

## CHAT ROOM



Kathie O'Donohue

*The list of 'whys' keeps on growing and growing...*

So many times life presents me with more questions than answers. Some are relatively easy to deal with in the sense that I can let them go, so to speak. They are humorous even, at times, and readily slip into perspective when I am no longer in the pressing situation. But there remains an internal, forever growing list of "whys?"

Why is it every traffic light I encounter when I am most rushed is always red? Why is the paycheck I am really counting on typically delayed in the mail? How is it the one ingredient I absolutely cannot leave out of a recipe in progress is the one I do not have, and this nearly always occurs when my toddler is napping and I am unable to run out to get it?

Why is one of my children usually sick on the same day I have an important interview, meeting, appointment? Or when I finally decide to schedule that massage just for me. When for once I remember to take along my coupons, how can it be those particular products are absent from store shelves? On the days I finally get motivated to work or throw a party outdoors, why does the weather change from sunny and clear to blustery and rain within minutes? And, one of my all time favorites: why is the baseball/basketball/karate uniform

Please see CHAT ROOM, B2

## Botsford Inn has memorable past

■ The Botsford Inn is 162 years old, making it one of the oldest operating inns in Michigan.



BY DAVID LITOGOT  
SPECIAL WRITER

One of the most famous landmarks of the Farmington area is the Botsford Inn.

In 1998, the inn celebrated its 150th birthday, making it one of the oldest active inns in Michigan.

That year historian Jean Fox wrote an extensive publication recording its vast and memorable past. But the inn lives on. The renovations, expansion and change in ownership has not diminished its role in the community or its appeal to travellers and diners.

In 1923, Henry Ford's car company had already manufactured 100 million cars and he was in the process of accumulating homes and buildings of antiquity. He purchased the Red Lion Inn at Sudbury, Massachusetts, restored it and renamed it the Wayside Inn.

On Aug. 27, 1924 the Detroit News announced that Henry Ford had bought another inn, the Botsford Inn, in Clarencville. Perhaps this inn, too, would be as the news article mentioned "preserved for posterity." This inn would become the only property owned by Ford and his wife in the Farmington area. Under his ownership, the inn would get a new lease on life.

Located a day's ride by stagecoach from Detroit the inn was formally known as the Sixteen Mile House. It was originally built as a house in 1836 by Allen and Orrin Weston. After the Grand River Trail became the Grand River road (and turnpike), the Weston home opened its door to travellers. The building expanded to twenty rooms including a small ballroom and a tap room. In 1841, the house became a full-

fledged inn and was sold to Stephen Jennings.

The inn sat close to the road and was of simple clapboard construction with a covered front porch and cedar shake roof. Coaches and horses were kept in the barn behind the inn.

Stagecoach lines ran up and down Grand River from Michigan's new capital in Lansing to the growing city of Detroit. As the road out front evolved from a trail to a plank road to a turnpike, the inn again changed hands. Milton Botsford bought the inn in 1860 and his family would own it for the next 64 years.

Henry Ford's interest in the Botsford Inn probably stemmed from the dances and balls held in the upstairs ballroom. Ford had escorted his future wife, Clara Bryan, there for many dances. Participating in such dances as the Virginia Reel, the Gallop, and Quadrilles, the couple probably had a romantic attachment to the inn.

After the purchase in 1924, Ford moved the inn 200 feet back from the road. Grand River was being widened and the extra front yard was used for a circular driveway.

The dining room was made larger, the kitchen electrified, and a suspended floor was constructed in the ballroom to give dancers a little more bounce. The ballroom was doubled in size and a chandelier hung from the ceiling. Ford had the paneling in one of the smaller dining rooms "smoked" to darken and stain the wood. He found 80 Hitchcock chairs stored in the inn. They were so valuable that he ordered them taken to Greenfield Village and replaced with reproductions. Antiques were placed throughout the structure and flower gardens laced the property's picket fences and stone walls.

Please see BOTSFORD INN, B2



Then and now: Top, how the Botsford Inn looked early in its history. It was built in 1836. Left, the modern look of the inn today, after renovations, expansions and changes in ownership.



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