

# Size Matters



Some people like small mugs.  
Others like large mugs.  
That's why we make all sizes

**Sturgeon River Pottery**  
Between Bay Harbor and Petoskey

Open every day



231-347-0590  
sturgeonriver.com

## ATTENTION SMOKERS!

Tired of paying too much for name brand smokes?

Come see what all the hype is about--you can roll over 190 smokes in less than 10 minutes

**SAVE HALF THE PRICE!**

Check us out 855 U.S. 31 South - TC  
(next to Subway near Chums Corner)

231-943-0920

RYO (3 lines) - Filling Station

# OKIES

Keep On Rolling

SURGEON GENERAL WARNING: SMOKING BY PREGNANT WOMEN MAY RESULT IN FATAL INJURY, PRE-MATURE BIRTH AND LOW BIRTH WEIGHT. QUITTING SMOKING REDUCES SERIOUS RISK TO YOUR HEALTH. MUST BE 18 YEARS OF AGE.

## Attention Realtors!

You can reach real estate buyers and sellers in 13 counties for under \$100!

contact Northern Express  
231-947-8787  
or tollfree  
877-244-8787  
or  
info@northernexpress.com



left: They started it... Stafford and Janice Smith were the youngest inkeepers in the Midwest when they launched their company at the age of 22. Photo courtesy of Stafford's. right: Reg Smith and David Marvin in the Library at Stafford's Perry Hotel in Petoskey. Photo by Peg Muzzall.



# 50 Years of Stafford's Hospitality

## New book takes a look back at the Stafford's story

By Rick Coates

If a picture tells a thousand words, could a name do the same? Just mention Stafford's Hospitality and for hundreds of thousands of visitors and residents of the region, wonderful stories and memories come to mind. This year Stafford's Hospitality, with operations in Petoskey, Charlevoix and Harbor Springs, is celebrating 50 years of business.

In many ways, Stafford's and Hospitality is somewhat redundant -- the two are synonymous with each other. Few if any have done the hospitality business better than Stafford's. That tradition started with their founders and today, the "second generation" has been handed the torch with new ideas, while hanging onto the core values that have led to success over the past 50 years.

The company was founded in 1961 by Stafford "Duff" Smith and his wife Janice. The two met while working at the Bay View Inn in Petoskey, where Stafford was the assistant manager (he had been working there since 1957) and Janice had just started as the dining room hostess in the summer of 1960. Later that year, Stafford would be hired as the manager of the Perry Hotel. A few months later, in early spring of 1961, the Perry Hotel was sold and Stafford lost his position.

But in early summer 1961, Stafford was offered the opportunity to purchase the Bay View Inn on a land contract and did so. The couple were married soon afterwards. At the age of 22, Stafford and Janice Smith owned a 60-room inn and were probably the youngest inkeepers in the Midwest.

### MEMORY LANE BOOK

The history of Stafford's Hospitality would require a book to do it justice and fortunately the Stafford's team thought of that. "Stafford's Hospitality: Fifty Years of Historic Lodging and Waterfront Dining" will be released on Mother's Day this year. The 65-page paperback is full of color photos and chronicles not only the history of Stafford's and their five historic Northern Michigan properties (Stafford's Pier in Harbor Springs, Stafford's Weathervane in Charlevoix and Stafford's Perry Hotel, Stafford's Bay View Inn and Stafford's Gallery of Art and History in Petoskey) but also some of their key staff. Stafford and Janice Smith will visit each of their restaurants serving Mother's Day Brunch and sign copies of the book for guests.

While Stafford and Janice Smith now play more of a behind-the-scenes role, as does Dudley Marvin -- who became Stafford's business partner 41 years ago, the reins are now in the hands of the "second generation." David Marvin (son of Dudley), vice president and chief operating officer; and Stafford Reginald "Reg" Smith (son of Stafford and Janice), general manager of

Stafford's Perry Hotel sat down to reflect on the history and the future of Stafford's Hospitality.

**Northern Express:** Talk about the process you go through to train your staff:

**David Marvin:** We start by having our hospitality principles stated right on our application and then when an employee is hired they receive a wallet size card that details our mission, principle goals, values statement and core values. We pack a lot of information on that card and you almost need a magnifying glass to read it.

## PETOSKEY 2011

**NE:** What is the core value every employee needs to have?

**Marvin:** That's tough. If I were to pick one it would be we never say "it's not my job," instead we always say "how may I help you." It is one of the interview questions we ask people what that means to them. If we don't get the answer we are looking for then we do not hire them. Our success has been founded on hiring people who understand this philosophy, on hiring people who genuinely care about serving others. You can teach people the technical aspects of their job but if a person doesn't understand how to treat and serve people then the chances are they are not going to learn that.

**NE:** What are some of the biggest challenges you face today versus the founders of Stafford's?

**Reg Smith:** I think the obvious is the economy and the competition. But I would prefer to look at that question a little differently and talk about what is the same. My parents built this company and then David's parents became partners and the four of them created a culture of never asking their employees to do something they wouldn't do themselves.

I think that sort of philosophy has been at our core then and is still with us today. There are certain hospitality principles that are timeless, such as we open our doors everyday for our guests. My father instilled the philosophy on all staff that we treat all guests as if they were members of our family. So I think a lot of challenges people have today in the hospitality business is brought on by themselves as some businesses have gotten away from the basics and we focus on them daily.

**Marvin:** Reg alluded to competition and certainly that has changed the way we operate today. There are a lot more dining and accommodation options in the region today than when Stafford's

started. But despite the increased competition, we have seen our operation grow every year. A lot of that has to do with the fact that competition keeps us on our A game. Plus, competition actually creates more business. We constantly have to analyze our operations to make sure we accomplish the bottom line.

**NE:** You mention competition; certainly one of your biggest competitors is Boyne. How is your relationship with them and what do you think of their operation?

**Smith:** We have a great relationship with Boyne and we have a lot of respect for them. Both of us have staff very active in a lot of community events in the region and we work together for the betterment of the region. They have a lot of the same type of customer service standards that we have.

**Marvin:** Boyne is the big boys of the region and we are small time compared to them. I like a lot of the things that Boyne does. One thing they do really well is keep people on property with the diversity of their offerings. All of us owe Boyne a huge thank you; their advertising campaigns have benefited all of us here in the region. So anytime we are put in the same sentence with Boyne we feel honored.

**NE:** Talk about the future. Where do you see the Petoskey, Harbor Springs and Charlevoix region going economically and does Stafford's have expansion plans?

**Smith:** Well I will take the community growth. I grew up here and headed off to Cornell for college and decided to pursue career opportunities elsewhere. A few years ago I moved back and really like what I see in the region. Petoskey and the rest of the area is very aggressive in its approach and I think we are seeing a lot of positive growth. This area with our schools, hospital and plus all the outdoor offerings makes the region very appealing to young professionals and entrepreneurs.

**Marvin:** There is not a week and sometimes not even a day that goes by that we are not looking at some sort of expansion of our operations. We just came off a consulting project in Indiana for the past couple of years where we put a management team in place on a historic hotel project and oversaw day to day operations. Right now we don't have any immediate plans for acquiring new properties at this time. We are looking at plans to expand the Perry Hotel; we have been looking at various options and right now no date in mind, but as the region grows we expect to add rooms.

For more information on Stafford's check out their website [www.staffords.com](http://www.staffords.com)