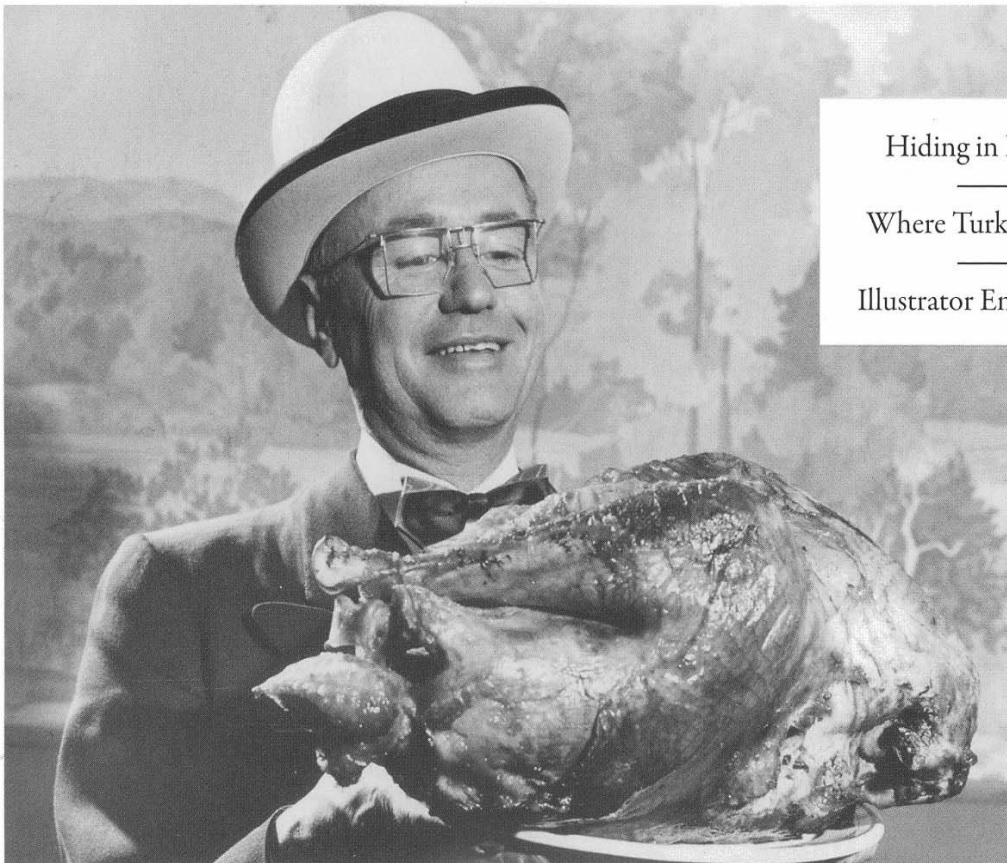




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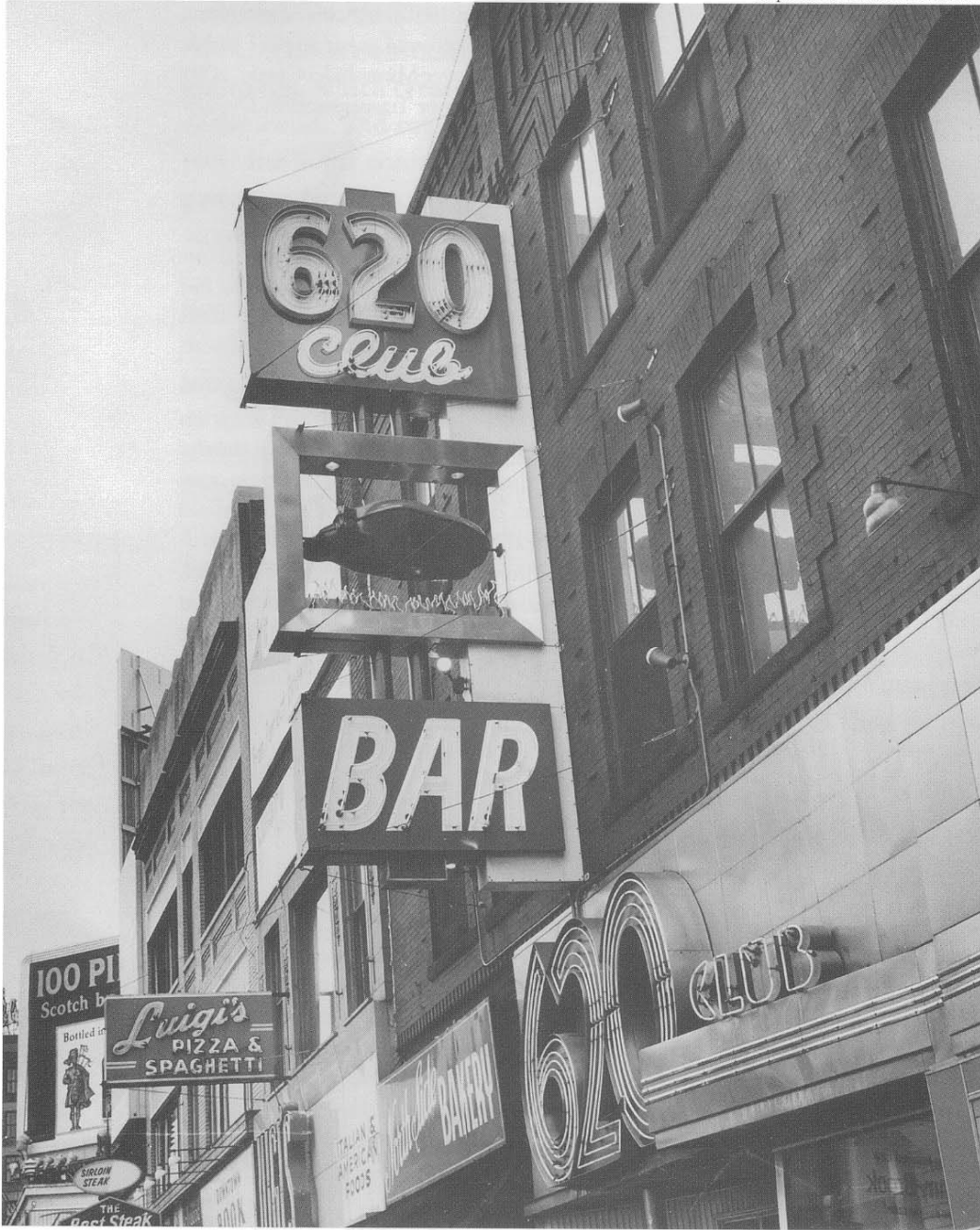
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Hiding in Plain Sight

Where Turkey Was King

Illustrator Emma L. Brock



The 620 Club was a popular restaurant at 620 Hennepin Avenue in Minneapolis from 1932 to the late 1960s.

The 620 Club

Where turkey was king

by Jane Winter Schofer and Edward Winter

Bob Murphy described in a 1953 issue of the *Minneapolis Tribune* how the 620 Club started. One day in 1932 Max Winter and Ernie Fliegel, who had recently started a joint venture to promote boxing matches, were walking down Hennepin Avenue together. An acquaintance stepped out of a recreation center and offered to sell them his quarter interest in the place. They bought his interest. The address was 620 Hennepin Avenue, and within six months they had bought out the other quarter-interest holders and converted the recreation center into a restaurant known as the 620 Club. Shortly after opening the 620 Club, Ernie and Max brought in Max's brother Henry to manage the restaurant.

Ernie Fliegel had immigrated to the United States in 1910 at the age of six. Ernie had been a featherweight fighter in the 1920s, but he had to give up boxing because of an injury to his eyes.

Max and Henry Winter were born in Ostrava in what is now the Czech Republic. Their parents brought them to Minneapolis just before World War I started in Europe. Henry was 15 and Max was 10 years old.

During the 1920s Max and Henry were partners in Winter Brothers Auto Parts in International Falls, Minnesota. At the end of the decade Max moved back to Minneapolis and joined with Ernie Fliegel to promote boxing matches. Henry also left International Falls and bought a poolroom in North Dakota. The poolroom was unsuccessful, lasting barely six months. At about this time Ernie and Max purchased the 620 Club and brought Henry back to manage it.

Max Winter later went on to become general manager of the Minneapolis Lakers and part owner and president of the Minnesota Vikings. The 620 Club became a popular hangout, and for four decades

you could find sports figures, reporters, businesspeople, lawyers, doctors, politicians, FBI agents, and entertainers eating there.

When the owners first opened the restaurant, it did not specialize in turkey. But by 1940 the 620 Club was known as the place "Where Turkey Is King."

The 620 Club also experimented with entertainment in the evenings from the early 1930s to the mid-1950s. It started with a 15-piece orchestra and had other entertainers as well. Later there was a live radio program, *Let's Talk Turkey*, originating from the 620 Club.

In the mid-1950s the club had a DJ spinning records. There was also a back room reserved for parties and groups. The Writers Workshop, which met there weekly through the 1940s, was attended by 60 writers, according to a 1949 issue of *Life* magazine. The Tip Toppers Club, all of whose members were at least six feet tall, also met there.

Once the club began specializing in turkey, it wanted only the best. Minnesota is known for raising turkeys, and for some years Ernie Fliegel went to the Northern States Turkey Show in Alexandria to purchase the champion turkey, often paying a record price.

The 620 Club had a great chef in Harry Walkowich. He left Russia at 17 years and started as a dishwasher in the eastern United States. In the 1930s he arrived at the 620 Club. Several years later he went to Charlie's Café Exceptionale. In 1951 he returned to the 620 Club and oversaw the preparation of about 300,000 pounds of turkey a year.

The 620 Club also had a great turkey carver in Melvin Grier, who organized a carving school in the early 1940s and once demonstrated his skill in carving on Arthur Godfrey's morning radio show on CBS. For many years the 620 Club pro-



Jane and Edward Winter worked at the restaurant when they were teenagers. Their father, Henry, was co-owner of the 620 Club.

This unidentified employee of the 620 Club proudly offered a roast turkey. Though the restaurant offered diners a full menu of choices (window display, below), turkey was king.



vided turkey dinners to the homeless on Thanksgiving and Christmas.

As Seen by Edward

In the early 1950s my older brother, Bob, occasionally took me to downtown Minneapolis on Saturdays or when school was out. I remember riding the streetcar with my mother, Molly, but the streetcars stopped running when I was about 11

years old. My brother and I took the bus or got a ride from our father.

We often went to the old public library at 10th and Hennepin. It looked just like a castle, with a great, open caged elevator to the upper floors. While my brother went to find books, I looked at the mummies in the hallway and played with a display where you pushed a button to match a name with a butterfly. A light went on if

A menu from 1934 (left) shows that the 620 Club did not specialize in turkey at first—but by 1940 it was known as the place "Where Turkey Is King" (1941 menu, right).

Tuesday, November 6, 1934
SIX TWENTY HENNEPIN BAR and CAFE
Evening Special Menu

Sliced Cucumbers 10 Radishes 10 Onions 10
 Raspberries and Cream 10
 Sliced Tomatoes 10; with Mayonnaise 15

620 SPECIAL DINNER 75c
 Pride Sirloin Steak, Fresh Mushrooms,
 Cottage Fried Potatoes, Combination Salad
 Green Asparagus in Butter
 Dessert Coffee, Tea or Milk

Special Dinner 40c
 Tomato Macaroni Soup
 Choice of
 Blue Ribbon Tenderloin Steak, Fresh Mushroom Sauce
 Grilled Lake Trout, Drawn Butter Sauce
 1/2 Fried Milkfed Chicken in Butter
 Broiled Pork Chop, Hawaiian
 Liver with Giblet Sauce
 Jelly Omelette
 Vegetable Dinner
 Whipped or French Fried Potatoes
 Vegetable
 Dessert Coffee, Tea, or Milk

Special Dinner 50c
 Tomato Macaroni Soup
 Choice of
 Baked Sugar Cured Ham, Sliced Cucumber
 Fried Walleyed Pike, Cole Slaw
 Fried Calfs Liver and Bacon
 Sirloin Steak, Dill Pickles
 Whipped or French Fried Potatoes
 Vegetable Salad
 Dessert Coffee, Tea, or Milk

Special Dinner 65c
 Tomato Macaroni Soup
 Choice of
 Fried Milkfed Chicken, French Fried Potatoes
 Large Tenderloin Steak, Sliced Tomatoes
 Large T Bone Steak, Mushroom Sauce
 Broiled Lamb Chops on Toast
 Whipped or French Fried Potatoes
 Vegetable Salad
 Dessert Coffee, Tea, or Milk

Special Steak Sandwich 40c
 French Fried Potatoes, Vegetable Salad
 Coffee, Tea or Milk

Hot Beef, Pork or Ham Sandwich with Mashed Potatoes and Gravy 20
 Hot Chicken Sandwich, Mashed Pot., Chicken Gravy .30
 Chili Con Carne 15 Italian Spaghetti, Toast 35

Thursday, July 10, 1941
620 Club Bar and Cafe
 We put up Roast Turkey Sandwiches to take out

Turkey Plate Dinner 45c

 Roast Young Minnesota Tom Turkey
 Cranberry Sauce
 Rich Brown Gravy
 Celery Dressing
 Fluffy Whipped Potatoes
 Cole Slaw White Meat 5c extra

Roast Young Minnesota Tom Turkey Sandwich 20c
 with Cranberry Sauce
 with Fluffy Whipped Potatoes and Brown Gravy 30c
 This Special of ours is the talk of the town
 White Meat 5c extra

Golden Brown Roasted
Turkey Wings 30c
 A Large Juicy Turkey Wing with
 Plentiful Helping of Cillets
 in Orono Sauce
 Plus Buttered Mashed Potatoes

Choice Top Sirloin Roast Beef Sandwich 15c
 Garnished with Home Made Pickles
 We use only U. S. Government graded and stamped beef

Hot Top Sirloin Roast Beef Sandwich 25c
 Mashed Potatoes and Brown Gravy

Chestnut Fed Baked Ham Sandwich 15c
 with Potatoes and Brown Gravy 25c
 Our Hams are boneless, mild, cured in natural juice

Hot Pork Sandwich, Potatoes, Brown Bravy ... 25

SANDWICHES
 Roast Pork Sandwich 15 Goose Liver Sandwich 10
 Salami Sandwich ... 10 Swiss Cheese Sandwich 15
 American Cheese Sandwich 10

Coffee 5 Milk 5 Tea 10 Iced Tea 10

Sandwiches are served on Rye or White Bread
 Toast 5c extra
 Our pies are made of fresh fruits and cream
 they will top off a good sandwich



The 620 Club bartenders (date unknown)



Clockwise, from top left: Waitresses (clockwise from lower left) Gertie, Marlys, Neva, and unknown, October 1949; Melvin Grier's carving school (see p. 17), November 1941; kitchen workers Sally, Juanita, and Gertie, August 1944; chef Melvin Grier, September 1941.

you were right. There was also a display matching rocks and their names.

Sometimes we went to a movie at one of the many theaters downtown such as the RKO Pan, Orpheum, Lyric, State, Radio City, World, or Gopher. The Gopher was our favorite; it was right across the street from the 620 Club.

Once we got hungry, there was only one place to go—the 620 Club, of course. In the front window facing Hennepin Avenue was a real turkey turning on a spit. As we walked inside the restaurant, we saw booths on the left and the bar on the right. Further back in the club were tables and more booths.

We went in and joined our father at the round table or at a booth and ordered a turkey sandwich with coleslaw on the side. The sandwich was cut diagonally from corner to corner.

A recent story on National Public Radio (NPR) discussed how diagonal cuts expose more of the face of the sandwich. The 620 Club sandwich showcased the mound of turkey in it. The NPR story also talked about mathematics and the strength of triangles. But it made no difference how they cut the sandwich, I could barely get my mouth around it. And I can almost taste it.

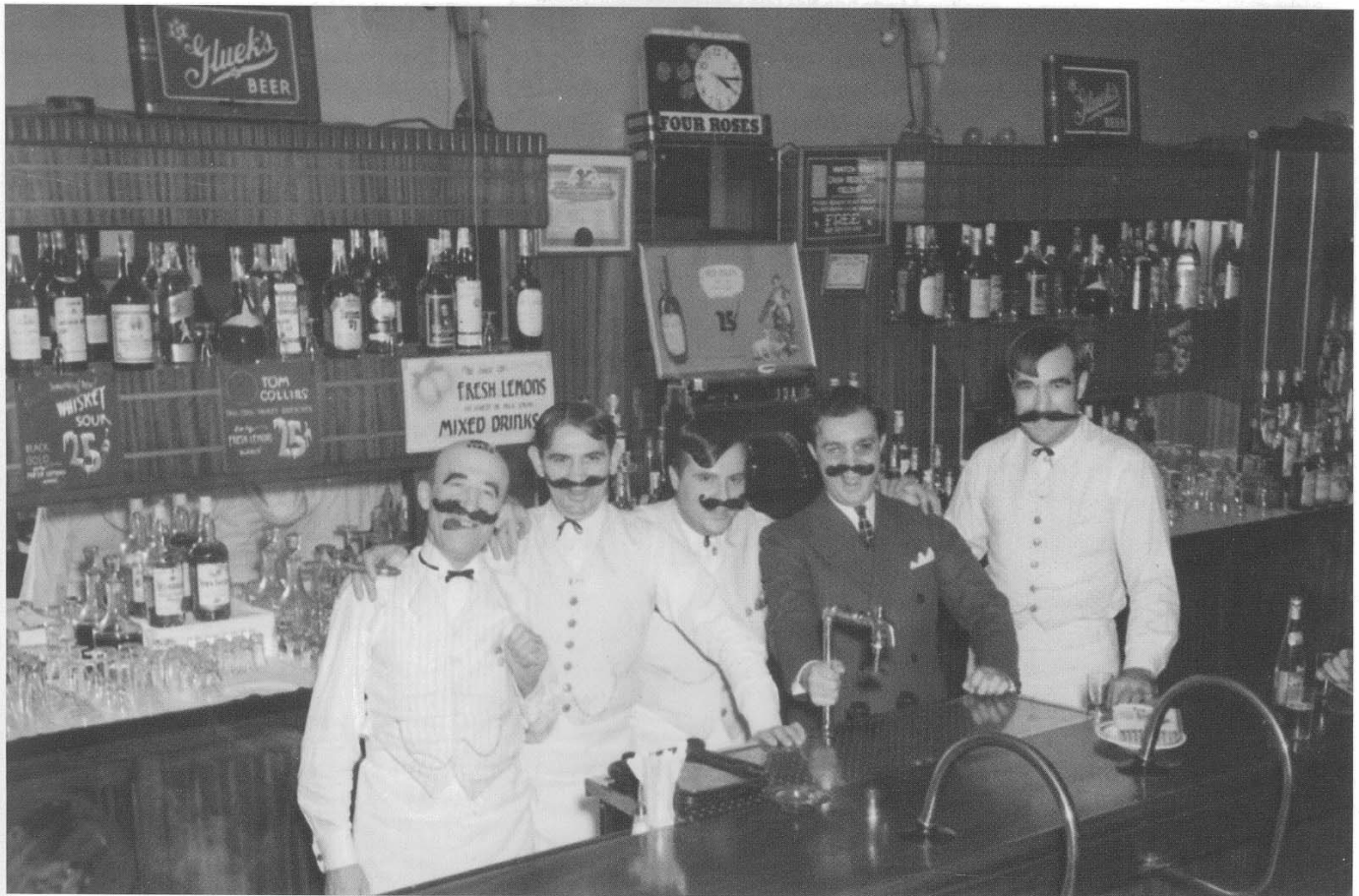
For dessert we went across the street to Bridgeman's for ice cream—a malt or an ice-cream sundae. I liked the hot-fudge sundae with whipped cream on top. Once I tried the La-la-Palooza. Those were the

days when I could eat as much as I wanted and never seemed to gain weight.

My father usually arrived at the 620 Club just before the noon rush. Every day after lunchtime he went to a barbershop at the corner of First Avenue North and Sixth Street for a shave. I spent a lot of time in the chair there, waiting for my father and reading comic books. I bought my comic books at Shinder's newsstand on the corner of Sixth and Hennepin.

My father usually went home for dinner around 4:00 PM, and we would catch a ride home with him. On his way home he might make a stop to buy some meat at the Great Northern Market, which was next door to the club. The floor there had sawdust or wood chips scattered on it. On the other side of the 620 Club was the North Side Bakery, and sometimes

Employees at the 620 Club worked hard—but had a good time on the job.



Ernie Fliegel (left) and Max Winter (right)—here with boxer Rocky Marciano (center)—loved sports celebrities and often favored them by naming sandwiches for them (opposite).

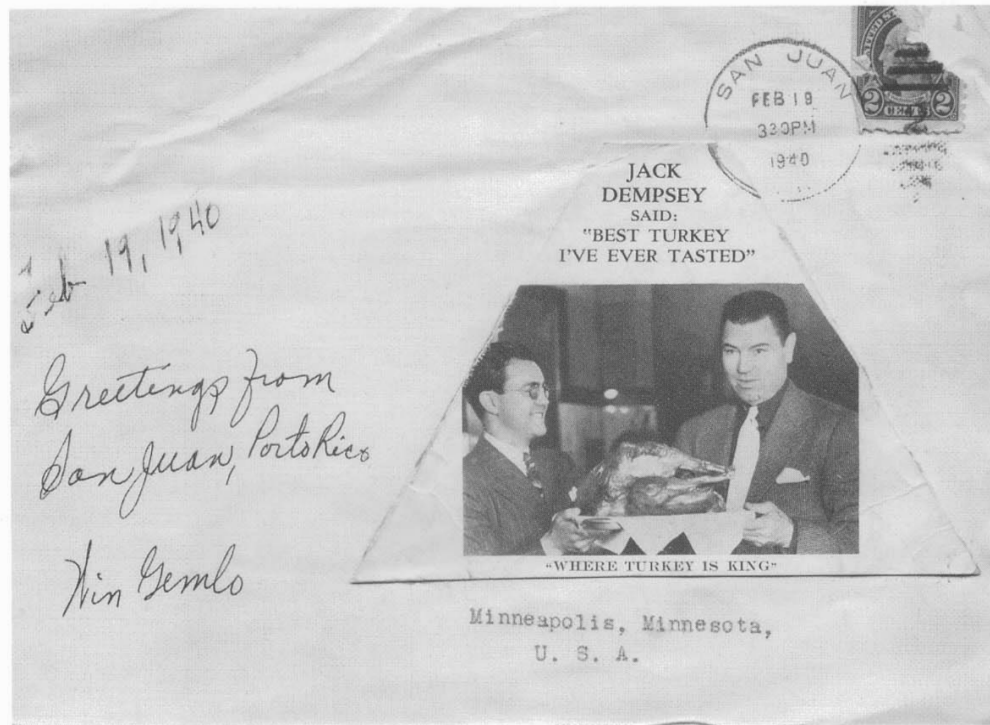


we stopped in there to buy rye bread or pumpernickel.

Dad always parked in the same two-story garage between Hennepin and First

Avenue North on Eighth Street. Some years after he stopped parking there, the second story of the garage collapsed from corrosion caused by years of salt accumulation.

A 1940 letter mailed from San Juan, Puerto Rico, featured prizefighter Jack Dempsey's ringing endorsement of the 620 Club's turkey (served by Ernie Fliegel).



After dinner at home with the family, Dad went back to the 620 Club to stay until it closed. He usually did not get home until 1:00 or 1:30 AM, and so he slept until mid-morning.

Once Dad came home with a black eye, and we had a lot of trouble getting the story out of him. Apparently he had stopped in at Brady's Bar at the corner of Sixth and Hennepin. There was a fight, a policeman was knocked down, and someone started kicking him. Dad was friendly with the police on the local beat, and he tried to stop the guy from kicking the policeman and got a black eye for trying. My image of my father changed.

My brother and I, soon joined by our sister, Jane, continued to go to the 620 Club whenever we were downtown, through our teenage years. The regular turkey sandwich stands out in my memory, but sometimes I enjoyed the hot turkey sandwich with gravy and dressing, the "George Mikan Sandwich" or the "Jim Pollard Sandwich," named after Minneapolis Lakers basketball stars of the 1950s. Other sandwiches were named after local journalists Will Jones, Cedric Adams, and George Grim.

Starting in the summer of 1957 when I was 16 and continuing over the next couple of summers, I worked at the 620 Club as a busboy. I quickly learned how to balance a tray of dishes on one hand while weaving through the crowd, back to the kitchen. I liked working lunchtime because it was busy and there was no time to get bored.

My cousin Richard Rein, an art student named Lorenzo, and a Polish man who did not speak English worked as busboys with me. I also washed dishes when the lunch crowd died down and the

dishwasher needed a break. We scraped food off the dishes and put them through an automatic dishwasher. Sometimes it was hard keeping up with all the dishes coming back. We had to wash the pots and pans by hand.

The only job I detested was washing the huge mirrors on the walls in the front of the restaurant. I remember my first paycheck and how happy I was to be earning 90 cents per hour plus a free lunch.

Jim Pollard Sandwich

Make white sauce:

2 T. butter
2 T. flour
2 cups milk
Salt and white pepper

½ cup grated cheddar cheese

Melt butter, add flour, stir well, add milk, and bring to slow boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Add pepper and salt and cheddar cheese, cook until cheese melts. Place turkey and ham on toast and cover with white sauce. Brown under broiler.

George Mikan Sandwich

Make white sauce:

2 T. butter
2 T. flour
2 cups milk or half-and-half
Chopped mushrooms
Salt and white pepper

Grated cheddar cheese

Melt butter, add flour, stir well, add milk, and bring to slow boil over medium heat, stirring constantly. Add pepper and salt and mushrooms. Cook a minute or two. Place turkey on toast and cover with white sauce. Top with a bit of cheddar cheese and broil.

MEET ME AT THE
SIX TWENTY CLUB
620 HENNEPIN
TWIN CITIES SMARTEST NITE CLUB
THE CROWD WILL BE THERE — SO MAKE A DATE AND SAY
"WE WILL BE AT THE SIX TWENTY CLUB"
NO MINIMUM — NO COVER CHARGE
RUBY BAE IN HER FAN DANCE
BILL HULWI And HIS ORCHESTRA
GOOD FOOD — COCKTAILS — WINES
TWO FLOOR SHOWS
UNDER DIRECT MANAGEMENT OF
BEN HARRIS ERNIE FLEGGEL MAX WINTER

Ad for the 620 Club in a boxing program featuring the bout between Jack Gibbons and Frankie Battaglia, March 16, 1936

For two weeks every summer I filled in while the bar boy went on vacation. This was my favorite job. I worked alone in the basement beneath the bar. The bartenders yelled down to me when they needed a barrel of beer tapped or when they needed a case of beer. I tapped them with a

hose running from the barrels up to the spigots at the bar. I passed cases of beer up through a trapdoor into the bar. The bartenders sent empty beer bottles down a chute, and I put them back in the cases. When the beer distributors delivered the beer, they picked up the empties for reuse.

Turkey Wings

Restaurant Recipe

7 to 9 large turkey wings
3 to 4 ribs of celery
Oil

Place the celery in a roasting pan with a small amount of oil. Lay the wings in the pan with the tender part up. Add water to not more than 1 inch in the pan. Roast until the wings are brown, basting frequently, at 350–375 degrees F.—about 2 hours. Cover with foil and continue to cook for half-an-hour. Turn the wings after 15 minutes and baste frequently.

Sage Dressing

Restaurant Recipe

1½ lbs. cooked turkey scraps and skin
1 loaf stale white bread
1 stalk celery
2 large onions
Milk
Salt, pepper, and sage to taste

Soak the bread in milk. Chop the celery and onions. Grind everything together; then add salt, pepper and sage. Using a pan at least 2 inches deep, fry or bake the dressing in a little cooking oil. Keep stirring to avoid burning. Add more soaked bread if it is too loose. This recipe is for cooking dressing outside the turkey.

Gravy

1 lb. turkey gizzards
¼ lb. mushrooms, sliced
1 medium onion, chopped
1 rib of celery, chopped
Garlic salt, salt, pepper
Soy sauce, Worcestershire sauce, and Kitchen Bouquet

Simmer the gizzards in water until tender, about 2½ to 3 hours. Wash thoroughly in cold water, cut each in half. Fry the mushrooms, chopped onion chopped celery until brown. Add a pinch of garlic salt, a couple drops of Worcestershire sauce, 1 T. soy sauce, and salt and pepper to taste. Strain the stock from the wing roasting pan and stir gradually into a blend of 2 T. flour and 1 T. butter. Heat on stove until mixture thickens slightly; then add the giblet mixture. If the gravy is too light in color, add a few drops of Kitchen Bouquet. Serves 6 to 9.

Some of the beers I remember handling were Grain Belt Premium, Hamm's, Gluck's, Schlitz, Pabst Blue Ribbon, and the one imported beer, Heineken's.

The bartenders also sent down empty hard-liquor bottles, and I had to break them. It was illegal to reuse these bottles. I assume it was against the law for a 16-year-old to be handling beer, but I was working in the basement and nobody saw me down there. During the time I worked there I tried some beer, but I did not like the taste. I did pick up the habit of drinking coffee while working at the 620 Club.

Sometimes I explored the basement. There were lots of dark, unused spaces. At one time there had been a kitchen down there with a dumbwaiter to get the food upstairs. My father told me that at one time they had had a rat problem in the basement, so they brought in some cats. The result was too many rats and too many cats. As the story went, Max went down to the basement with a gun to try and shoot them, but he didn't hit a single rat or cat. When I worked there I never saw any cats. I do not remember looking for bullet holes.

In the cashier's office upstairs was an early picture of the restaurant. It showed tables upstairs on a balcony around the perimeter, with



Henry Winter enjoyed the house specialty—turkey—as much as any of the restaurant's patrons.

Henry



The Writers Workshop met regularly at the 620 Club through the 1940s.



Ernie Fliegel and Henry Winter

restaurant two stories high at the center, but a false ceiling had since been put over the first floor and the balcony was no longer used for seating.

I tried to imagine what the restaurant was like with balconies. At the time I worked there, the upstairs was used for offices and storage, plus there was a locked

Coleslaw

5 or 6 servings

- 1 head of cabbage shredded
- ½ green pepper cut fine
- 1 carrot grated
- 2 slices of pimiento
- 1 onion chopped
- ½ T. yellow mustard
- ½ cup of sugar
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Pinch of celery salt
- ½ cup vinegar
- 2 T. vegetable oil

Mix everything together. Tastes best if you let it sit for a couple of hours before serving.

Coleslaw

Restaurant Recipe

- 3 bushels shredded cabbage (45–50 lbs)
- 12 medium-sized carrots
- 4 large green peppers
- 3 large onions
- 1 can (#2) pimientos
- 3 quarts vinegar
- 3 quarts mustard
- 2½ quarts vegetable oil
- 8 lbs. sugar
- 4 T. salt
- 3 T. black pepper
- 3 T. celery seed

Put half of cabbage in mixing bowl. Grind carrots, green peppers, onions, and pimientos very fine. Put all into bowl until cabbage is juicy; then gradually mix in remaining cabbage. Mix it again. Tastes best if you let it sit for a couple of hours before serving.

room for liquor storage. The balconies were used for storage only.

The bartenders let my father know when they needed more liquor, and he went upstairs to get the bottles requested. This was not part of the bar boy's job.

Jane's Perspective

The memory, from my earliest childhood, of my father's restaurant, the 620 Club, so

punch in the numbers on someone's lunch check. Waitresses came up to greet my mother and me, and we knew them all by name.

My mother and I often came downtown from our home in St. Louis Park on the bus to do some shopping, usually on Nicollet Avenue. After we finished and were worn out, we headed to the 620 Club to have some coffee (Coke for me,



*The front of a letter mailed from France to the 620 Club—
"Where Turkey is King."*

named for its address on Hennepin Avenue in downtown Minneapolis, are vivid and full of love.

The atmosphere of the restaurant, probably from its nightclub days, was dark and shadowy, but it never seemed frightening to me because when I entered its doors, I was a queen. Winnie, the tall and beautiful hostess/cashier, took me on her knee at the cash register and directed me to

of course) and wait for my father to be done for the afternoon so he could drive us home.

Occasionally, we began these trips in the morning, coming downtown with my father, who left for work about 11:00 AM but stopped for a swim at the YMCA before actually going to work. After our shopping, we went to the 620 Club for lunch. What a fabulous place to eat! I

usually ordered a turkey sandwich, or, as I grew older, a hot turkey sandwich with mashed potatoes and gravy; I gradually came to like the cranberry sauce served on the side.

But my real relationship with the restaurant came in the

Chopped Liver

Restaurant Recipe

5 lbs. turkey or chicken livers
3 large onions
2 cups vegetable oil
2 T. salt
1 T. pepper
1 tsp. garlic salt

Put the oil in a large ovenproof pan, slice the onions ½-inch thick, and put them in the pan. Wash the liver and drain in a colander. Put the liver and all other ingredients in the pan, mix. Roast for 1 hour or until done. The liver should not be bloody. Let the mixture cool for half-an-hour; then put through a grinder or food processor. Mix well so it is not lumpy. If the paste is too thick, add ½ cup of turkey or chicken stock.

late 1950s, when I began to work in the kitchen for a few hours every day during summer vacations.

During this period I came to know some of the staff members better and to appreciate that they led more difficult lives than did my middle-class family. For example, many of the waitresses were divorced and had children to support; I presumed they did not have much education. A waitress job did not pay particularly well, even with the tips they received, but it was a job a woman could get even if she had little schooling.

Although all the waitresses treated me well, some were friendlier than others, and some told me about their personal lives. Among a few of them I sensed a faint stream of resentment because my life was so sheltered. Of course they did not voice

this to me, as by this time my father was an owner of the restaurant and their boss. Nevertheless, I felt pleased to be working among them, learning something about lives more difficult than my own and earning a little spending money as well.

One of the best parts of my job was getting to know the kitchen staff. At some point in the late 1940s or early 1950s, my father hired a Polish woman named Nina Patswold, who had managed to come to America after World War II and marry an American man. Most of her family was still back in Poland, struggling to survive the difficult postwar years and the new Communist regime.

Nina must have applied for a job in the kitchen at the 620 Club, and my father hired her. Because of his Eastern European background, he could speak to Nina in her native Polish. She was a good worker, and my father decided to help her bring her sister, her sister's husband, and her father all to America from Europe, with the help, I believe,

Owners Ernie Fliegel, Henry Winter, and Max Winter (July 6, 1944)



of Hubert Humphrey, who had been mayor of Minneapolis. My father promised all these folks jobs at the 620 Club, so that they could get visas and green cards.

When I started work in the kitchen, Nina and her sister Klemka (for Klemen-

tina, I believe) had both been working there for a number of years. They spoke English, though with a heavy accent, and they were friendly to me. Klemka's husband was a busboy in the restaurant, as was their father. Joseph, who had been in the Russian army and saluted me with a click of his heels whenever we met. He spoke no English, so I did not get to talk to him during those years. My father explained what he was saying, generally just polite remarks.

The atmosphere in the kitchen was different from that in the dark and shadowy restaurant's public area. The kitchen was spotlessly clean, well lit, and full of huge cooking equipment—giant stock pots on an enormous stove, a deep fryer for making French fries and fried fish and shrimp, large slicing machines for slicing the 24-pound turkeys roasted every day, and my favorite, a Hobart mixer that was so large it stood separately on the floor. The big bowl fitting onto the machine could be raised and lowered to bring it closer to the big blades that mashed potatoes, mixed coleslaw ingredients, and combined any of the numerous other ingredients making up the recipes of foods served at 620.

Klemka and Nina took me under their wing and began to teach me the jobs I needed to know so as to help out in the kitchen—how to peel and cut up boiled eggs to combine with boiled potatoes and celery to make potato salad, how to peel apples and cut them up for pies, how to do the countless other basic jobs to prepare foods



Among the groups that met regularly at the 620 were the Tip Toppers, all of whose members were at least six feet tall (November 1941).

for the further, more sophisticated cookery done by them or by the phenomenal head chef, Harry Walkowitz, a friendly, older, Russian man who also spoke with a heavy accent. He invented some of the 620 Club's most famous dishes, such as the George Mikan Sandwich (see p. 23), which I make at home to this day.

The sandwich was named after George Mikan, a well-known player on the Minneapolis Lakers, our hometown basketball team. My father's brother, Max Winter, one of the original owners of the restaurant, was also general manager of the Lakers. In the restaurant was a special, large round table, called "The Round Table," where many sports figures from Minneapolis as well as politicians, lawyers, journalists, physicians, and so forth, sat during the lunch period. Women were not

allowed at that table, so I was occasionally introduced to somebody but never invited to sit there. One day I met George Mikan; my small hand simply disappeared into his gigantic one as I stared up at his six-foot-ten-inch frame.

In later years I learned that Harry Walkowitz had created most of the unusual dishes at the 620 Club. He had worked for Charlie's Cafe Exceptionale but eventually returned to the 620 Club. At any rate, I do not remember a time when he was not at the restaurant except for his brief patches at Charlie's. My fondest memory of Harry is of a time he made French toast for me. I don't remember why he did that, but I watched him prepare it with real cream—it was definitely the best French toast I ever ate.

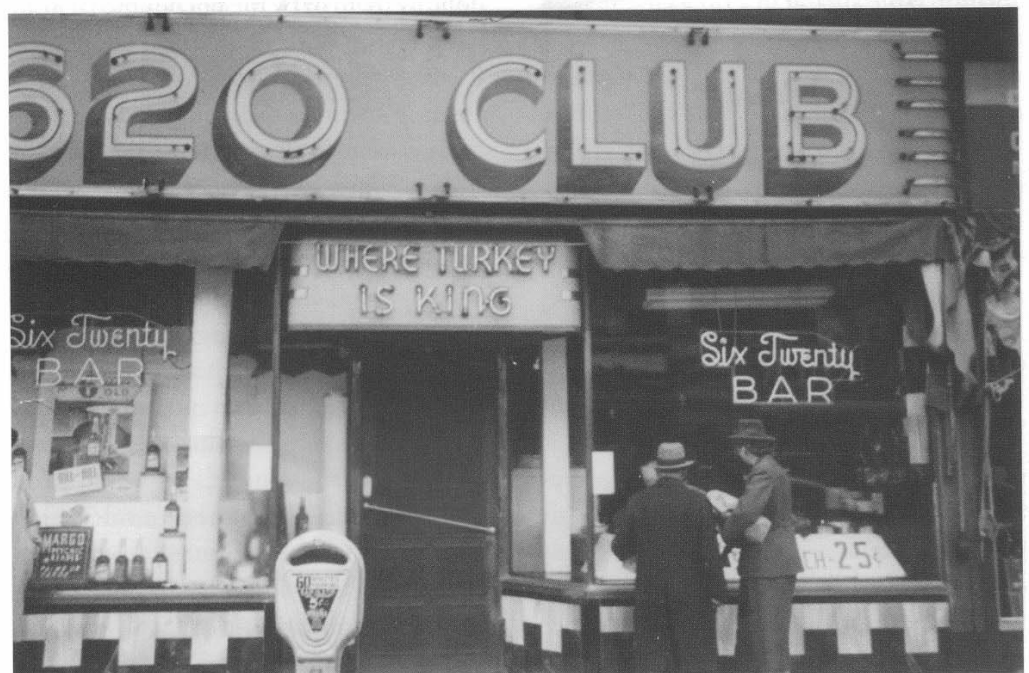
Nina and Klemka spoke Polish when they talked together, which fascinated me. My father also spoke Polish to them when he came into the kitchen. I told them that when I grew up, I would learn Polish too, so that I could eavesdrop on them. Many years later I did major in Russian in col-

lege and took Polish as my second Slavic language. My husband and I even lived for a year in Poland in 1968. By the time I returned with this knowledge, however, the 620 Club had closed. My father took me to visit Nina at home so that I could show off my Polish, but I never saw Klemka again after my college years.

Over the years there were many waitresses and busboys (including my brother Edward) employed at the 620 Club. I remember many of their faces generally but only a few in any detail.

Two women served as head waitresses for many years. The daytime head was Gertie Frandsen; the nighttime head was Anne Manley. Gertie was a bit scary to me—she was always polite but rather abrupt in her speech. She didn't smile much and seemed to take her job seriously. Anne, however, was friendly and smiled more readily. Since I was at the restaurant less frequently at night, I didn't see her often. Some of the other daytime waitresses, such as Marlys and Neva, were friendlier to me.

After four decades the 620 Club closed, in the late 1960s. It is much missed by all who relished those turkey sandwiches and all the other great meals.



When I worked at the restaurant in the summers I learned a lot about the waitresses' lives as they chatted with me during breaks or before and after work.

When I was perhaps 13 or 14, I developed a crush on a busboy from Mexico who spoke with a strong accent. His name was Lorenzo, and he was a handsome, exotic-looking art student at a Minneapolis art school. We had much to talk about, since I had decided I wanted to be an artist, too. A year or two later, he was gone, and I never heard anything more about him.

A few years later, when I was about 17, I went out with one of the bartenders' sons, a nice-looking fellow named Joey. We went out for a few months, but that ended when I went off to college.

The 620 Club had a huge influence on my life. Mainly, it introduced me to people from other cultures and other economic classes whom I would not have met under ordinary circumstances. It made me more aware of people whose lives were less fortunate than my own.

Working at 620 was educational, but it was also a lot of fun. The women in the kitchen were cheery and good-natured, and the waitresses joked and laughed with me. I learned about cooking and, later, when I was 21, about working as a waitress.

And I learned about the position of women in the 1950s and early 1960s from these working women and from the male exclusivity of the "Round Table" at the front of the restaurant.

*I learned
about cooking,
working
as a waitress,
and the position
of women.*

Edward Winter

graduated from the University of Minnesota and worked as an accountant in various food-related businesses before starting an organic farm with his wife, Jan, in Oregon, 22 years ago. He is also the financial manager for the nonprofit Northwest Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides.

Jane Winter Schofer

graduated from the University of California with a master's degree in library science and worked at the Philadelphia Public Library 12 years and for a private day school library 30 years. She now lives in Philadelphia.