

Thursday, November 25, 1982 O&E

Nightclub gives Frisco's a special touch

By Ethel Simmons
staff writer

YOU DON'T HAVE to go all the way to San Francisco to get in the mood of that fabulous city.

The former Stafford's restaurant at the Orchard Mall on Orchard Lake and W. Maple roads in West Bloomfield has a new name, menu, decor and entertainment concept. The theme is illustrated by the name — Frisco's.

Dennis Vatsis, a West Bloomfield Township board trustee, is in partnership with his brother Ted, who operates Frisco's. Dennis said the restaurant had been in a five-year battle to get a liquor license. The township turned them down, but the court gave them a license and, "We immediately remodelled," he said.

Today, Frisco's is a classy nightclub and cocktail lounge, as well as an informal restaurant. In the evenings, the Billy Kallio Trio plays for listening and dancing, Tuesdays-Saturdays.

"WE'RE THE only restaurant in West Bloomfield with dancing and live entertainment," Vatsis said, pointing out that Conetti's nearby has a piano bar only.

In Frisco's lounge, Happy Hour is from 3-8:30 p.m. seven days a week, with Carl Steger at the piano. The bar

also includes a small oyster and shrimp bar.

Nightlife customers nestle in raspberry and black banquettes, or sit around small round tables. The old banquet room that had been turned into an entertainment room for the Comedy Castle and then the Comedy Capers has become the intimate setting for drinks, food and fun.

Throughout the dimly lit room, big color photographs of San Francisco remind one of the City by the Bay. Stafford's cocktail room was taken over for a bandstand, and the wall alongside it facing the inside of the mall has a breathtaking diorama.

Skyline views of San Francisco — north, east, south and west — are illuminated through an expensive lighting technique. The photos enclose the area, in an eye-arresting way.

DAVID SAVAGE of Image Designers in Troy is the man behind Frisco's interior design. Savage also has done a restaurant in Waterford built around the theme of Uptown New York.

Vatsis' first choice for a city motif was New York but since that was already taken, San Francisco was the happy, second choice.

"Savage made a special trip to San Francisco to take these photos," Vatsis said, of the original photographs displayed through the nightclub and dining room.

The bar area has been enlarged to seat 30 customers, while the dining room lost about 30 seats, now seating 150. Stafford's staid setting has been replaced in the dining area by floral-patterned tablecloths and draperies, ceiling fans, and black-and-white photo blowups of boats and paraphernalia at Fisherman's Wharf.

A menu designer came up with the colorful, tall menu fronted with a cable-car drawing of San Francisco. The menu opens to reveal an array of fairly inexpensive snacks and dinners.

VATISIS SAID salads and Mexican, Greek and American dishes are prominent on the menu. "The price structure is quite moderate. Frankly, it's on the cheap side."

Sunday brunch, "all you can eat" of breakfast items served, costs \$4.19. Hours for the family brunch are 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Regular restaurant hours are 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. Mondays-Thursday, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Fridays, 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturdays and 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. Sundays.

The bar is open till 2:30 a.m. seven days a week, and food may be ordered in the bar until restaurant closing time.

"Unquestionably, it's the best-looking restaurant in West Bloomfield," Vatsis said. "It was to make it into the showplace and entertainment center of West Bloomfield."



Stafford's restaurant has undergone a name change and then some. The new nightclub and cocktail lounge area has illuminated skyline views

of San Francisco, in keeping with the new name: Frisco's.

Good voices spark musical about senior citizens

Performances of the Birmingham Village Players' production of the musical "70, Girls, 70" continue at 8:30 p.m. Fridays-Saturdays, through Dec. 4. For ticket information, call 644-2075.

By Barbara Michaels
special writer

Though the title suggests scores of young chorus girls, "70, Girls, 70" actually features singing and dancing by actors and actresses portraying spry senior citizens of three score and 10. Sporting gray wigs or powdered hair, the Birmingham Village Players are the most vigorous, spirited septuagenarians one can imagine.

The show boasts excellent vocal talent and seems to have much audience appeal, even though there is not one memorable song in the Kanter and Ebb score.

review

The music is lively, but the many between-scene numbers seldom justify their existence. The feeble running gag is that costume changes take forever because the cast is so old, thus necessitating the extraneous songs in front of the curtain.

At the Sussex Arms, a seedy residential hotel for senior citizens, the drab denizens lead uneventful lives until one of their group strikes it rich as a shoplifter. Ida (Lee Rosender) wants to share her good fortune with her friends and extracts them to help her expand her operation and put some excitement in their lives.

IDA'S GANG specializes in furs, taking only from the big stores "that can afford it" and going to great lengths to return a mink inadvertently taken from a small business. Soon the merry band of senior delinquents is rolling in furs, with most of the profits going to spruce up the Sussex Arms and make it a shelter for the indigent elderly.

Lee Rosender does an outstanding job as Ida. She has a strong, pleasant voice and a commanding stage presence that is further enhanced by her striking costumes. Ida is part Auntie Mame, prodding her fellow elders to live every day to the fullest, and part "unlucky" Molly Brown, unfailingly cheerful when adversity finally strikes. The other members of this over-the-hill gang all do some work. Peg Hummel, prodding her fellow elders to live every day to the fullest, and part "unlucky" Molly Brown, unfailingly cheerful when adversity finally strikes. The other members of this over-the-hill gang all do some work. Peg Hummel, prodding her fellow elders to live every day to the fullest, and part "unlucky" Molly Brown, unfailingly cheerful when adversity finally strikes.

songs as Harry, a bank retiree now in charge of diagramming the belts. Alice Christopher is amusing as the easily befuddled Eunice, and Ben Benson's Walter is a pillar of moral indignation until he confesses he is an ex-con. An engaged couple, Christopher and Benson are especially endearing when they coyly speculate about their sex lives in the musical number "Do We or Don't We?"

Another musical number that works

well is when Patrick Lynch as Eddie, the bellhop, teams with DeeDee Johnson as his grandmother. Lynch's powerful, resonant voice deserves more than one solo, and Johnson's zesty hoofing reminds everyone not to underestimate the grannies.

LATER ADDITIONS to the gang are out-of-work waitresses Melba and Fritz, played by Lindsay Balmer and Ann Weisman. These two belt out numbers

with great aplomb, though they never get a decent song to put their energies into.

With 18 scene changes, director Isobel Himelech cannot be blamed for the show's choppyness. Himelech, musical director Priscilla Benson and choreographer Debbie Cragin have instilled the production with great buoyancy. Despite the play's sophisticated New

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