

# THE RYE



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[Home](#)

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[Schools](#)

[Sports](#)

[Features](#)

[Columns](#)

[Around Town](#)

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| November 2007 |    |    |    |    |    |    |
|---------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| S             | M  | T  | W  | T  | F  | S  |
| 27            | 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 | 1  | 2  |
| 3             | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  |
| 10            | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 17            | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 24            | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |

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- [Rye Free Reading Room](#)
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- [Rye Merchant's Association](#)
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## Downtown People: Hilda Chapterlane and Irmí Buxeder Rye's Hardest Working Sisters

– By April Miller

If you've walked down Purchase Street in the last 50 years, you've likely seen Hilda Chapterlane and Irmí Buxeder hard at work. The sisters ran Baskin Robbins from 1964 to 1986, when they moved across the street to work at Poppy's Café, owned by Hilda's husband and daughter.



"Purchase Street has always been a wonderful place to work, surrounded by people shopping and eating and visiting with friends," said Hilda.

The sisters, 84 and 81 respectively, grew up in Bavaria, but have only been back to visit a few times since coming to Rye in the early 1950s.

Germany holds few happy memories for the women, who grew up as the country entered World War II. Hilda began working in a factory when she was 14, because their mother was sick; Irmí also started working when she turned 14.

During the war, the family's home and possessions were destroyed by a bomb and they were forced to move in with relatives.

One brief respite from the horrors of war for Hilda was meeting Robert "Poppy" Chapterlane. She met him at a café frequented by American soldiers, where she was a bartender and Irmí was a waitress. Poppy was smitten, but Hilda wasn't convinced.

"He asked me out repeatedly, I always said no," she said smiling. "But he was so nice and polite and stubborn, that she finally gave in," added Irmí.

Poppy's love for Hilda was obvious when the rest of his company returned to the U.S. and he reenlisted to stay with her. He wanted to get married and bring her home with him. She arrived in Rye in 1952.

Hilda immediately fell in love with the town, but missed her family terribly. So Poppy took out a loan and the

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next year brought over Hilda's mother and Irmie, and eventually all of her family. He helped everyone find jobs and a place to live.

He was a wonderful man, said both women repeatedly, their eyes filling with tears. Poppy passed away in 1997.

It was Poppy who saw the ad for the sale of Baskin Robbins and bought it for the sisters, who ran the shop for the next 20 years.

"We worked different shifts, so we always got along," laughed Irmie.

Irmie and Hilda loved talking to customers who they say felt like extended family. "If someone didn't have money to pay for their ice cream, we told them 'don't worry, come back and pay when you can,'" said Irmie.

Hilda's daughter, Gerri Piovesan, and Poppy sometime filled in at the shop, and that partnership culminated when the two opened Poppy's Cafe in 1985. Hilda and Irmie sold Baskin Robbins and joined the new family business, working tables and behind the counter.

The family has maintained the old fashioned sense of community at Poppy's. "This is a place where people know your name and what your usual order is," said Hilda. "Rye has lost some of that 'homey' feeling, which is sad."

The sisters agree though that there is nowhere they would rather live. When they aren't working they can be found bowling, shopping with friends or out with the Rye Seniors.

Neither sister looks her age, and they smile broadly at the compliment, agreeing they look good. "I think it's because we have always worked, we're always busy, said Hilda. "We haven't had the time to get old yet."