

Common man's vehicle sets tone at Family Buggy

BY ELEANOR HEALD
CORRESPONDENT

A trendy theme is often the inspiration for a restaurant. If it doesn't catch on, the spot closes in under a year. When Peggy and Don Payne opened their first Family Buggy in 1967 at Six Mile Road and Evergreen, they chose what has become a timeless concept, an American menu at reasonable prices.

The Paynes called their eatery Family Buggy because "buggy" was a common man's vehicle.

"Not upper crust," Don Payne emphasized. "I believe our name reflects family and the atmosphere we create. We filled the first restaurant with antiques and continued that decor as we moved to the Detroit-area suburbs.

"To us, it speaks to American heritage. Even in these tough economic times, people still eat out a lot. To make a choice of

where they go, they ask, "what do you feel like eating tonight?" They can get whatever they like, whenever they come to a Family Buggy.

"The menu doesn't change often, but we guarantee consistency."

Retaining staff insures restaurant consistency. Workers stay put when they're treated well. Janie Widman was the first cook and moved to the Livonia location when the Payne's closed in Detroit. She stayed 25 years. The Widman Room honors her. Betty Bergers has been the Farmington Hills cook for 29 years. In Rochester Hills, Mary Jo Wilking has been cooking for 16 years. In Livonia now, Jeff Switalski has nine years in the kitchen.

WHAT'S ON THE MENU?

Frequent diners at Family Buggy call the Ultimate Bean Soup a favorite. For sandwich-



A sample of the home cooking at The Family Buggy in Rochester includes all time favorites like fried chicken and fish with all the fixings.

FAMILY BUGGY
Where: Three locations
■ 870 South Rochester Road (north of Avon Road), Rochester Hills (248)656-0850.
■ 29335 Orchard Lake Road (at 13 Mile Road), Farmington Hills (248)553-9090.
■ 11502 Middlebelt Road, Livonia (734)427-8360.
Food style: Everything American families love to eat, from soups, salads, sandwiches and burgers to lunch and dinner plates.
Cost: Lunch \$7-8; Dinner \$10-12. Kid's menu \$4.75-\$6.25



Teddy bears adorn The Family Buggy restaurant in Rochester including this furry fellow who greets you as you enter the restaurant.

es, the Chicken Pita beats all others. Like French Dip? So do many regulars.

Marty Salad is a signature item. Preferred three to one at lunch, it is coupled with a cup of "The Other" soup.

Marty Salad is the one to request with a dinner main course that offers a tossed salad or soup as options.

Fish and Chips is the top dinner item. Broiled Scrod with a light sprinkling of Parmesan and served with a choice of potato or vegetable is a close second.

Beef aficionados can get the \$25 Porterhouse Steak (16-ounce USDA Choice) for \$16.45, accompanied by a baked potato and onion rings.

A Kid's Menu, including beverage and dessert, offers items such as chicken fingers, macaroni and cheese, a small burger, spaghetti or shrimp.

After all these years, Don Payne still enjoys the restaurant business.

"It's the variety," he said. "Each day is different. We custom make our product to please, so there are a lot of challenges in this business."

"I should probably expand and I do have my eye on



PHOTOS BY LAWRENCE MCKEE (OBSERVER & ECCENTRIC)

Don Payne, President of The Family Buggy, chats with a family at his Rochester restaurant.

Plymouth and Northville."

Eleanor Heald is a Troy resident who writes about dining, food, wine and spirits for the Observer & Eccentric Newspapers.

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