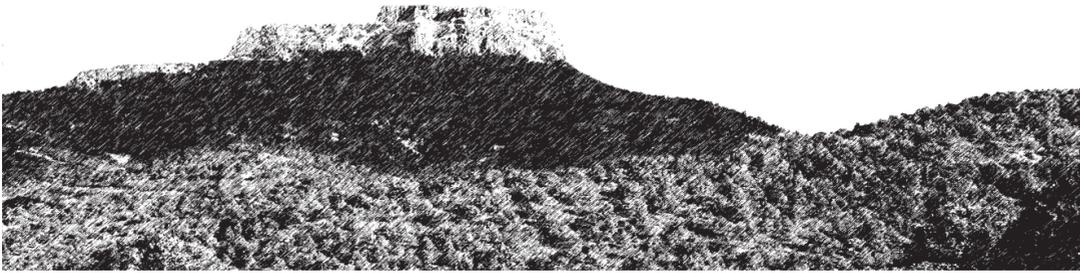


OVER THE PASS



CONNECTIONS

“What makes you cry?”

By **Tim Keller**
Correspondent
The Chronicle-News

Photos by **Tim Keller** / The Chronicle-News

“Sad movies, and shows like Grey’s Anatomy. It’s mostly all depressing. It makes me want to be a doctor, and not want to be a doctor.”

– Nicolette Garcia, criminal justice student, TSJC



“Seeing all the snow. I don’t like the cold. I’m from Edgewood, near Albuquerque, and it gets cold there but not as cold as here. I’ve been cold all my life and I just don’t like it, but I can’t get my husband to move to Arizona.”

– Amanda Baker, TSJC Bookstore assistant



“Spending money. I know I don’t need what I’m buying, but I want it, like shoes, and tons of make-up when I already have plenty. I bought some two days ago. I don’t need more.”

– Yvette Garcia, cosmetology student, TSJC



“I recently re-watched the animated TV series ‘Clannad: After Story’ with a friend and it made me both happy and sad. I cried. How can I explain the sadness without spoiling it...let’s just say that it has touching family moments, and a great romance.”

– Eric Quan, host, Wonderful House Chinese Restaurant, Trinidad

Tony’s Diner off to roaring great start

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prised at the instant popularity the diner had experienced since it opened.

“I signed a lease for a few years. I wasn’t looking for it to take off as quickly as it did,” he said. “I opened up on Tuesday of Labor Day week. I bought moderate amounts of food. We were figuring on a soft opening, and it just totally destroyed us. We ended up with 275 people that first day. It was just totally amazing, and all my waitresses and my cooks had a brand new menu. They had never worked together before. It was like we were bumping into each other. It was actually very comical, in a way, although we didn’t think it was comical at the time. Having that type of situation, we ran completely out of food. The next day was Wednesday, which was the day to order food for Thursday. My wife, Cathy, was running back and forth to Safeway and WalMart, and I bet she put on 100 miles that day going back and forth. So we survived those first two days. So on Wednesday I figured that if I double ordered, I might be okay. That was the wrong thinking. We were totally out of food again, because during the Labor Day weekend, there wasn’t one day that we didn’t have over 300 people in here. It just went crazy. So we thought that maybe after Labor Day things would, like normal, just take a dive. Everything comes to a halt. Wrong thinking again. In the month of September, we were running at an average of 275 people a day. Then in October, it just blew us away even more. We were running close to 300 people a day.

“What we did here is what people normally do after three years. You know, you build a clientele and you start working your numbers and start doing your marketing. We didn’t call anybody and we didn’t market anything. We just opened the doors and people came in, in droves. It was wonderful. October was our biggest month. We did over \$75,000 in sales. It was just totally amazing. Then November came, and of course we didn’t do as much as we had in October, but we did well. We averaged for the four months, about \$65,000 a month, which was unheard of. There have been several times when we’ve been maxed out and people had to wait. I felt like I was in

Pueblo, and had to wait to sit down. People were willing to wait, so that worked out pretty well.”

The diner’s food supplier is U.S. Foods, out of Denver. They were amazed at the orders that were coming in from Tony’s Diner, he said.

“They couldn’t believe the orders that they were seeing. They said, ‘at this time of year, that just doesn’t happen.’ It’s cool, though. It’s really nice. It’s a good feeling. It’s the type of situation, you know, that 2.5 years ago, I had to file for bankruptcy. I previously worked at Lee’s Bar-B-Q in Trinidad for 15 months, and I developed some good food there, too.”

Tony’s Diner features a popular all-day breakfast, featuring a breakfast combo and breakfast burrito. Mattorano talked about what he felt were the elements of operating a successful diner.

“What I think contributes to my success is three things. One is that you have to have things clean and keep them clean. Second is that I work very hard and spend a lot of hours trying to get the prices where they ought to be. I believe there are a lot of people who don’t really know how to do food pricing. The third thing is that we have good food.”

The diner has enough parking for all but the busiest times, and a seating capacity of 84 patrons. A drive through window for takeout meals is planned for the near future and a catering business is in its early stages.

“Right now the only people catering that I know of are the Holiday Inn. We’ll offer catering for weddings, graduation parties and other events. We’ll take it to the home or a hall or wherever they want it.”

While things have gone very well for the diner thus far, Tony said he and his staff hoped to offer some new features going into the future.

“We’re hoping that we’re going to be able to do a lot more. Hopefully, before this summer actually starts, we’ll be able to do some pizzas. We already have a takeout business, but we’re going to put together a drive-through. We believe that a drive-through is necessary in today’s world, because most people work and they don’t have time to



Photos by **Steve Block** / The Chronicle-News

The regular crew at Tony’s Diner includes, from left to right, Thomas Hurtado, Raul Campos, Alicia Torres, Proprietor Tony Mattorano, Tim Peña, Day Manager Jude Anaya and Tiffani Kelsey.

cook. They don’t want to come in to eat. They don’t want to bring their kids in to eat, and so they just want to pick it up and go home. So they won’t even have to get out of the car. They can just drive through and pick it up, after they call it in.”

The diner’s doing some marketing efforts right now in local print media, with coupons for discounts available to patrons. Sundays will now feature all-you-can-eat pasta, with a salad, at a reasonable price. Tony’s has a staff of 13 people, with Jude Anaya serving as day manager. Mattorano said one key to the diner’s popularity was that he makes a lot of the food himself.

“I’m basically the one that makes all the food. I make all the chili and the sausages. We sell a lot of sausage to go. I make a lot of capicola, an Italian spicy ham, and people buy it in big hunks and they buy it for breakfast. We also make breakfast sausage, Italian sausage, and I also make bacons, but I had to stop because I didn’t have enough cooler room. I need to get a walk-in cooler, so that’s the next expense that has to come up. It’s important to recognize that we’re always marketing. We have something new coming up called Sliders, which is like a small hamburger, and we’re going to have either a meatball or Italian sausage Slider for \$1.50, with an order of a soda pop. They’ll be ready for the Super Bowl. We’ll also have an Egg Matt Muffin, which is based on my last name and has either breakfast or Italian sausage.”

Ida Spahr and her brother, Lester Rodriguez, said they come to diner regularly and really enjoy eating at Tony’s Diner.

“I like their salads and their pasta, hamburgers, chili fries and things like that,” Spahr said. “They also have very good service.”

Tony Mattorano said he and his staff had been delighted by the diner’s instant and ongoing success.

“We’re just really excited,” Mattorano said. “We’re excited about the way Trinidad has received us. I’ve lived here all my life and I know almost everybody that comes in here. We get a lot of people in off the highway and strangely enough, when people stop and ask if there’s a good place to eat,



Brother and sister Lester Rodriguez and Ida Spahr enjoy coming to Tony’s Diner regularly for a tasty meal during a busy day.

they send them on down to the diner. When we first started here, I told my employees that there were two reasons why I’m here. First, I really enjoy what I’m doing and second, I’d like to make a few bucks, and I told them that if their reasons were not the same, then they were in the wrong place.”

Tony’s Diner is open for business from 6 a.m. until 8 p.m., seven days a week. The phone number is 719-846-6000.