Lucky for them (and for us), the flaky fish is mild enough to allow for creativity. And the Colonnade's chef, Jeff Gurney, takes advantage of it. With regular grouper specials, here are the restaurant's mainstays:

- Grouper Piccata
- Grouper Rockefeller
- Grouper Russian
- Grouper Oscar
- Charbroiled Grouper
- Grouper broiled in lemon butter
- Golden fried Grouper
- Crunchy fried Grouper in an almond and corn flake coating

Man, that's a whole lotta grouper!

The original Colonnade, shown here, was started in 1935. ▶



# LET'S DISH

IT'S A LITTLE BEFORE 11AM ON MONDAY, AND THE SERVERS AT THE COLONNADE ARE WRAPPING SILVER AND LAUGHING AT INSIDE JOKES. BEFORE THE DAILY LUNCH RUSH BEGINS, AND AFTER FINISHING THE LAST OF WAY TOO MANY PINEAPPLE MUFFINS, WE TAKE A BREAK TO SIT DOWN WITH THE COLONNADE'S FINEST.

**STM:** How many years have you been working here?  
**Flo:** 32, **Jeff:** 26, **Sandi:** 14, **Jayne:** 10, **Oscar:** 2

**STM:** What's your favorite dish?  
**Sandi:** The Seaside Cobb.  
**Oscar:** I like the Grouper Oscar.  
**Sandi:** Gee, I wonder why?  
**Oscar:** I don't know; it's the best dish. Very, very good.  
**Jayne:** They have the best fried shrimp in Tampa.  
**Jeff:** Probably the seafood pasta.

**STM:** How many muffins do you think ya'll have eaten since you've worked here?  
**Jeff:** Well, the number's gone up recently since I've brought in the new ones...they can't stop eating them.  
**Sandi:** We can't serve them if we don't know what they taste like!  
**Jeff:** Halloween, or the month of November, we had pumpkin spice. Delicious.  
**Jayne:** And the cranberry walnut, that's my favorite. (Sandi and Jeff agree)  
**Jayne:** But we only have those on occasion; the blueberry and corn are staples and the other ones are kind of a special muffin of the day.

**STM:** What makes you guys stay here?  
 You've been here forever!  
**Jayne:** It's the longest I've ever had a job in my life! Once you start you can never leave!  
**Jeff:** And look at the view...

**Sandi:** Yeah, you get to watch half-naked guys running down the street! (All laugh)  
**Flo:** It's a nice place to work. They've been very good to me, and the food's good.  
**Jeff:** And you don't have to be ashamed of what you're serving, that's for sure.

**STM:** What's the most popular dish?  
**Oscar:** People love the Captains Platter.  
**Me:** Do people ever finish that?  
**All:** No, it's a lot of food!

**Oscar:** The same as the seafood pasta—they never finish it.  
**Jayne:** We used to have a seafood marinara...it was in this huge mixing bowl. We had to put a mixing spoon in it cause a regular spoon would just get lost in the bottom.



These ladies are no longer working at the Colonnade.



**STM:** Why the big portions?  
**Jeff:** Just to make people talk.

**STM:** Really?  
**Jeff:** (Nods) It's what you want. You want to make people talk...

**STM:** Do you guys eat the desserts?  
**Jayne:** I tell everybody it's the best key lime pie in Florida. It's creamy and yet tart. I've never cared for key lime pie anywhere until I worked here.  
**Oscar:** The coconut cream pie too.

**STM:** Jeff, do you come up with that too?  
**Jeff:** Those have been there before I was. I worked here with Allie (she worked at the Colonnade for 50 years and Lois taught her how to bake) and people wonder how I'm able to...I'm from the north but I cook like an old southern boy. Allie taught me everything. Old school. (Laughs)

**STM:** Do you guys eat the pie every week?  
**Sandi:** No, I can't. I'd have to buy bigger clothes.  
**Jayne:** You don't see a lot of very thin servers here. ■

▼ (From left) Longtime Colonnade veteran Flo, Jayne, chef Jeff Gurney, Sandi, Oscar, and STM's very own Jennifer Stevens.



## THE SWEET STUFF

In the old days, bakers didn't have formal recipes. They didn't measure out ingredients. True bakers eyeballed the sugar and flour—and whatever else they decided to add to their goodies. Lois Whiteside was no different. And since it's her original recipe that's been passed down throughout the years, the Colonnade doesn't have its famous key lime pie recipe to share with us. And if they did, they'd have to kill us.

So for you Floridians with a missing taste bud, or readers who are just not fans of the creamy, tart deliciousness that is key lime pie, we've decided to share with you a few more Colonnade classics if you've saved the room:

- Coconut Cream Pie (Also famous around these parts)
- Chocolate Bourbon Pecan Pie
- Cheesecake with fresh Florida strawberries
- Strawberry Shortcake ala Mode with whipped cream