



Putting the “Um-pa-pa” in a Lifetime of Polka

Local area musician Steve Pucker and his wife Marge received awards from the United Musicians Polka Association of Pennsylvania (UMPAPA) at their annual dinner and dance on Sunday, November 11, 2007, at the S.N.P.J. Club in Sygan, Pennsylvania.

Steve received, “The Trustees’ Honor Roll Award” for a Lifetime of Performance, Dedication and Promotion of Polka Music through the years. Marge received “The Booster of the Year Award” for her loyalty, continued support and dedication to the UMPAPA organization.

Steve started playing with the Gene Viola Band in 1949 after a mere six months of lessons. He joined the Joe Tasz Band in 1956 and was playing with them when they appeared on the Steubenville TV Station, Channel 9, each Sunday for the first two months of 1959. In 1960, they recorded two 45-records. While with Joe Tasz, Steve played saxophone and drums.



In 1966, Steve formed his own band called “The Royal Trio,” where he played the drums. After a few years, he started playing the sax again and formed another band called the “Vel-Dets.” They played several nights a week. Finally, in 1980, he retired due to back problems.

In 2005, Steve’s friend George Suhon convinced him to record a CD with him in his studio, which sold at a record pace (a few are still available). To date, Steve has appeared and sung with 10 local polka bands.

Steve and Marge still attend Polka dances to support the local bands, of which they’ve been a valuable part for the past 57 years. □

YMCA Indian Princesses Bring Dads and Daughters Together

When it comes to quality father/daughter time, the South Hills YMCA’s Indian Princess program offers up some of the best fun and greatest memories to be had in the area. What at first can seem a bit unusual for the busy working father (dads square dancing?), quickly makes way for lifelong friendships and memories that are, in the words of the credit card commercial, priceless.

“My kids love the program,” said John Mincin, a Peters Township resident who is hoping to introduce the Indian Princesses program to more South Hills communities such as South Fayette. His daughters Kimberly, age eight, and Samantha, age five, are

active in the groups’ many activities, including campouts and father-daughter dances.

Like most of the men in the group, Mincin is most impressed by the friendships he and his daughters have formed.

“I’m best friends with all the (dads),” Mincin explained. “The girls are all best friends.”

The organization follows the school calendar with recruitment in the fall. The national group has a hierarchy that begins with YMCA-wide events (known as the Longhouse), “Nation” events that involve the community, and Tribe events that generally break down according to the school. Mincin would like to see South Fayette’s elementary school represented next year.

The group regularly meets for dances, ice cream socials, pizza parties, recreation and – three times each year – camp outs. They use the Kon-o-kwee and Deer Valley campgrounds for their outings. They are seeking new members and encourage all to inquire about joining.

Mincin has noticed how his daughters have truly grown and matured with the program. “The first year, Kimmy didn’t want to do the rope swing,” at the Kon-o-kwee campsite, Mincin said. The rope swing is part of an extensive obstacle course that the girls tackle with their dads. It didn’t take long for Mincin’s daughter to conquer her fear. “It takes awhile to build up courage and confidence.”

Mincin is happy to answer any questions about the Indian Princess program. Interested dads may call him at 412-337-3062. For additional information about the father-son Indian Guides or Questers, an organization for older children and teens, please call Kate Keegan at the South Hills YMCA (412-833-5600) or visit princesspatter.org. □



The Mighty Papago Princesses at their fall campout enjoy unseasonably warm weather and a large pile of leaves.



Ferguson's Pub opens in old Mariani's spot



There's a new Pub in town! Ferguson's Pub and Restorante, which bills itself as "an Irish bar and an Italian restaurant," has opened at the location formerly where Mariani's Restaurant stood at 611 Millers Run Road. Mariani's was badly flooded in the aftermath of Hurricane Ivan over three years ago. The former owners renovated the interior completely after the flood but were never able to get back on their feet.

Ferguson's is owned by Anthony Ferguson, who formerly lived in South Fayette in the Canongate neighborhood as a child. He graduated from high school in 2000 and has worked in the food service business since as a bartender and bar/restaurant manager. Most notably he was formerly a manager at Town Tavern on the South Side but his dream was to have his own restaurant and bar.

When he learned that the old Mariani's was available, he thought it was just what he was looking for.

Ferguson's is proud of the fact that much of the food offered is homemade and uses family recipes. The restaurant offers a variety of appetizers including homemade fried zucchini, onion rings, fresh cut fries served with Mariani's original meat sauce and melted provolone or with Tony's wing sauce. Listed as "Too Good to be Called Appetizers" are Cousin Zach's Bruschetta, Tony's Soon-To-Be-Famous Chicken Wings and Cousin Mark's Fresh cut, beer-battered Chicken Strips.

At a recent lunch visit, we tried the meaty and tasteful chicken wings (Buffalo and garlic parmesan variety); the fresh garlic and parmesan were abundant. Ferguson's has wisely chosen to keep Mariani's wedding soup recipe, for which the former restaurant was well known. Hamburgers at Ferguson's are large and perfectly cooked. We tried the Buffalo Blue Burger and the Southwest Burger. Both were accompanied by fresh cut French fries which native Pittsburgers will appreciate. The Southwest Burger was topped with fresh, homemade onion rings, bacon, cheddar cheese and BBQ sauce. The Buffalo Blue Burger has wing sauce and blue cheese. Much too much for us to eat but it will thrill a bigger appetite!

Ferguson's also offers a large variety of Pub Salads including a Buffalo chicken salad and a traditional Pittsburgh-style grilled chicken salad with fresh cut fries. There are all types of sandwiches and hoagies offered as well.

For dinner the restaurant features Mariani's sauce recipes on their "Build Your Own Pasta Bowl," which includes four different pastas, seven sauces and four types of meats including "Mom's Meatballs," chicken, shrimp and hot sausage. Seven additional entrees listed include Roasted Red Pepper Chicken, Chicken Marsala, "Aunt Cathy's Pork Loin" and a 12-ounce strip steak.

Ferguson's is open Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. until 1 a.m. (2 a.m. on Friday and Saturday). For more information, call 412-564-5292. □

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