

## THE HISTORIC STRATER HOTEL PRESENTS

# ROOM 424: THE BLOMSTROM FAMILY

**ROBERT BLOMSTROM (1920-2004)**  
**MARJORIE BARKER BLOMSTROM (1925-2005)**

**THEIR CHILDREN, RICK, JIM, AND CHRISTINE, WARMLY  
REMEMBER THE STRATER AS A FAMILY GATHERING SPOT  
AND A HOME AWAY FROM HOME**

## A DURANGO FAMILY LEGACY

The Blomstroms and Barkers were not only relatives, they were also great friends and at one time, co-managers of the Strater.

Robert, or Bob as he was known, was born in Holdrege, Nebraska and came to Colorado to attend Colorado State University. After two years in college he spent the next five years in the U.S. Army Air Corps during which time he met the love of his life, Marjorie Barker of Durango. With his military service complete, Bob returned to college at Indiana University where he earned undergraduate and masters degrees, and later a PhD degree from University of Colorado. After college he and his young family joined forces with Marjorie's brother, Earl Barker Jr., to co-manage the family owned Strater hotel.

It was Bob and Earl Jr. who

first realized the potential of the corner space of the building and joined forces to build the saloon, known today as the Diamond Belle. They then embarked upon the ambitious project of an entire hotel overhaul, from top to bottom. That meant that the old "Strater House" was to be redone from the basement to the rooftop. The utilities were the first to receive attention, then they went to work upgrading every bathroom and installing in-room closets. No area escaped their attention.

Bob later returned to his first love of teaching at Arizona State University, then at Michigan State University where he was the Director of the School of Hotel, Restaurant and Institutional Management. Appointed by MSU and the U.S. Government, he led a team of professors to Ankara, Turkey, for two years

with the mission of strengthening teaching methods in Turkish Universities.

Blomstrom authored several text books, was Vice President of the Educational Institute of the American Hotel and Motel Association and served as the President and Chairman of the Board of the council on Hotel, Restaurant, and Institutional Education.

In 1983 Bob and Marge retired to Sun City, Arizona, where they enjoyed warm winters, spending cooler summers in Durango. They shared the next 21 years enjoying friends, family, golf, and adventures.

Bob was successful in every area of his life—career, husband, father, friend. Without a doubt, his spirit and influence live on in the Diamond Belle, and indeed, throughout the Strater in all of its beauty and splendor.

## MARJORIE BARKER BLOMSTROM—HER INFLUENCE BEHIND THE SCENES

A lover of art and music, Marjorie and her sister-in-law Jentra Barker, were a formidable collaborative team when it came to the upgrade and design of the Strater Hotel undertaken by their husbands in the late 1950's.

Marge had grown up in Durango and graduated from

Durango High School while her father, Earl Barker Sr. operated the hotel. She attended Fort Lewis College for two years and then transferred to the University of Colorado in Boulder where she received her BFA. After her marriage to Bob and their return to Durango to co-manage the hotel with her

brother Earl and his wife Jentra, the two women and their creativity were instrumental in the design and furnishings of the revamped rooms.

Although Marge lived in several places after the Blomstrom's moved from Durango, she always considered this her home.



*The Blomstrom Children:*

**Rick Blomstrom** was in charge of the Food & Beverage department and later the Accounting Department. As a youngster he carried the first sandwich board by the train depot advertising the Strater. Rick is retired from the hotel business and lives in Austin, TX.

**Jim Blomstrom** was the hotel's general manager for several years and is also retired from the hotel industry. He remembers his first job as cleaning the Diamond Circle Theatre (now the Hentry Strater Theater) bar at about age 10. Jim lives in San Antonio, TX.

**Christine Blomstrom Montgomery** is an RN who has devoted most of her career to caring for veterans. She has fond memories of helping her grandmother pick flowers from her garden for arrangements which graced the Strater lobby; and of her Aunt Lucille (Earl's oldest sister), who worked for many years as a desk clerk and was known for her welcoming smile and cheery disposition.