

Tour de Garage



When the Engels learned of an 1890s-era bar for sale in Vancouver, Washington, they purchased it and had it shipped to their Lamorinda home. Photos Cathy Dausman

Vintage Saloon:

It is almost always casino night for Terry and Nancy Engel. Truth be told, the couple agrees they spend more time in their four-car bay than in any other room in the house. And why not? Engel and his wife have transformed the space so convincingly that a newcomer's jaw drops when first stepping inside.

The heavily ornate red and black colors of the drapes and walls, casino carpeting, poker tables and a vintage 1890s full length bar are the show stoppers in a lounge filled with memorabilia from Reno's old Harold's Club.

Terry Engel jokingly calls their space "a den of alcohol, tobacco and gambling."

"It has all the vices, except for the dancing girls," he adds. The solid oak furnishings show their age in a fine patina. Engel made the frosted glass cashier sign, and added a tin ceiling, stained glass skylights, a spittoon, mood lights and wall mirrors to make everything sparkle.

Only the garage door lift tracks betray the room's original design, and yes – even that is fully functional.

The Engels have owned this home for 12 years and began collecting casino artifacts shortly after moving in. It is a decidedly joint effort.

"My wife is as guilty (of expanding the collection) as I am," Engel confides. "A month doesn't go by that we're not adding something."

But this is not a "hands off" collection – it is the place for a weekly gathering of Engel's friends, and almost everything works. Frankie Avalon croons "Venus" from a Wurlitzer jukebox. The roulette wheel ball, when thrown, stops on black-17, and the custom poker tables are equipped with automatic card shufflers. There is usually a sports event airing on television, and the bar is well stocked.

At Christmas poker tables are topped with red and black tablecloths and small trees and become dining space for family and friends. Although the space is equipped with fire sprinklers, smoking is not allowed inside. But Nancy has little worry about spills. "The casino carpeting hides almost everything," she says, adding she even welcomes her brother's dog.

... continued on page D6

... continued from page D1



Engel's trophy business has allowed him to do some of the glass etching on display at their casino garage.



The Wurlitzer jukebox plays 78 LP records. It is stacked with music from Frankie Avalon, Ritchie Valens, the Everly Brothers and Jerry Lee Lewis