

# RICHARD HELMING

## Small Town Man with Enormous Success: With a Love for People, Richard Helming Finds Happiness in Owning Fleig's Café

Graduate: Class of St Ferdinand 1958    Occupation: Retired Business Owner

Growing up and living his whole life in a small town, Richard Helming probably never expected to make the many friends and meet the people he did while living in Ferdinand. Graduating from St. Ferdinand High School in 1958, he most likely did not see himself as a well-known member of the community and successful business owner; however, that is exactly what he became.

While in high school, Rich developed a love for sports. One highlight he remembers involved cheering on the Ferdinand Crusaders in their first year of both basketball and baseball. This is where Rich developed his love of sports that has continued throughout his life.

After high school, he served in both the National Guard and U.S. Army before being employed at Jasper Engines and Transmissions. He began working in the parts department in 1959 and stopped in 1971 when he purchased Fleig's Café in Ferdinand. His experience from bartending part-time at the Covered Bridge inspired him to start his own business.

Becoming a business owner may seem tough at first; however, the typical day of work soon came natural to Rich. At the beginning of the week, he received supplies for the busy days ahead. Opening the restaurant at 7:00 a.m. and serving breakfast was the first part of the day on Mondays. Then, he joyfully served lunch and dinner meals to customers looking for a delicious meal, such as the famous turtle soup, and friendly service-just what they received.

It is safe to say that Rich, over time, became attached to his business. Being his granddaughter, I saw the love he had for working there. He truly cherished the company of all the people he met. Rich said, "I enjoy getting to meet the many, many people that come through the doors at Fleig's Café." This explains why it was difficult for him to let the business go in 2005, when he sold it. Now retired, he still goes there a few days a week as a part-time bartender.

With more free time available, Rich enjoys playing golf, going to Ellis Park horse racing, and spending time at his cabin in Perry County. Today, at age sixty-seven, he has kept his love for sports since high school by watching and supporting Ranger sports, especially basketball. While owning Fleig's Café, he would often serve the team after tough games. Exhausted and hungry, the basketball players would have a restaurant to relax in and enjoy themselves.

Another important aspect of Rich's life is family. He married his wife, Betty Helming, at age twenty-one, and they went on to have four children: Brenda, Sandy, Julie, and Keith. With six granddaughters and one grandson, a family trend of girls has continued for Rich.

With many achievements to reminisce about, Richard Helming should be a proud man. Because of the attitude he has toward life, many people have great respect for him. Advice to students from Rich is, "Study hard and stay away from drugs." Coming from a hardworking man, this advice has important meaning that will help anyone on the road to success.