**Up Front**

**Neighborhood Stories**

By Bette McDevitt

**Allegheny Country Club's Josie and Dick Arrigo**

I knew I was in good company when I entered the back door of Allegheny Country Club with Josie and Dick Arrigo. There were warm greetings all around the kitchen. The butcher, Joe Stromei, put down his knife, shook my hand, and said, “I’m Joe, and I’m Italian. We lost everything… the war, the Pope—first we have a Polish Pope, now a German. What are you gonna do?” We chatted our way through a dozen people, chopping vegetables, preparing chicken breasts, peeling potatoes, and then moved on to a quiet room where we could talk.

Dick and Josie have spent their adult lives in that kitchen. Dick over 60 years, Josie, 55. For 51 of those they lived in a house on club grounds where they raised three daughters. They could fill a book with their memories. It was in that house in 1948, at the time rented to a friend, where they met each other on a blind date, agreed to by Josie only “if he could dance.”

“I danced,” says Dick, and they were married a year later.

Dick began as a bellhop back when some members lived at the club, and guests stayed overnight. He moved up to become a waiter, headwaiter, chef, and finally head chef, while Josie waitressed and prepared salads in the kitchen.

“It was different when we started here,” says Dick. “I learned on the job, and worked hard at it. Mr. Adolph Berger, who was the manager, taught me a lot. I wasn’t so good on sauces, so they sent me to the Culinary Institute of America at Hyde Park for two weeks…. We did nice dinners, prime rib, steaks, and soft shell crabs.”

“And we had finger bowls on the table,” Josie remembers, “and we used French service.” With the French style, the waiter or waitress serves the food tableside onto each guest’s plate. Josie and Dick think it’s better that each plate is now prepared in the kitchen. That way the food is served to everyone at the same temperature.
Dick worked his way from bellhop to head chef. Josie waitressed and prepared salads.

Josie (opposite page) and Dick (above) a few years before they met on a blind date.

Josie and Dick in the 1950s.

The couple speaks warmly of the people they have served at the club. "Mr. B.F. Jones, he was a good friend of ours," says Josie. "The Byers were our neighbors in the house down the road. Mrs. Byers was a French lady. She was so lovely. The H. J. Heinz's lived there after them and remodeled it a lot. I served the wedding rehearsal dinner for Teresa and John Heinz at that house."

In 1902 the club moved from its first location on California Avenue on the North Side of Pittsburgh to
Lili Palmer, General Hap Arnold, and singer Johnny Mathis.

"Times have changed a lot. I couldn't be a head chef today," says Dick, who is 81, same as Josie.

He may be too modest. "I want to be more like Dick than anyone I know in the world," says Jersey Span, one of the club’s current chefs. "I say it on every review."

Today, the couple works three days a week. "What would we do at home? asks Dick. "Watch TV?"

Josie still prepares salads and appetizers, and Dick makes lunch for the staff, as well as sauces and soups, cookies, and hundreds of mushroom sandwiches and cheese puffs. "I got those recipes from Mrs. Michael Rae," says Dick. "She lived on Blackburn Road and built that beautiful stone wall all the way down the hill. The Raes donated the land for the park and the YWCA."

Josie agreed to a first date with Dick back in 1948 only "if he could dance." Here, they celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary in 1974.


its present location off Blackburn Road in Sewickley Heights. It was a magnet for the many industrialists who lived in the city and then built estates in the Sewickley area, including the Oliver, Jones, Snyder, Scaife, Robinson, Chalfont, Dravo, and Heinz families.1 Josie and Dick remember D.L. Clark, founder of the candy company, was also a member.

Josie and Dick have served national celebrities. Bing Crosby was once a guest. They also remember Rex Harrison, his wife
Many of the original mansions have been torn down, among them the Jones estate, Fair Acres; the Rea mansion, Farmhill; the William Thaw estate, Thawmont; and the Robinson estate, Franklin Farm.  

Back in the kitchen, Executive Chef John King joins the crew (the family, as Josie and Dick refer to them) seated around a long stainless steel table for a cup of coffee. "When I came here, Dickie would say 'Do you want something to eat?' to everyone that came in the door. 'Is this guy crazy?' I thought. It could be the laundry guy, the beverage guy, or the manager. 'Sit down,' he would say. 'Have something to eat, come on, let me feed you.' Now, you know what? I do it, too."