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The face of downtown Milton is changing — for the better. Recent improvements to the streetscape have made it a more attractive place to shop, and several new retail shops are coming to complement the good mix of existing stores. Milton's charming town core boasts a variety of goods and services, friendly clerks and comparative prices. Each week on this page, we invite you to meet and learn a little more about the background and philosophy of the individual stores, their services and their people.

CHARLES HOTEL

By Jane Muller

It's all in the family at the Charles Hotel, 270 Main St. Milton, where brothers Adam, Alvin and Nick Chuchmach run the drinking and dining establishment.

The original portion of the building was constructed some 150 years ago but the Chuchmachs came to own the hotel 16 years ago.

Adam and the late Peter Chuchmach, the fourth brother involved in the business, began looking for a hotel to buy several years after the family moved to Toronto from Manitoba.

Nick, who had been a barber for 14 years was asked to join his younger brothers in the venture and he did. Now his sons Terry and Donald have joined the hotel staff, acting as waiters and bartenders.

He calls the changes in Milton since his arrival "almost unbelievable." He and his wife Mary came to a country farmers' town where there were no houses for sale and empty lots weren't often sold to out-of-towners.

With the help of a local real estate saleswoman they found a house which they still live in today.

The hotel has changed with the town. A lounge was added in 1968 along with an expanded kitchen and both opened Jan. 14, 1969.

"Shortly after we built on the lounge was the beginning of the end of old Milton," Nick Chuchmach recalls.

He credits then Mayor Brian Best for initiating the changes in Milton which began with a steady improvement of the sewage system which allowed for further construction in the area.

"For years developers met in the Bear Rug Room (located on the basement level of the hotel). Then finally the move came," said Nick.

The Chuchmachs were allowed to sell liquor at the Charles Hotel in 1968 but only after a local plebiscite was held. At that time there was a staff of 40 at work in the Charles but when liquor licences began to be issued to many local restaurants, the staff was dropped to 24 to counter the drop in business and interest rates which doubled from 6 per cent in one summer, according to Nick.

As new drinking establishments opened in Milton, business at the long standing Charles would drop off for a while but the regulars would come back.

"At one time up to about 1970, when you came into a lounge you were supposed to sit and drink," remembers Nick.

But he and his brothers wanted to offer food to the lounge patrons and it took some persuasion including a letter to a cabinet minister before food could be served there.

"We could have been one of the first places in Ontario to desegregate customers," Nick said.



Nick and Alvin Chuchmach along with their brother Adam provide something for everyone—from dining to drinking to entertainment and rooms for rent—at the Charles Hotel.

Soon after taking possession of the hotel the wall which separated the men's room from the ladies' room was removed and the large room provides an area for live bands. Country and western or country rock bands are featured every Thursday, Friday and Saturday night at the Charles Hotel's Sportsmen's lounge.

"We have 22 renting rooms and almost all are rented to residents," he said.

The rooms were rewired, remodeled and heated for the first time when the Chuchmach brothers first took over in 1965.

Nick explains he looks after the "worrying" end of the hotel business, spending much of his time in the office which was built as part of the lounge addition in 1968. Alvin looks after the food while Adam specializes in overseeing the bars.

Alvin's grandson has joined the hotel staff and he along with Nick's sons take orders from floor foreman Paul Lee.

The Charles Hotel includes the Trident Lounge for quiet drinking, the Sportsmen's Lounge, a dining room and the Bear Rug Dining Room which is often used for business luncheon meetings.

The Charles Hotel has taken on a slightly different purpose one day a year for the past two years when it serves as the Ukrainian Pavilion during Milton's Festival of Countries. The location is quite fitting as the Chuchmachs' family roots are in the Ukraine.

The Chuchmachs' community involvement also includes an annual golf tournament in memory of brother Peter Chuchmach who died of leukemia. The proceeds are donated to the Milton Chapter of the Canadian Cancer Society.

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