

# Behind the store fronts

## The Inns and how they grew

ANGUS

McKELLAR

In recent years stopping at a Holiday Inn while traveling has become a commonplace happening to thousands of Americans, but for some time there has been a real push to make

each Inn as an integral part of the community.

The Holiday Inn people feel that one of the best ways to maintain and improve the quality of their services and accommodations is through competition for the top 10 awards among the 1,700 Holiday Inns now open in 43 countries and territories.

One of the local Inns honored recently was the Holiday Detroit-Farmington where Earl R. Billing was named one of "the top 10 innkeepers of the year," and Patricia Fallon one of the "top sales managers of the year." Anne Berchem, one of the "top 10 housekeepers of the year," and Dale Smetzer in the "top 10 percent food and beverage director of the year."



PAUL McELWAIN MARIA McELWAIN

"WE STRIVE for a complete team effort," Billing commented, "and whole hearted involvement in community affairs."

He is on the board of directors of the Farmington Chamber of Commerce and is active in various local service organizations.

"Banquets and weddings have become an important part of the business," Billing said.

Patricia Fallon, formerly of the Ponchartraine, also carries titles of assistant innkeeper and controller, in addition to her sales and promotional work. "Since coming here four years ago," Ms. Fallon said, "Mr. Billing has been concentrated on the restaurant part of the business, and with the help of chef Richard Dietrich we have become well known in the area for our buffet."

"We have found special promotions that are geared to children help business volume," Pat added. "Our employees join wholeheartedly in the fun and dress in special costumes at Christmas and Easter as well as other times."

"The wide-eyed reaction from the kids when they are served by an Easter bunny makes it all worthwhile," she smiled. Other special events have been "hobo" night and a "fantasy" night.

Last year Pat was queen pageant chairman of the Farmington Founders Festival, and this year is first vice chairman of the Festival.

A viking motif is carried through the Inn. The big responsibility of maintaining the 104 rooms to Holiday standards of cleanliness falls on Anne Berchem. Something like the military, a surprise inspection is made about every three months from Holiday's headquarters. Grading is made on the basis of 1,000 points.

THE FRANCHISE holder of the Farmington Holiday Inn is a Southfield man, Paul McElwain, who also owns the franchise on the Holiday Inn of Southfield on Telegraph at the John Lodge and I-96 Freeways.

An inspiring success story, Paul McElwain and his wife, Maria, are the everyday working operators of this thriving Inn. As part of an expansion program two years ago the McElwains decided to build Michigan's first revolving restaurant.

The story around the Inn is now becoming a landmark for thousands of Telegraph Rd. travelers. The construction time table has been good, and McElwain hopes to open the tower for guests about the end of May.

The revolving portion of the 10th floor restaurant is on a 10-foot wide turntable that can be set to make a



ANN BERCHEM PATRICIA FALLON

complete circle in 30 to 70 minutes, unfolding a spectacular panoramic view of the now, urban countryside. The turntable will seat about 145 people. "Cozy" bars are situated off the turntable.

Stringent safety standards have been established. The stainless steel ceilings of the kitchen area and the automatic degreasing equipment makes the possibility of fire almost nil, McElwain said. Four elevators will service the area, although only three are required. In case of a power failure, a huge 600 H.P. diesel engine is on standby to generate electricity.

In the tower below the restaurant, 192 new guest rooms will be available with different interior designs on each floor. The furniture for the tower rooms is specially designed, and Mrs. McElwain designed the bedspreads.

IN THIS PERIOD of economic problems and many people seeking re-location in other occupations to make a living, the McElwain story pointedly bears out what has been often said to the effect that most people have untapped potentials to succeed in a variety of fields.

In 1959 Paul McElwain left his native Missouri, came to Detroit, and opened a Gulf gas station on W. Grand Blvd., next to the Lee Plaza hotel. In 1966 he bought seven acres at his present location, open a Gulf station, and became more active in Southfield community affairs (he and Mrs. McElwain ran the "Upper Teens Boys Club" at Beech and Nine Mile Rds. for 9 years).

At about this time the Gulf Oil Co. invested heavily in the Holiday Inn Corporation, and the Gulf people got around to wondering if maybe one of their own gasoline dealers in Southfield would not also become a good innkeeper. And so it came about that Paul McElwain was offered a franchise, and lo, it seems that Gulf's judgment was good.

Alpine bicycle shop opens doors

Alpine Bike and Sport Center opened Apr. 12 at 3592 W. Maple Road in the Village Knoll Shopping Center in Birmingham.

In addition to other bicycle lines and accessories, the shop carries Swedish Crescent and French Stella bicycle lines, both winners in world championship races, according to owner Pete Plotke.

Plotke said his three employees have been involved with bicycle racing and are trained to handle maintenance and repairs.

Formerly in public relations with McCord Corp. of Detroit, Plotke said he decided to open the business because "I've always been interested in bicycles."

The 1,440 square foot center will be open seven days a week during the spring months—10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Saturday; from 10 a.m. to 9 p.m. on Thursday; and noon to 5 p.m. on Sunday.

Plotke is a resident of Southfield.

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