

Entertainment Outlook

Rekindling fond memories of The Silver Rail

Anyone who was of drinking age back in 1947 and lived in or near Toronto 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 handicapped children at Variety Village. So, anyone

One of the Rail's features was a 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, thus, incontrovertibly fresh.

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

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 people drank wine, then," she added.

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.

Massey Hall, virtually across Shuter St., also provided many distinguished visitors, from Sir Ernest MacMillan 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 Silver Rail.

In the early 1950s, the Rail began a policy of offering entertainment in the dining lounge. Mona Borland recalls the Art Snider Trio playing there, along with singer Betty Jean Ferguson, the Halifax beauty who already had been a Miss Canada. The last act to play there was The Deep River Boys.

In the mid-1950s, Mona left the Rail because a change in working hours made it impossible for her to look after her two growing sons. She went to work in an office — hired by a Silver Rail customer. She liked her new

boss, but she hated office work. "I've always liked being a waitress, because 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 those days.

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 Rail's amazing financial success raised a lot of eyebrows.) But by 1961, his health was poor, so he sold the business to Nick Yioldassis and Jim Demeroutis (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 continuous 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

on I'm Not Rappaport, the Herb Gardner 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 iceberg.

In recent years, he has done creditable 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-year-old 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 opening night at the Royal Alex. During 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 meeting him as I was by seeing his play. His gift is in his ability to mine the humor

out of the harsh realities of life, in this 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 Gardner whether there were any plans for a movie version of I'm Not Rappaport.

Barris Beat

who makes a donation of \$25 to Variety Village gets a ticket that will entitle 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 available 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 tax purposes.

The Silver Rail opened on April 2, 1947. Ontario's second licence went to the Barclay Hotel and the third went to the Club Normans — 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 eatery (with drinks) in Toronto. Line-ups, especially on Friday and Saturday nights, began at the door at Yonge and Shuter Sts., and then 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 disabled 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, respirator-dependent 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 lives.

The McGibbon Hotel
79 Main St. S. 877-3388

ENTERTAINING THIS WEEK

JOHN McDONALD
and
SOUND INVESTMENT
Country Western
Country Rock
THURSDAY, FRIDAY & SATURDAY

Jessie's Dining Lounge

THE FINEST DINING EVERY THURSDAY & FRIDAY
Served 11:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

SPECIAL PRICE ONLY **\$5.10** INCLUDING TAX

OTOOLE'S Georgetown Market Place

15 Min. or Free - Lunch Special

GEORGETOWN LITTLE THEATRE PRODUCTIONS INC.

Presents

TEN LITTLE INDIANS

BY AGATHA CHRISTIE
DIRECTED BY NEVILLE WORSNOP
JOHN ELLIOTT THEATRE
8 Church Street, Georgetown

APRIL 24, 25, 29, 30 and MAY 1, 2

Curtain: 8:00 p.m.

Tickets at door: **\$6.50** BOX OFFICE: **877-3700**

Reduced rates Wednesdays and Thursdays for Seniors, Students and Groups \$4.00

By Kind Permission Edmund French Inc.

Belamys Restaurants

COME AND ENJOY SUNDAY BRUNCH

We Serve From 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

265 Guelph St. Georgetown 873-1888

To participate in this Special Feature

Call one of our professional advertising representatives at The Herald
45 Guelph Street
877-2201

THE RAVINE

IS NOW OPEN FOR DINNER

HOURS: WEDNESDAY TO SUNDAY From 5 p.m. on
NOW LICENCED UNDER L.L.B.D.

873-0113 or 457-2240
267 GUELPH ST., GEORGETOWN

The Terra Cotta Inn

Nestled in the middle of the quiet, humble village of Terra Cotta is an inn that's unforgettable for the scenery and delightful food and service.

The Terra Cotta Inn is the perfect spot to have a relaxing lunch before facing the afternoon's hectic rush.

For starters, consider fresh Atlantic mussels in basil and tomato sauce on a bed of pasta. There's also gravlax salmon, pate maison on croûte or anti-pasta to choose from.

Soups are always delicious and prepared daily with fresh ingredients while French onion soup is a delight anytime.

There are three types of salads to choose from, including the popular Caesar, la salade gratinee and a salad featuring the best of what the season has to offer.

The entrees are what everyone surely waits for. There is a good variety to choose from, including brook trout, pork medallions, omelettes, milk fed calf liver, sirloin steak and supreme of chicken. And don't leave the table without trying some of the tasty homemade desserts. You won't be disappointed!

WIN \$25.00

WHO TAKES VISA, MASTER CARD AND AMERICAN EXPRESS?

TAKE-OUT DELIVERY PARTY ORDERS

MARNY'S FOOD HUT

•Roasted Chicken Dinners
•Buffalo Style Wings
•Hamburgers
•Fries
•Coffee

TAKE OUT FREE DELIVERY

873-0430

509 GUELPH ST., NORVAL

THE GOURMET'S ALMANAC

SPRING EDITION

Dining Guide

Featured Restaurant Of The Week!

The Terra Cotta Inn

CHARMING VICTORIAN INN ON THE BANKS OF THE CREDIT RIVER

— OPEN TUESDAY TO SUNDAY —
Four Licenced Dining Rooms With Banquet Facilities For 100 or Less

175 King St. TERRA COTTA 453-8281

The Colonel's taste is best.

Kentucky Fried Chicken

Kentucky Nuggets

6 Nuggets \$2.25 9 Nuggets \$3.39 20 Nuggets \$6.95

116-A GUELPH ST. 877-5241

Cellar

16 WARD ST., GEORGETOWN

Lobster SEASON COMING SOON

877-0652 or 846-8811

ANSWER:

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE NO.

- RULES:**
- Simply answer the above questions and fill out the form before and you could have a chance of receiving a \$25.00 voucher to be used at the Featured Restaurant Of The Week.
 - Answers must be received each week no later than the Monday of 12 noon following publication.
 - Send your answers to the Herald, c/o The Gourmets Almanac, 45 Guelph St., Georgetown, Ontario L7G 2T8.
 - First correct answer will be selected. Judges' decision will be final.
 - Postal employees and immediate families and participating advertisers and families not eligible.
 - Must be 18 years of age or older.