Rekindling fond memories of The Silver Rail

ronto will know about The Silver Rail. It was the first restaurant in Ontario licensed to serve mixed drinks, and it was a hit with the public from the first day it opened, in April of that year.

Nick Yioldassis and Jim Demeroutis, the present owners of The Silver Rail, have come up with an unusual way of celebrating their establishment's 40th anniversary, which will be observed from April 27 to May 9.

Both men are members of the Variety Club of Ontario, which is currently raising money for a much-needed swimming pool for handlcapped chil-dren at Variety Village. So, anyone

> **Barris** Beat

who makes a donation of \$25 to Variety Village gets a ticket that will entitie that person to a dinner at The Silver Rail during the celebration, at 1947 prices. There's a special menu for that period of time (roast beef, for example, is sallable to anyone who presents a ticket obtained from the Variety Club. Also on that special menu, cocktails are about 65 cents and beer is 45 cents.

You can phone in your donations to 416-961-7300, and besides the ticket for a Silver Rail dinner, you get a receipt for lax purposes.

The Sliver Rail opened on April 2, 1947. Ontario's second licence went to the Barclay Hotel and the third went to the Club Norman - both places now defunct. Such long-established hotels as the Royal York and the King Edward got their liquor licences

shortly thereafter. But for the first couple of years, The Silver Rail was the most popular eat-ery (with drinks) in Toronto, Lineups, especially on Fridayand Saturday nights, began at the door, at Yonge and Shuter Sts., went along Shuter to Victoria St., and then up Victoria. There were no reservations, but patrons were willing to endure long waits just to try out the new "dining lounge." This room was (and is) in the basement; a "cocktail lounge" was also opened on the street level.

A life of independence

Canada's "Man in Motion" Rick Hansen is just one of many people who have recorded remarkable achievements despite severe spinal cord injuries. "A Life Of Independence", airing Friday, May 1, 9 - 10:00 p.m., on Global, salutes Hansen and other disable people who, through amazing technological advances, have re-entered the world of the able-bodied. "A Life of Independence", narrated by Veteran Canadian actor Raymond Burr, is produced by Hy Perspectives Media Group in association with the Global Television Network.

In addition to a segment on Hansen, the special features a group of six quadriplegic, respiratordependent men who have chosen to leave the hospital ward and live on their own in a development called Creekview 202. These men are among the most severely disabled men in the world to live independent

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lobster tank, just inside the window facing Yonge St., from which patrons could choose the exact lobster they wanted - while it was still alive and,

early days at The Silver Rail. She began working there as a waitress a month after it opened. Now aged 77,

She remembers that customers were eager to try out the new cocktails available - a Pink Lady one day, a Gimlet or a Manhattan or a Tom Collins the next time. "Very few

Partly because of its location, the Rail became a regular port of call for the City Hall crowd. Mona remembers Toronto mayors Nathan Phillips, Allan Lamport and Bill Summerville, as well as many members of council.

Shuter St., also provided many distinguished visitors, from Sir Ernest Mac-Millan and Walter Susskind and Seiji Ozawa (when they were Toronto Symphony conductors) to Harry Belafonte and Marge and Gower Champion. Such other visiting entertainers as Johnnie Ray, Barbara McNair and Kenny Rogers also frequented The Sil-

the Art Snider Trio playing there, along with singer Betty Jean Fergu-son, the Halifax beauty who already had been a Miss Canada. The last act to play there was The Deep River

ter her two growing sons. She went to work in an office - hired by a Silver Rall customer. She liked her new



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always liked being a waltress, bethus, incontrovertibly fresh.

Mona Borland remembers those Mona still works there (as a hostess) two days a week.

"I do remember those long line-ups," she told me. "Sometimes they started right at the bottom of these stairs and went all the way around to

Victoria St. and beyond."

people drank wine, then," she added.

Massey Hall, virtually across

In the early 1950s, the Hall began a policy of offering entertainment in the dining lounge. Mona Borland recalls

In the mid-1950s, Mona left the Rail because a change in working hours made it impossible for her to look afcause you meet so many people," she said. "And you get a real insight into people." She also worked hard to upgrade the image of waitresses, which, she says, was "not very good" in Mike Georgas, one of the original

owners of the Rail, bought out his partners after a falling out. (There was a court case, during which details of the Rall's amazing financial success raised a lot of eyebrows.) But by 1961, his health was poor, so he sold the business to Nick Yioidassis and Jim Demeroutls (who had restaurant

experience in Ottawa). A girl who worked in the check room sometimes called in Mona to work in her place when she needed a day off. Nick noticed that Mona knew her way around - he didn't know she had worked there - and re-hired her. She has been there now for 26 contin-uous years. "And I still love the work," she told me.

Nick jokingly said he was going to get Mona to dress in 1947 clothes for the 40th anniversary celebration. Mona laughed and said, "All right, but no pictures."

If there was ever any doubt as to what a fine actor Paul Soles is, it vanishes long before the final curtain falls

ner play in which Soles and Leon Bibb are starring at the Royal Alexandra

Theatre in Toronto. For a long time, Soles was regarded as a competent host and or interviewer on a succession of television shows (Take 30, This Is The Law, Canada After Dark, Beyond Reason, etc.) that exhibited only the tip of the Soles

In recent years, he has done cred-Itable acting work in Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto and other centres, in such noted plays as Talley's Folly and The Diary Of Anne Frank.

But never before has he had as rich and rewarding a role as that of the feisty, charming, indomitable 81-yearold yarn-spinner in this deliciously funny and emotionally touching play.

Leon Bibb, who plays his park-bench partner (also made up to be an octogenarian), is also quite effective. But the Paul Soles role is stronger, more fully rounded, and so the night belongs to Soles. There was an extra bonus to the

ing the intermission, theatre owner Ed Mirvish steered me toward a man and casually introduced him as "the author of the play." Having been a Herb Gardner fan for years, I was as thrilled at meeling

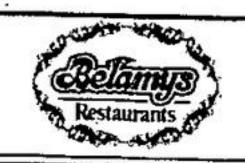
opening night at the Royal Alex. Dur-

case old age. His most famous play, A Thousand Clowns, has long been a favorite of mine. I also liked the film version of The Goodbye People, although it was not a success, and I unblushingly told him how much I admire his work.

During our brief chat, I asked Gordner whether there were any plans for a movie version of I'm Not Rappa-







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