

# Gallery owner raves about her business



Raven Gallery owner Kit Cohen calls the club her "living room." "Friends will drop by to see how I'm doing or I'll ask people in."

By SHIRLEE IDEN

When most people are finishing their dinner and sitting down to relax or go out, Kit Cohen begins her working day. Mrs. Cohen is the owner of the Raven Gallery in Southfield, a liquor-less club where folk entertainment and hominess are the focal points.

She gets a lot of double-takes when people ask for the owner and she says, "That's me," because no one expects the proprietor of a club to be a woman.

But owner-operator she is, and she waits tables, hostesses, hires entertainers, deals with vendors and servicemen and even bakes a mean cheese cake.

Ask Kit Cohen and she'll tell you she's a "semi-businesswoman" but a real pro at baking super cheese cakes.

She and the Raven go back 14 years to when a high school chum took her to the club.

"I was out of Dondoro High School in Royal Oak, working as a waitress. I loved the club right away, was enthralled with the music. I went back again and Herb (Cohen) offered me a job. Within months I was the head waitress and took over the kitchen."

"For 14 years I took care of the kitchen."

She and Cohen, the Raven's founder and owner, became good friends and eventually married. The marriage lasted seven years until his unexpected death nearly two years ago.

KIT FACED many decisions at that time. Some friends advised her to go away and think things over or sell the business. She demurred.

"People said take some time and get yourself together, but I didn't want to escape. I wanted to face it—I felt it would be harder to go away and come back."

She stayed and made a number of necessary changes in order to cope with the huge responsibility but she didn't feel her. In January she made the decision to keep the club open five days a week rather than six and now she wonders how she ever managed before.

*"But whatever I did, it would always have to be something where I dealt with people, because I love people."*

—Raven Gallery owner Kit Cohen

"It's the same number of hours, but it gives you the extra evening in your life," she said. She added that she works 40 to 60 hours each week, about 35 hours that are "visible," and others spent at business chores no one ever figures on.

"The Raven is such a unique business," she said. "I use it as my living room lots of times. Friends will drop by to see how I'm doing or I'll ask people in."

She doesn't have to say how much she misses Herb, it just shows when she talks about him and their marriage.

"A lot of people wonder how I could have married a man 30 years older than I, but we truly saw no age difference," she said. "I personally try not to ask someone's age or occupation."

KIT SAYS she did her own growing up early since both of her parents always worked and she was the oldest and only girl with three younger brothers.

"I grew up in Royal Oak," she said. "I'm definitely a Detroit girl but I would like to do some traveling some day. Before Herb died we took one trip to Europe and visited several countries. It took a lot of persuading to get him to close the place up for two weeks."

But she admits she hasn't taken a break herself since his death. "In the beginning I needed to be 150 per cent occupied, otherwise my mind would wander. Now, I'm really into what I'm doing."

She says she has no problems dealing with her clientele as a woman, but salesmen and servicemen, "seem to think you don't know what you're

doing," when she makes business decisions such as buying equipment.

In her own interpersonal relationships, Kit has one cardinal rule and that is—everyone at the Raven gets equal treatment.

"It's very important to me that people be treated with courtesy no matter what their age. I'm very young looking myself when I'm in jeans and a tee-shirt so I know how it is to be ignored or treated like a young punk."

She firmly contends that waitressing is a good job, not a demeaning job and a good experience for anyone.

"WAITRESSING for ladies is a good thing when you need time to get money for school or to make decisions. I find a great joy in waiting tables and I don't find it demeaning. Everyone at one time or another should be a waiter or a waitress."

"What you learn is patience, endur-

ance, organization and tact," she said. "It can be very helpful in whatever other field you might go into. It's demanding and if you can handle a rush hour lunch, you become a better person for it."

One of the tougher decisions Kit has made since taking over at the Raven was turning down the liquor license that her husband fought for years to get.

"I turned it down all right," she said. "The primary thing was I can't deal with somebody who's had too much to drink and has become obnoxious. Probably we would have had only beer and wine and 50 per cent would have handled it okay but that five per cent I just can't deal with and they could have destroyed the atmosphere of the Raven."

Though it would have been a groove monetarily, I couldn't give up my principles. People told me if I wanted to sell just how much that piece of paper would have been worth, but it didn't matter."

In her fantasies, Kit says she would have liked to have been a photographer or done some modeling, something creative, but if not those, she would go into management.

"But whatever I did, it would always have to be something where I dealt with people, because I love people," said added.

*"It's very important to me that people be treated with courtesy no matter what their age. I'm very young looking myself when I'm in jeans and a T-shirt, so I know how it is to be ignored or treated like a young punk,"*

—Kit Cohen

## Realtor reveals success formula

# Belief in work ethic aids career

By BETTY MASSON

When Nada Ilich talks to someone interested in a career in real estate, her first questions are:

"Do you like hard work and long hours?"

"Do you like people?"

Hard work and caring about people have made Mrs. Ilich Century 21's top real estate salesperson in Michigan, and, she believes, No. 3 in the United States.

Last year, her sales amounted to \$3.8 million. "My goal for 1978 is much higher," she said.

In addition to setting this sales record, Mrs. Ilich is manager of Century 21's Hartford South Office at Five Mile and Newburgh in Livonia.

The office opened in December 1976 with 2 sales force of one. It now has 16, and was the company's top producer in the state for 1977.

"I want everybody here to be a million-dollar producer," said Mrs. Ilich. "And they will be."

Mrs. Ilich was introduced early to hard work and long hours. When she

was 12, she started helping out in her father's bakery and delicatessen in the small mining town of Noranda, Quebec. The store was open from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., seven days a week.

Today, Mrs. Ilich is not disturbed if anxious home buyers telephone her in the middle of the night about potential investments.

"When people are making the largest investment of their lives, it's natural for them not to sleep," she said. "They should be excited. They should worry a little bit."

She studied at business college for two years, came to Detroit to visit relatives and met and married Sammy Ilich. The two operated stores in Detroit, including a bakery and a paint and home products store.

Customers told Mrs. Ilich she would do well in real estate, and 13 years ago she began work with Hartford in Bedford Township. She did well from the beginning, and real estate became a full-time job after Sammy's death seven years ago.

Today, Mrs. Ilich regularly brings home awards for salesmanship. Her

method is simple. She does it by working 8 to 12 hours a day, seven days a week. Although she is interested in hiking, swimming and tennis and used to go dancing, work is her chief interest and concern.

"When you commit yourself to what you're going to do, you either do it well or you don't do it at all," she said.

Except for short visits to her relatives in Canada, she is reluctant to take vacations other than traveling to attend real estate conferences and conventions. For each of these, she hopes to come home with at least 20 ideas she can put to work.

"My clients have hired me to work for them. Most of my clients would like me to present the offers. I should be present. I always am, at closings," Mrs. Ilich said.

Last year, she attended 159 closings. She also goes over the papers with her clients, if possible, the day before, so they know exactly what the financial picture will be.

Along with her dedication to work, Mrs. Ilich is scrupulous about starting her week with attendance at church

early each Sunday morning.

"When I miss, I'm not comfortable at all," she said.

She hates to "miss" anything.

"I love to be on time, I'm always punctual," she said. "When I say I'll be there, you can be sure I will be there—unless I'm dead."

Mrs. Ilich recognizes the importance of organizing her time. When asked how she accomplishes so much, she replied, "I often wonder myself. I write things down and I have a good memory. But you have to be organized within yourself, more so than on paper."

If organization seems to come easily to her, it may be because she believes it is important to set priorities, to recognize the most important things to be done—and to do them.

"Don't put off problems until tomorrow," she said. "Do them now and get them out of the way."

Why is she working so hard? "Because I enjoy my work so very much, and because I enjoy people so very much."



Nada Ilich is constantly on the go. Hard work and caring about people have made her Century 21's top real estate salesperson in Michigan. (Staff photo by Art Emanuel)

## A Natural for Business

Shirley Peisner

INCOMPARABLE • SPIRIT • ENTHUSIASM

Constant source of up to the minute information on your needs and your dreams. Rely on...

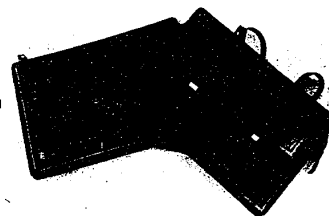
SHIRLEY PEISNER  
Member of the Million Dollar Club

THE DURBIN COMPANY REALTORS  
28200 SOUTHFIELD, LATHRUP VILLAGE  
559-8181 398-9811

## Carry the look of success wherever you go

Here's three classic briefcases for today's sophisticated businesswoman. Michael-Scott makes them in hand stained black, brown or oxblood English bridle leather. All nylon stitched with wing swept zippers.

Model 199 (Pictured left). Top zipper. Padded double handles with 24K gold plated handle trim. Inside zipper pocket. Full front flap pocket. \$140.



Model 191 (Above left). Top zipper case with two full inside zipper pockets. Removable shoulder strap. \$90. Model 152 (above right). Legal size. Scottie bag. Double shoulder strap. Top zipper opening. Two front saddle pockets. Back zipper pocket. \$105.

Harrison  
LUGGAGE

Birmingham  
152 N. Woodward Ave.  
646-8088

Rochester  
Great Oaks Mall  
OPENING SOON