

Wait people live with 2 sides of coin

To find out tipping trends and attitudes — on a completely unscientific basis — we recently conducted random interviews with about 25 wait persons in our communities from Farmington to Rochester. Following is what we found out.

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER

Attitude, attitude, attitude. That's what mostly determines how big a tip Oakland County restaurant customers leave their waiters or waitresses. Of course, it helps to work Friday or Saturday nights.

"The percentages go up when everybody's having a good time and the waitress isn't walking around with a sour face," said Laura "Fitz" Fitzryk, a waitress at the Wagon Wheel Saloon in Troy.

"You have to be friendly. I like to have fun with the customers. Want to see my button?" Fitzryk asked, showing several pinned to her apron — one with the snappy "I'd Card My Own Mother."

According to Tim Fisher, who waits on tables at Blakeney's Ranch House in Farmington Hills, being nice to the customers just "adds up" in the gratuity department. A smile on the face often makes up for cold meals, too-few coffee refills or high prices.

But although restaurant patrons and their tips (mostly 15-20 percent) generally are the same all over, there are plenty of other variables that determine whether someone tucks a \$50 bill under the condiments, dumps

loose change on the table or stifles their server completely, as described by one waitress as the old "dine and dash" routine.

(Some factors aren't even the server's fault, explained Kathryn Hungerman of Steak and Ale in Farmington Hills. She listed a few: either a customer's auto AC broke down on the drive to the restaurant; the salad bar plates were dirty; or their steak wasn't cooked properly.)

Men vs. women

■ One of the bigger tip-affecting variables is whether a man or woman is sitting at the table.

Out of the 25 persons interviewed: 17 said men are more generous; several cited the fact that more women keep a tight grip on household purse-strings; only Jeanette Bogle of Olga's Kitchen in West Bloomfield thought women leave better tips.

"I don't know if more women have waited tables and are sensitive to it," said Bogle, who formerly worked at the Birmingham Olga's. "I can almost tell when a woman tips well that she at one time worked for tips."

Other waitresses, and even a few waiters, didn't share her opinion.

"They (men) tip better because they're out more often and they pay more often," said veteran waiter Jim Giroux, who has worked at both the Outback Steakhouse in West Bloomfield and, most recently, 220 Merrill Street in Birmingham.

"Women are not as sure about what to leave. They'll leave you 10-15 percent." Men tend to



leave around 20 percent, Giroux estimated.

Blurring the gender line, Hungerman said women generally are poor tipppers. But she added a qualifier or two.

Females who don't tip well often are "businesswomen or little old ladies," Hungerman said,

putting them in the 10-percent-tip category. She said "single women at night" and yuppies are better tipppers.

It's chemistry

According to Blakeney's Fisher, there's no contest. Of

course, she emphasized it doesn't hurt her cause to be waiting on — and sometimes flirting with — male customers. "Men are more sociable, they like to flirt. Being a woman you flirt back."

But the women she waits on often "don't even acknowledge

Tales of tips run gamut

RANDOM VIEWS ON TIPPING FROM THE FARMINGTONS:

- Cheryl Bruscow, Dimitri's: "I know some people who don't believe in tipping." Those people told her they shouldn't "be paying our wages" and that restaurants should pay higher hourly wages instead.
- Maureen Merritt, Mayberry's: "Once I got a couple of prayer cards along with a tip. And I got \$10 off of a single (customer). I don't know who he was. I thought, 'God, what did I do to make him give me this?'"
- Jason Schoof, Anita's Cafet: "I've been tipped unique items, such as a free haircut or a little piece of personalized poetry." Schoof said he also waited on former Piston Vinnie Johnson at the restaurant, but couldn't remember the tip.
- Kathryn Hungerman, Steak and Ale: "One tip I remember is someone left me 29 cents on a bill of \$49.71. . . . Another waitress here was offered \$100 to stand up and dance on a table. She didn't do it."

you're there," particularly in the case of two or more females at a table. "They continue talking with — for hours upon hours and each leave a dollar and figure that's enough," she said.

On the flip side, male servers

See TIPPING, 4A

Youth expects to return to work after recent accident

BY SUE BUCK
STAFF WRITER

A 16-year-old Farmington Hills resident is expected back at the Farmer Jack super market this week following his recovery from an accident at work Friday evening.

Nitesh Balkumar Shah, 16, and three other employees of the Farmer Jack store at 22128 Farmington Road were moving a fully loaded pop machine when the

1,000-pound machine fell on Shah's chest, pinning him to the floor, according to a Farmington Public Safety report.

Before police arrived, Shah was removed from under the machine. "CEMS applied traction, the victim was immobilized with a C collar and backboard," the report noted.

Shah was transported to Botsford Hospital in Farmington Hills where he remained in the short

stay unit until almost 11:30 a.m. Saturday, said Chris Ward, hospital communications spokesman.

"He's fine," said store manager Richard McArdle. "Everything turned out OK with no problems."

McArdle said that he was not working when the incident occurred.

Shah could not be reached for comment.

\$50,000 grant helps keep bicycle path rolling along

BY BILL COUTANT
STAFF WRITER

The cities of Farmington and Farmington Hills will give a new meaning to the term "networking" when the last link of a north-south bike path is completed.

Michigan Department of Transportation Director Pat Nowak announced that Farmington Hills will receive a \$50,000 grant for a bike path from 10 Mile to Heritage Park on Farmington Road.

The half-mile stretch, along with other grants already approved, will help the city complete a bike path that will, when completed, link the northern part of Farmington Hills to the southern part and Farmington.

"We did a study and found that the bike path was a high priority," said Farmington Hills Mayor Nancy Bates. "A lot of people in Farmington Hills like to bike and walk."

The city will have to match the grant with \$50,000 to fulfill its

part of the agreement for the grant that the city applied for in April. The money has already been budgeted for the project.

The final link of the 8-foot wide bike path will link Heritage Park, Woodland Hills Park, Pioneer Park and the City Park in Farmington.

Construction of the final link will begin in the summer of 1994, said assistant city manager Steve Brock.

"The part of the path going over the (I-696) bridge will probably be

the last thing completed," he said. "That's probably where we'll have some sort of a ceremony. . . . This will connect the 35,000 people living north of the bridge with the rest of the community and Farmington."

Steve Brock
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Brock said the city's version of the laying of "the golden spike," will likely include a personal visit from Nowak aboard a two-wheeler.

Farmington Hills already has an extensive bike network north of the I-696 bridge, Brock said.

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CLARIFICATION

Two clarifications in recent Farmington Observer editorial material should be noted:

■ In the July 26 edition, a Farmington Focus item should have

said that Hills resident Darrell Datto used a three iron to ace the par-3 17th hole at Oakland University's Katke-Cousins Golf Course. He was playing in an alumni outing July 13.

■ On the editorial page of the July 22 edition, a letter from Hills resident Susan Keon should have referred to a 2-foot-tall variance granted by the zoning board of appeals.