

SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

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At Fish House Vera Cruz, cook Jose Luis Rodriguez prepared a dish. *Charlie Neuman / Union-Tribune*

SAN MARCOS

Landmark Restaurant Row to celebrate 30th anniversary

By Linda Lou, STAFF WRITER

Thirty years ago, an astute businessman had a vision of turning land surrounded by chicken ranches into a place known for fine dining, set in a place reminiscent of bygone California.

Jim Eubank's Old California Restaurant Row on San Marcos Boulevard became wildly successful as a North County dining destination. People "made the pilgrimage" from cities throughout the region be-

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Project took about 15 years to complete

cause of the variety of restaurants, City Manager Paul Malone said.

"It was the largest aggregation of restaurants" in the area, he said.

Eubank died in 2004. His sons, Jerry and Bob, and his widow, Vera, still own the property.

To celebrate the 30th anniversary of the San Marcos landmark, 16 of the 18 dining places in Restaurant Row will participate in the center's first Restaurant Week by offering fixed-price menus tomorrow through Sept. 28. Dinners will range from \$10 to \$30.

Malone said Jim Eubank was

single-minded in completing his vision three decades ago, salvaging lumber and other construction materials from pier and railroad demolition projects and storing them on site. He could be found doing sandblasting or running forklifts on the property.

Jerry Eubank, 57, said his father wanted to create a unique environment that would evoke character and history, not just stucco buildings in a strip mall. That's why visitors can find old beams, tiles from Mexico, fountains, flowers and trees on the 20 acres, said Jerry Eubank, who lives in Hawaii.

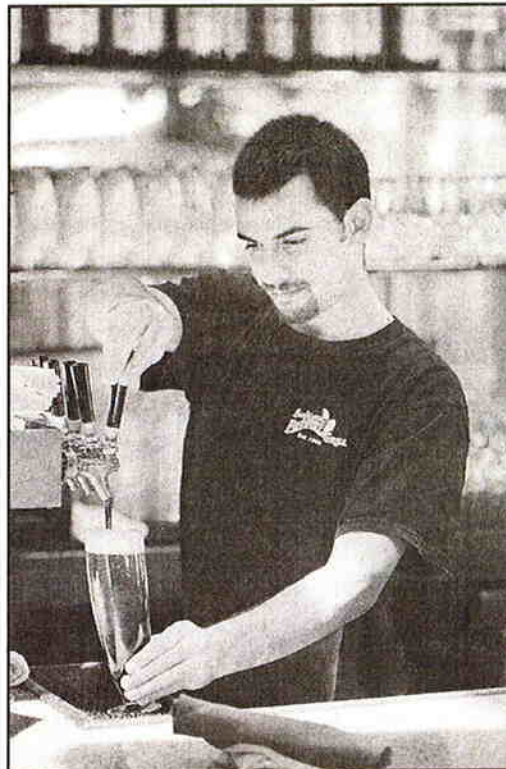
The first restaurant opened in 1978 and was called Gentlemen's Choice, a prime rib and steak place, said Bob Eubank, 61, a Leucadia resident.

People praised Gentlemen's Choice, he said, but by the time the fourth business opened, people began to say his father was nuts because there were too many of them.

The restaurants thrived, however, continuing to pull people from as far away as Fallbrook and Rancho Bernardo, he said.

It took about 15 years for Restaurant Row to be completed, Jerry Eubank said. At one point, Bob and Jerry each owned a restaurant there.

Their father worked hard to get a movie theater built next door instead of at another proposed location, to offer people a dinner-and-a-movie combo,



Bartender Jon Wood poured a glass of beer for a customer at the San Marcos Brewery & Grill. *Charlie Neuman / Union-Tribune*

DETAILS

Restaurant Week

When: Tomorrow through Sept. 28

Where: Old California Restaurant Row, 1020 San Marcos Blvd.

Cost: \$10 to \$30 fixed-price menus.

Restaurants: Sixteen restaurants are participating, with cuisine including Asian, Mexican, Italian and American. The menus typically include an appetizer, entree and dessert. Reservations required.

Information: oldcalrestaurantrow.com

Bob Eubank said.

In the past few years, landscaping improvements have been made along the property bordering San Marcos Boulevard, and the center plans to

add more flowers, trees and walkways. Fire pits are also in the works.

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