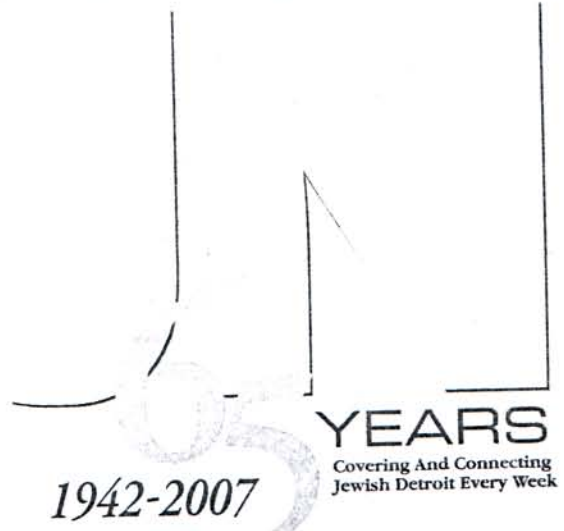


A JEWISH RENAISSANCE MEDIA PUBLICATION  
\$1.50 SEPT. 6-12, 2007 / 23-29 ELUL 5767

JNonline.us

Arts & Entertainment  
THE BEST OF EVERYTHING



## Big Rock Gathers No Moss

Birmingham chop house builds on innovation and success.

**H**is reputation follows him and, as such, he is expected to keep creating changes at his restaurants.

So it is nothing new anymore when Norm LePage takes a successful restaurant and, rather than have it stagnantly rest on its laurels, continues to make alterations ... It's uncanny that improvements seem to happen every time.

In 1984, Norm resurrected the old Birmingham Grand Trunk Western Railway Depot and created Norman's Eton Street Station ... only to transform it 13 years later into a fresh and better dining destination with another new name ... 1997 saw it become a bona fide chop house ... Big Rock Chop House, that is.

In those 10 years, owners Norm and Bonnie LePage, with partners Ray and Mary Nicholson, have seen about 1.5 million people served in the restaurant alone, since the inception of its new concept and name ... With this amount of customers, Norm and Bonnie certainly had to be doing something right again!

A name change in itself is nothing new ... It has been done many times before ... But this one by Norm was together with a complete operational turnover as well ... Taking a highly successful restaurant and completely changing it in all aspects is most times unheard of.

But Norm still isn't satisfied ... And already the area in which Big Rock stands is being worked on for what will eventually become a complete complex, housing the present restaurant and Reserve banquet facility, condominium lofts, underground parking for those residing in the lofts, retail space, etc.

Still with Norm these past 10 years are

Vera Day Rizer, general manager; Helen McCasland, office manager; Kevin Eskanian, head waiter; Carolyn Clark, catering director; Craig Wilson, bartender; Michael Joseph, head steward; and Alan Gonzalez, waiter at the upstairs Got Rocks ...

Where there were seven managers back in 1997, today, between Big Rock and Reserve, the count is 21 ... Reserve now also has its own kitchen staff plus the addition of a garden area with covered terrace gazebo for the likes of enchanting marital "I Do" sessions.

Executive Chef Jeff Rose, noted for his ability to make improvisations on standard items along with high quality culinary presentations, has been with Norm and Bonnie only three years, but his talents have blended in excellently with Big Rock's 10-year numbers ... Over 15,000 pounds of calamari, more than 180,000 pounds of seafood, over 700,000 pounds of beef, etc. ... In the name change's first year, bone-in filet and whitefish were the biggest sellers ... Today, they continue on top together with Dover sole, salmon and tuna mignon ... Big, too, are the lamb chops, veal chops and short ribs.

Big Rock kitchen hours for lunch and dinner are Monday and Tuesday, 11-10; Wednesday and Thursday, 11-11; Friday and Saturday, 11-Midnight ... In the upstairs Got Rocks, food and liquor are served Monday-Saturday, 5 p.m.-1 a.m.

The time for a change was in direct accordance with Norm LePage's way of life in the restaurant business ... Since the days of 1971 when he and Bonnie owned



Danny Raskin  
Senior Columnist

a little Southern Creme coffee counter and donut shop in Dearborn Heights and their first restaurant, Squire's Table, in Commerce Township, success to him was doing it better, which he has constantly done.

Eton Street had been a winner for 14 years, a highly regarded American Bistro ... Norm visualized having a chop house and steak house

and has turned it into a dining phenom ... While so many restaurateurs hope for better economic times, Norm revels in business being up from 15 percent last year to an even greater 35 percent today.

Norm LePage has again found his ultimate dining happiness in Big Rock Chop House.

**PEI WEI ASIAN Diner** (pronounced pay-way), "little brother" of P.F. Chang's China Bistro, has opened on Orchard Lake Road, corner of 14 Mile, Farmington Hills ... It seats around 70, open Sunday-Thursday, 11-9, Friday and Saturday, 11-10.

**NEW THREE-COURSE** luncheon menu is at Il Posto Ristorante, Southfield, Monday through Friday, soup or salad, choice of three entrees (with vegetables and potatoes) and dessert, \$18.

**MAIL DEPT.** ... "We went to the Falafel House on Orchard Lake Road just south of Maple, West Bloomfield, and enjoyed its outstanding falafel stuffed with pieces of shawarma." ... Karl and Margie Stern.

**DURING ITS RECENT 20th anniversary**, with one of the events being celebrity impersonators riding the trains, Dennis

Green, marketing manager for Detroit People Mover, rode with "Marilyn Monroe and others ... Sitting across was a gent who kept staring at her ... Finally, he leaned forward and asked, "Excuse me, but are you the REAL Marilyn Monroe?" ... Dennis joined riders in laughing, and said, "She looks pretty good for having been dead over 40 years, don't you think?" ... The fellow quietly exited at the next station.

**REUNION DEPT.** ... This Saturday, Sept. 8, 6:30-midnight, is Detroit Henry Ford High's big 40th by class of 1967 at Laurel Manor, Schoolcraft Road, Livonia ... \$80 at the door, \$150 per couple ... For more info, call Esther Allweiss Ingber, (248) 967-6380 ... 1957 Detroit Central High shindig is Saturday, Oct. 6, at Pi Banquet Hall, Southfield ... For more info, call Barbara Kanarek Dorfman, (248) 626-2228, or (248) 514-7222.

**CONGRATS** ... To Betty Simons on her birthday ... To Bruce Guttman on his birthday ... To Linda Powell on her birthday ... To Jerry Zuckerman on his birthday ... To Brandon Gilbert on his birthday ... To Aileen Leichtman Bloom on her birthday ... To Dr. Morton Lazar on his 94th birthday ... To Aaron Friedman on his 84th birthday ... To Roslyn August on her 75th birthday ... To Seth Stern on his 21st birthday ... To Sheldon Yarsike on his birthday ... To Sheila and Donald Zimberg on their anniversary ... To Mikki and James Hill on their anniversary ... To Aaron and Dolly Friedman on their 60th anniversary. □

Danny's e-mail address is  
dannyraskin@sbcglobal.net.