

Travel



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Travelers do a night on the town in Detroit

You have probably done a night on the town in Chicago, Cleveland, Toronto or New York City. When was the last time you did a night on the town in downtown Detroit?

That's what I was thinking as I stood on the black and white tile steps, leaning on a brass railing at Trappers Alley, listening to the music, smelling the fudge and savoring the flaming cheese I had enjoyed with a glass of sweet white Cyprus wine at the Olympia Restaurant in Greektown.

I have been in restored malls like Trappers Alley all over the country, but this time I was traveling in my own home town, courtesy of the Metropolitan Detroit Convention and Visitors Bureau.

The occasion was a meeting of the Executive Committee of Midwest Travel Writers Assn., which represents writers and editors in 14 states. It was chaired by President Dixie Franklin of Marquette. The group had already toured Henry Ford Museum and other metro Detroit attractions, and now they were seeing the town by night.

I don't usually have a chance to join a press group so close to home, but Kathy Uitalo of MTCVB invited all the local travel writers to enjoy what she called "A Night on the Town." You and I can explore the town on our own, of course, but it's a long time since most of us pursued pleasure on an itinerary as strenuous as this one.

We started with drinks at the top of the Renaissance Center, had flaming cheese in Greektown, dined at Jacoby's in Bricktown, had after-dinner drinks at the Rhinoceros in Riverfront and ended the night with P-Jazz at the Top of the Pench. A great evening, designed to make you rise up very, very slowly the next morning.

IT IS ALWAYS great fun to see your own locale through the eyes of out-staters, so we all looked through



1-of-a-kind traveler
Iris Jones
contributing travel editor

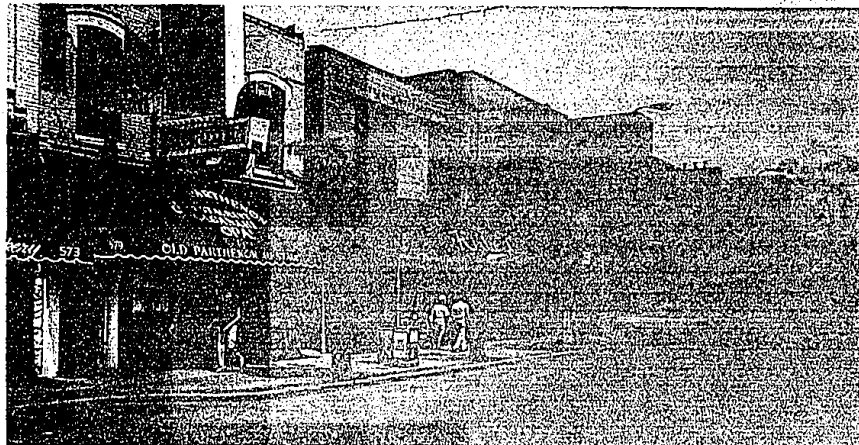
the windows of The Summit, atop the Westin Hotel-Renaissance Center, with the eyes of visitors who hadn't seen it before. The best view of the city is from here, especially when the sun is sinking behind the horizon and the river flows like molten gold under the lighted span of Ambassador Bridge.

The group included Fred Karst, Bill Roberts and Fred Noifdger, travel editors of the South Bend Tribune, the Indianapolis News and the Toledo Blade respectively; they had all been to Detroit before but none had really explored Greektown.

It was great fun to wander down Monroe St. on a Friday night, past the lights and the crowds too often missing in downtown Detroit but always present in Greektown. It's also fun to watch their faces when the OPA is served.

If you haven't been to Greektown lately, or have forgotten the ritual, you too would jump out of your chair when the waiter sets fire to the platter of cheese and everyone within eight shouts "OPA!" I've enjoyed the ritual in many Greek restaurants, but I've never had the hot cheese with sausage and sweet white Cypriot wine at the Olympia Restaurant before, nor eaten at tables set in an "outdoor cafe" setting inside Trappers Alley.

You probably know that Trappers Alley Festival Marketplace once housed the fur tanner operations of the Traugott Schmidt and Sons Co. Schmidt was a German who immigrated to the United States in 1852,



Monroe Street, in the heart of Detroit's Greektown, is home to authentic Greek restaurants and bakeries.

photos by MICKY JONES

built his first building here in 1872 and was producing 200,000 dressed skins a day in 1892.

Today it has 90 restaurants and shops on the many levels set amid the restored brick walls, and expansion begins into the Beaubien building late this spring, adding new retail tenants and the Attic Theater.

By the time we left for Jacoby's, oldest continuously operating restaurant in Detroit, we were protesting that we would never eat again, but that didn't stop us from wolfing down hot sausage and red cabbage when we got there.

It is quiet outside on Brush Street in Bricktown, but when you go in past the etched glass window door of "Jacoby's Since 1904," as it is officially called, the voices rise in a quiet roar from the white-clad tables.

Gary Jacoby gave us a little history with our food and drink: the place was opened in 1904 as a stable, a party room was opened upstairs in 1909, and the restaurant grew and changed through the twentieth century until it was restored in 1970 to its 1904 look.

WE WERE ALL sluggish with food when we arrived at the Rhinoceros in Riverfront, but it didn't take Pinkie Smith and her band long to wake us up. We leaned against the black grand piano near the great mahogany bar, clapping our hands with the crowd under the hanging lights, while Vernon Falls, the man with the flying flippers, led a musical trip, with Ben Jones on guitar and Randy West on drums.

Our final stop of the night was at the top of the Pontchartrain Hotel, where singer Orletha Barnes was belting out the songs, with a lot of help from her band, her amps and her loyal table-thumping fans.

By that time we were all so high on Detroit, the food, drink and music of the city, that we had to drag ourselves back out onto the freeway and home.

As I tapped my foot against the car floor and hummed homeward, I wondered how many of the hometown folks had enjoyed a night on the town in Detroit recently. It's easy to do it when you are traveling in another part of the U.S. or Canada, but not so easy to put it on your agenda at home.

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Harvey to speak at conference

Paul Harvey, who is seen, heard and read on 1,200 radio stations, 100 television stations and in 300 newspapers, will deliver the Monday luncheon address at the Governor's Conference on Tourism in Detroit, March 30.

Some 600 representatives of the Michigan Travel Industry are expected to attend the Fourth Annual Governor's Conference on Tourism at the Westin Hotel-Renaissance Center, Detroit, March 29-31. It is co-chaired by First Lady of Michigan Paula Blanchard and Robert Carlson, president and chief executive officer of Crowley's, a Detroit department store chain.

Major events of the conference include a keynote luncheon address by Gov. James J. Blanchard Tuesday, March 31, a Best of Detroit's Reception featuring the Detroit Jazz Greats, a preview of the state's new travel marketing strategy, promotional film and summer ads and a dinner celebration of the sesquicentennial at the Henry Ford Museum.

Harvey's four shows (morning, mid-day, and Saturday news programs and the daily "Rest of the Story" program) are ranked first, second,



Paul Harvey

and third and fourth in network ratings. He has received 11 honorary degrees and 11 Freedoms Foundation Awards.

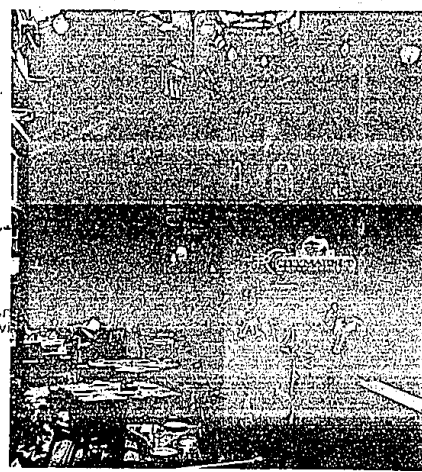
He has been elected to the National Association of Broadcasters Hall of Fame and the Hall of Fame in his

native Oklahoma. Other honors include the "Horatio Alger" Award, Commentator of the Year, Salesman of the Year, American of the Year, Father of the Year and Gallup Poll list of most admired men.

Conference workshops will include separate question and answer sessions with the directors and representatives of the state Departments of Commerce, Natural Resources, Agriculture and Transportation, sessions on cooperative marketing, packaging and the importance of a marketing strategy.

In addition, 14 travel industry organizations will present workshops that include motorcoach tours, regional promotion, golf, convention bureaus, marketing, recreational vehicles, legislation, the Michigan Sesquicentennial, recreational boating and risk management. There also will be a hard-hat tour of Detroit's Cobo Conference/Exhibition Center, which is undergoing expansion to make it the seventh largest such facility in the United States.

Registration information may be obtained by contacting the Michigan Travel Bureau, P.O. Box 30228, Lansing 48909, phone 517-373-0670.



Trappers' Alley in Greektown houses numerous shops and eateries.

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