Ginopolis

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Ginopolis, 50, looks upon as questionable.

"I don't know what we really thought we were going to do," he said.

But with the popularity of the bar — which Playboy Magazine named as one of the top 10 in the country at the time — came the crowds and a prosperous business. But by 1985, the brothers knew they were looking for something else.

"I knew I didn't want to own a singles bar," John Ginopolis said. "We didn't put our name on the building to have it be a meat market."

That meant starting from scratch, in a way, when the brothers took out the dance floor and converted the place into a full-service restaurant in 1986.

"It was tough," John Ginopolis said. "We basically had to start over, appeal to different customers."

The celebrities kept coming, but so did many customers who had become regulars because of the atmosphere, service and food.

"I just happened to come in here one day," said Chuck White, a retiree who moved to the area from Milwaukee. "He (John Ginopolis) came up to me and treated me like a long-lost brother. I've been coming back ever since."

Celebrities galore

To be sure, customers and staff members, feel comfortable enough to joke freely with the brothers. Celebrities feel comfortable enough to make the restaurant a stop when they come to town.

"They come here knowing that no one is going to bother them," John Ginopolis said. "When Bob Hope and his wife came here, nobody bothered them. When they got up to leave, everyone began applauding."

Although the restaurant features more of a sports motif, Hope is not the only Hollywood personality to appear at Ginopolis. Elizabeth Taylor made an appearance at the restaurant on a recent trip to promote her perfume and raved about the restaurant's famous ribs.

Those popular ribs have a story all their own. John Ginopolis' wife, Marion, has an uncle who owns a restaurant in Cincinnati famous for its ribs. When her uncle made him an offer to allow the restaurant to "import" them from the Queen City, he took it.

"I told him I'd love to sell those ribs," John Ginopolis said.

The restaurant has other popular menu items, like Norwegian salmon, lamb chops and Chicken Dijon. But the ribs — 2,500 pounds worth a year — have become famous, even among the famous.

"He serves the greatest ribs at his restaurant," said Detroit Tigers manager Sparky Anderson.

The reputation for food and personal service has traveled by word-of-mouth among celebrities. And the restaurant's reputation hasn't been lost on business and professional people in the area.

"The name Ginopolis is known throughout the area," said Farmington Hills City Manager Bill Costick. "It's one of our banner restaurants."

Staff stays on

Ginopolis has also benefited from little staff turnover. Of 65 who work for the business, more than 20 have worked more than 15 years with the brothers. Maitre d' Ernie Palombo, who owned his own restaurant for 21 years, is one of many who add experience to the business.

"I retired for the first time in 1975," he said. "Since coming here, I've done more work than ever."

Staying on top of business and getting along well together have helped Pete and John avoid problems.

"I've known lots of people who had a business but didn't stay on top of it and lost out," said Pete Ginopolis, a 47-year-old bachelor. "There's no jealousy between us. When we were growing up, we used to fight like cats and dogs. But we never have a problem."

BILL BRESLER/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Behind the bar: *Cheryl Barry, a 19-year Ginopolis employee, gives the bar a quick wipe-down.*

John Ginopolis has found time to work with area charities, including Sparky Anderson's CATCH.

And John, a former Detroit area bartender of the year, can pour on the charm. But he credits his wife's support (they've been married 28 years) and his brother's and father's work for making the business a success.

Beauty salon greets customers

Customers coming to Ginopolis for the first time will probably notice a beauty salon/barber shop as they enter.

"It was Johnny's idea," said Phyllis Mato, owner of "1944." I've been here for five years."

John Ginopolis said the business has been a hit with customers.

"It's worked out real well," he said. "People love it. They'll have their hair cut and then come in for lunch."

Eagle students to hear poetry recited

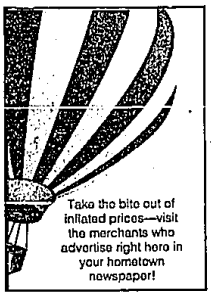
Students at Eagle Elementary School in the Farmington District will learn about the oral tradition when Michigan poet Terry Wooten visits the school Friday, Jan. 8.

Wooten has committed over 700 poems and stories to memory, including selections from ancient cultures, Michigan and Native American folklore and modern poets.

"The oral tradition is an old and honored art form," Eagle Principal Susan Johnson said.

"Terry will visit classrooms and recite a portion of his repertoire for our students."

Wooten was born and raised in rural northern Michigan and currently lives in Kewadin, north of Traverse City.



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