

Millie says goodbye to Mohawk Inn

After 30 years in same job Campbellville waitress retires

By JENNIFER ENRIGHT

Millie Dredge didn't think much of the first job she was assigned at the Mohawk Inn in Campbellville. Working in housekeeping turned out not to be her cup of tea - but in her case it might be better to alter that slightly. Let's just say her cup of coffee.

After her stint in housekeeping, Millie switched over to waitressing and therein began a more than three-decades long career that began in 1967. What hooked her?

"My first tip was \$100 for a cup of coffee," says Millie, who retired this August. "And I decided I kind of liked it."

That historic pairing of Millie and Mohawk began simply, but over the years Mohawk has come to be associated with Millie for many people. As a waitress, she developed a loyal following. There were customers that asked specifically for her. People like Strathroy resident Murray McTaggart,

retired now, used to stay over at Mohawk Inn on Thursday nights. McTaggart always wanted Millie to serve him.

She had a following of local people too; among them Miltonian Mary Price and her late husband Stan. Stan had been Millie's baseball coach when she was growing up in Brookville where her parents once ran the general store, then known as Goians. Mary says Millie was always "very friendly" and they really liked having her as their waitress.

Alex So, the general manager at Mohawk Inn, says Millie will be missed, and not only by her customers. So describes her as an exemplary employee - always on time, always classy, always offering exceptional service.

Alex says Millie was special, but not only as a waitress. What stands out in his mind is her loyalty. There aren't many people he believes that spend more than three decades working at the same place.

Millie worked at Mohawk for so many years that she knew all of the owners beginning with Bert and Marguerite Day, the couple who first opened Mohawk Inn back in 1967. There was Alex Hacker and Anna Spencer, David Shelley, and the current owner James So, as well as others that she knew.

Not surprisingly, over the many years that she worked at the well-known inn north of Highway 401, she witnessed her share of changes. Millie was around when the inn featured a railway coach on rails just outside the building; a coach that was once the private coach of former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker.

Millie, who moved to Ontario from Saskatchewan when she was in her teens, recalls having meetings in that coach. The girl from out west sat in a private car made famous by Dief, who was born in Ontario but moved to Saskatchewan when he was young.

That was one of the nice aspects about her job, but there were many others. Millie says she simply loved being a waitress and she took pride in her work. "I loved every customer I ever had. I never had any complaints. That's part of the reason that I stayed," says Millie, who can describe in detail the look of the tables with their white table cloths, service plates, and wine glasses each supplied with a napkin inside the glass or the uniform that she once wore - black pants, a

white top with a black vest, a black bow tie, and on the feet high heeled shoes.

The menu, now and in years past, has always been attractive. Millie remembers some of the popular items - deep dish apple pie with caramel topping, prime rib, Chicken Apple Jack, a house specialty that consisted of a breast of chicken stuffed with butter and cinnamon and topped with an apple fritter. And there were always the little extras there to entice people - cheese dip with celery and carrots or fresh bread and cheese available at the bar. People would find their way to the butcher's block by the bar where they would get something to eat. It was popular. "It operated on the honour system," says Millie. "People would put 50 cents in a little jar."

Millie has served some celebrated figures in her long career as a waitress: sports celebrities Eddy Shack and Jean Belliveau, among others; country and western musicians such as Ian and Sylvia Tyson, Gordie Tapp and Johnny Hunter; and an up and coming group that was unknown to her in her early days as a waitress. "I served the Bee Gees and I didn't even know who they were," recalls Millie. "They were young kids and I was young too. They were nice."

Looking back on it all, Millie feels she was fortunate. "I was lucky to have a job where I could meet and make new friends and also have a lot of fun and good times. And I got paid for it."

Today, though, she wants to spend more of her time with her five sons - Doug, Cameron, Mark, Jeff, and Barry - as well as her four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Millie, who describes herself as an active person, says she will have more time too to play golf and perhaps travel. And she may even break out the knitting needles in her role as grandmother and great-grandmother, although that might be hard to imagine for Mare Borino, a waitress and bartender at Mohawk Inn. The Millie she remembers is someone who could move swiftly around a table wearing pumps - and she could look lovely and elegant while doing it.

Says Millie, "Maybe some day I will be knitting in a rocking chair."



The Turner Report



A few days ago mortgage rates - in fact, interest rates in general - went up for the first time in almost a year. Yeah, rates are still very low, but this latest bump has more than a few people worried. Should you join them?

Truth is, I think we are entering a transitional phase, which could turn positive or negative in short order. Every indicator now points to rising interest rates over the next few months, since higher energy costs and increased government spending are inflationary. The guys at the Bank of Canada are well aware the cost of money has been ultra-low by historic standards for years, and are bound to get it back to more normal levels.

This is already having an impact on construction and real estate across the country. New housing starts are down close to 20% across the country but, as I wrote here before, the slowdown in places like Milton, Oakville and Burlington will be modest, if it materializes at all, due to strong buyer demand and scarce land reserves.

Almost everywhere else, though, the real estate boom is starting to wind down. As the prime rate - now 4.5% - turns into 5% and beyond, rising mortgage rates will hurt the ability of first-time buyers to jump into a market where real estate prices have risen by double-digit amounts yearly. This is about to become the next big media story, since Canadians have built up such a phenomenal dependence on the value of real estate. While price fluctuations should be viewed as normal, the first dips experienced in the GTA (coming in the next few months) will be greeted with screaming headlines. Ignore them.

Sure, real estate, construction, renovation, Rona and The Home Depot have been engines of the economy, and there is good reason to believe everything could start slowing up this winter - especially with the cost of heating oil

and natural gas eating into household income. And with oil so expensive, Canada's loonie will go higher, hurting manufacturers. Already this year, we've lost 108,000 manufacturing jobs.

So, the immediate reality is more expensive loan and mortgage payments. Higher fuel bills. Slowing real estate appreciation. Less economic growth. This is a scenario we have not seen now for a decade, and the hardest hit will be new homebuyers who jumped into housing when it was the most expensive ever, and mortgaged themselves to the gills.

Should you worry about the economic future? Hardly - there is no recession on the horizon, no return to 10% mortgages, no stock market bust. But don't ignore things, either. A slugging housing market does call for a few actions:

If you are one of those new real estate owners, then I would suggest locking in your mortgage. If you have real estate equity then, stay variable for a few more months. If you have been thinking about cashing out of your house, then list it now, because the economy may well be more difficult after Christmas. If you want to buy real estate, be ready to pounce in February. If you like investing, then the TSX should be fun - all shot up on Katrina's energy legacy. If you have too much debt, best pay it off.

And, hey, why not make your mortgage tax-deductible? I'll tell you how, next week.

Garth Turner is a broadcaster, journalist, author and entrepreneur who lives in Campbellville. More at www.garth.ca.



A NEW ELEGANTLY DESIGNED BANQUET FACILITY



Accommodates 140 Guests
Nestled into the foothills of
the Escarpment

- Weddings • Banquets • Retirements • Birthday Parties
- Anniversaries • Company Functions • Classroom Facilities
- Outdoor Marquee Functions

Customized Menus, Decor &
Entertainment Packages

**Book Your Christmas
Party Now!**



Visit Infusion at

www.infusioncatering.com • 905-847-6809

Visit the Bob Rumball Centre at

www.bobrumball.org • 905-878-4932

