

"I MADE MORE MONEY OFF A FAST NICKEL THAN A SLOW DIME"

The Story of Angelo Iacovetto

Written by:

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Angelo Iacovetto has played a very important part in Routt County history that many people are not aware of. In this story we will show a man who, by using his intelligence, has saved and brought many businesses into this community. He has lived and worked in most towns in the entire county.

"My parents arrived in the United States in 1909. I was born on May 20, 1923. Until 1944, I worked for my dad in general merchandise in Phippsburg. At that time, I went into the Air Force along with seven brothers. After being in the Air Force for two years, I came out in 1946. I was then offered a job with the Hayden Coal Company as the general store manager. I worked at this job from 1947 to 1950. In 1947 I was also appointed to the job of postmaster along with my two other brothers who were also postmasters in Colorado.

"We went to the Phippsburg Grade School. It was first through eighth grade, and the Yampa High School was ninth through twelfth. The teachers I remember at that time were Mr. Walker at Yampa, a Mr. Runner in Oak Creek, and a Mr. Troter in Phippsburg.

"It was fun going to a one-room school house because you had one teacher for the whole group. Emma Fleming was our teacher. I think you learn more in a school that small than you do in a larger school. You're more acquainted with the teacher, and she's more acquainted with you. She knows what you can do and what you can't do. If you had a problem in reading, English, or whatever, then she could concentrate on helping you with those subjects.

"The subjects we had in school were: English, math, typing, history, and then there was a study hall. There were not that many sports at this time in school. The only thing they played was basketball, and I never really got into basketball. We did not have football, wrestling, or baseball. Most of the kids were ranchers and farmers so they had to go home and do their chores.

"I graduated from Oak Creek High School in 1942 and didn't really have any plans. I thought at one



**"I MET MY WIFE, HELEN COMACK,
WHILE HER SISTER AND HUSBAND
LIVED ON A RANCH IN PHIPPSBURG."**

time of becoming a pilot in the Air Force, but due to my eyes I had to give that idea up. In 1941 I went into the Air Force and they sent me to administration school. My training was at Buckley Field in Denver, and after that I was shipped to Eglin Field, Florida. From there I was sent to Fort Totton, New York, to fly up to Iceland to replace the first sergeant there. But then they got orders from Washington that the men with dependents would be screened off the ship, so I didn't get to go.

"When I was stationed in Florida, my wife and our young daughter, Dorina, came and spent some time with me. Florida was a big change, especially since I had never been out of Routt County except for going to Denver. I had seven brothers in the service. Four were in the Navy and three were in the Army. We all got through the war okay, but we lost one brother after the war.



"HELEN AND I WERE MARRIED AUGUST 2, 1942 IN OAK CREEK."

"After the war I came back to the states and started working for my dad in the general merchandising. Then a job opened up in the Hayden Coal Company as the general store manager, and I resigned from my dad's general store and took that position. I took care of the filling station, the store, and the post office. In 1948, I was getting \$400 a month for being store manager. I also drove a school bus for extra money. The school bus was a Model A Ford. We ran that school bus route for three years and never missed a morning. We had to pick up seven kids and went as far as Deer Park.

"I met my wife, Helen Comack, while her sister and husband lived on a ranch in Phippsburg. I was a delivery boy from the general store. We had a GMC pickup and would make deliveries to their house. The only way I could meet her was to walk. I'd call her and tell her to start walking and we would meet at the top of the hill. We didn't have lights on the pickup because my dad didn't believe in transportation at night. Us kids wouldn't get a chance to run around at night. In fact, there were ten of us so dad had to watch us pretty closely. There were nine boys and one girl. Helen and I dated for a year and were married August 2, 1942. We were married in Oak Creek. It was performed by the justice of the peace and then after she became Catholic, we were married in the Catholic Church. We were married before I went into the military. Our first child was only six months old when I was drafted.

"During grade school and high school, I worked in the general store in Phippsburg for my dad. Most of the people were from the local railroad, ranches and towns. During the summer we had tourists.

"I worked for Eps Ice Company after Helen and I were married. It was an easy job. We'd just cut the ice out of the lake in about 300-pound blocks. They

would hoist it up a big chute into a big building. It was all stacked up in layers and covered with hay and straw. Then the railroad would use it through the summer to pack all the produce that was raised in Yampa. It was about a six-week job. I was paid \$2.00 an hour.

"I was a general store manager for Hayden Coal Company and postmaster, and my wife, Helen, was the assistant. Haybro was a mining town. Between Haybro and Oak Creek, they had a large payroll. All of our business was coal miners. I took care of all the general merchandise and the butcher shop. We had the system pretty well finalized when people needed credit. They would go to the main office, and they would draw script. They'd go over and draw \$50 of script, and come over to the store and spend it. The only place they could spend it was at the company store. Then that \$50 would be deducted from their paycheck.

"In 1949 I resigned that position and bought Dream Island. I thought I was qualified to run my own business. The only thing that was there was six little old cabins; they had deteriorated to the point that they could hardly be used. We repaired them and rented them to tourists for \$4 or \$5 a night. We had a little store in which we sold picnic supplies, fishing equipment, and food items. Helen made potato salad which could not supply the demand.

"Then, in 1955, things were going pretty well for us so I dismantled the old cabins and gave them to whoever would haul them away. I built four new units; then we opened up the trailer court and campground. That gave us a pretty good income, plus the motel which we were starting to upgrade. During the third year, I built more new units which gave us 24, then I built a bigger building for the store. The first section of Dream Island was finished in 1955.



"IN 1949, I BOUGHT DREAM ISLAND."

"Our business season was the summertime. At that time everybody in Steamboat Springs lived off of the tourists in the summer and each other in the winter. Hunting season gave us a shot in the arm to get us through the winter. In the winter we'd close everything up and I'd run the store and work for The Pilot. I did that for three years. Then I delivered milk for Seleh Dairy prior to the time I went to work for the Pilot. I always had an interim job to keep the expenses paid up at the Island.

"The best advertisement I found was word of mouth by satisfied customers. If you satisfy the customers, the business will advertise itself. We took good care of them when they got there until they left. It's just like our place at Pearl Lake; we have a rental cabin up there and we get people calling about it from all over, and we don't advertise it.



"DREAM ISLAND WAS A PLACE THE WHOLE FAMILY COULD ENJOY."

The railroad had no impact on Dream Island. All of the business was by cars. The railroad was the Denver and Salt Lake Railroad. It took seven hours from Denver to Steamboat; it was a real long ride. Very few people rode the train, unless they had to. They stopped at every milk station and picked up the mail and cream cans. There was one at every depot. There was a carpenter from the Hayden Coal Company that rode the train to Denver. He asked the conductor why the train stopped. 'Well,' he said, 'there's a cow on the track.' They got the cow off the track and were on their way.

"The Harbor Hotel went bankrupt in 1964, and Del Scott from the Routt County National Bank appointed me as the receiver. I took a contract of receivership. In those days, Phil Collins was the



"MY WIFE AND I WENT IN AND CLEANED UP THE HARBOR HOTEL."

owner of the Harbor Hotel. He had six months to redeem it. When I was put in there, they put it through the redemption period. My wife and I went in and cleaned it all up. We cleaned up all the rooms and put them in real nice shape, hired some good help, and opened it up.

"We had a terrific business there. People started coming back because the place was clean, the atmosphere was different, public relations were different, and people knew that when they came in they were appreciated. Then at the end of the redemption period we sold it to Paul Hunt and Irving Arnold. Then, of course, I would have stayed on as general manager, but I didn't want to because I was still operating Dream Island.

"After that, the Inn at Thunderhead had problems. They had to have a manager that was well-qualified. So when they were having trouble, I agreed to take it until it sold. When we opened it, I hired my work crew. We had a beautiful cocktail lounge and a great big banquet room that seated 150 people. We had a dumbwaiter that would serve banquets upstairs.

"I got it on its feet, and it was doing a good business. At the end of the six months it sold. The first person to offer to buy the Inn at Thunderhead was going to buy it on the condition I sign a contract to stay on and manage it, but I still owned Dream Island and I had other parties that would buy it. So I did resign after it sold.

"When the Inn at Thunderhead sold, the agreement I made with them was that I would get so much a month for six months. At the end of six months, I would sell it and I would get a commission. But if it didn't sell within the six months, I would have to run it until it sold. I had good luck selling it because people could see it when they came in to buy. They could see what was there, the business we were doing. The books were showing a profit.

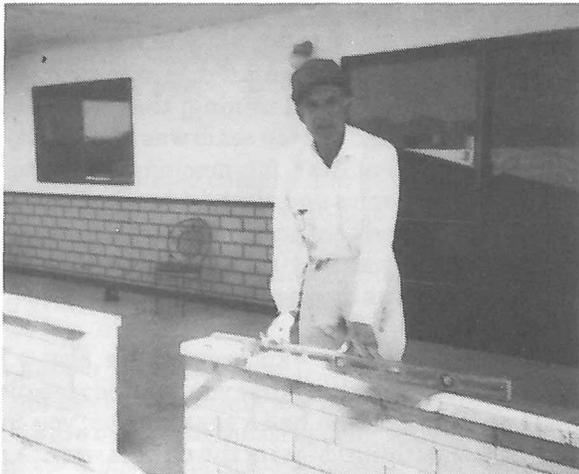
"The management is the hardest thing about business. I would go consult with other businesses, even in the hotel business. We had these meetings and they wanted to know how I operated and why I was so successful, what happens when people steal their towels and bedding. We never had that problem. When customers came in, we let them know that we appreciated their business. They were our friends and our customers, so when we got acquainted they wouldn't do anything like that.

"In my business of hotel, motel, food and beverage, I could sit down and figure our expenses. I could run down the list of figures and I could tell what I had to sell at a profit. Same way with liquor costs, I could figure out what I had to sell and still show a profit and pay for all of the expenses. But, I think that the logical thing in business is to let the people know that they're appreciated. A stranger never walks through my door. I think that's why we were so successful.

"The reason I sold Dream Island was that my children were out of school and we lost Dorina, our daughter. We didn't want to sell Dream Island, but we did. I didn't want to retire because I had always worked. Helen and I had five children: Gordon, Wayne, Judy, Marlian and Dorina; we now have nine grandchildren.

"After I sold Dream Island, a banker from Chicago hired me to put the Glen Eden Ranch together. I spent a year doing that. When we got it together and it was doing one good business, I hired an assistant manager and trained him with everything I knew. I could have stayed on working as general manager, but I didn't. I turned the keys over to Frank Leonard and went down to Arizona.

"In July of 1979 I was appointed special deputy sheriff by former Sheriff Nick DeLuca. In 1983 I was



"I TURNED THE KEYS OVER . . . AND WENT DOWN TO ARIZONA."

also appointed honorary park and outdoor recreation ranger by George O'Malley, director of parks at that time. In 1986 I was appointed honorary district wildlife manager."

Angelo Iacovetto is a very good fisherman. There were articles in The Denver Post about him fishing and smoking whitefish. One can see the effect that just one intelligent man can have on a community. My (Roger's) grandfather is an avid fisherman. Angelo entertains some of the people that head Colorado Parks and Recreation, as well as other Colorado officials or friends; Helen cooks the meals and he takes them night fishing on his pontoon boat. One rule he has is that 5:00 p.m. is cocktail time; he is a scotch-and-water man who loves his Chivas Regal. The best fishing we have ever had together was at night on Pearl Lake. My grandfather's idea of retirement is going down to Arizona for the winter and building a house. When the house gets done and sold, he and Helen pack up and move back to Routt County. He's always got something to do from sun up to sun down, and then we get to go night fishing.

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