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## Stafford Smith: The story behind his restaurant, inn business



Stafford Smith enjoys the Christmas tree inside his business, the Bay View Inn. Smith also owns Petoskey's Perry Hotel, Charlevoix's Weathervane Restaurant and The Pier in Harbor Springs. (Alice Perrault/News-Review)


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By Alice Perrault News-Review Staff Writer  
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Many know the name, but few know the story.

Stafford Smith, has been involved with Petoskey in one form or another his whole life. However, he really planted his roots in 1961 when he bought the Bay View Inn.

"I started working here (at the Bay View Inn) in 1957. I worked my way up to head desk clerk," Smith said.

The journey began while Smith was in college at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., studying business. Smith would work at the inn during his summer [vacations](#). It was there he met his wife, Janice.

Although the now 72-year-old enjoyed his time at the inn, he had no plans to stay there.

"My major in college was labor relations and arbitrator. I had every intention of doing that, but, there was a recession and there wasn't any hiring going on in my area," Smith said.

"The summer of 1960 I became manager of the inn. This was the fourth summer in a row I worked here (at the inn)," he added.

The next year, Smith began working toward becoming manager at the Perry [Hotel](#). When the hotel changed owners, he found himself back at the inn.

At that point, Smith began working with owner Dr. Roy Heath to buy the inn. He spent the next 10 years paying off the land contract.

"As the times changed, this inn changed. Trains upgraded to [cars](#) which lead to shorter stays and the need for private bathrooms. Because of that we had to do some major remodeling," Smith said.

This remodeling cut the number of rooms available nearly in half. Today, there are about 30 rooms at the inn.

"We took this place that was a summer hotel and turned it into a country inn," Smith said.

"We like to keep things very personal here. We want guests to feel like they are coming home to friends," he added.

As the inn developed, so did other events in Smith's life.



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In 1970, Smith bought the Pier Restaurant in Harbor Springs. In the early 1980s he bought the Weathervane Restaurant in Charlevoix.

As if three businesses were not enough to handle, Smith took over Petoskey's Perry Hotel in 1989.

"We have also had a few storefronts along the way, but these are the ones we own today," Smith said.

Today, Smith and his wife have three grown children -- Reginald who is the general manager at the Perry Hotel, Dean and Mary Kathryn.

Smith is a very active member of the National Association of Inn Keepers. When he can, Smith enjoys traveling and taking part in anything to do with history.

"Country Inns are historic. Most of them have a story behind them," he said.

Despite the fact that hospitality was not where he saw himself, Smith is very happy with the way things have turned out.

"I still have a passion for this industry. I enjoy serving people," he said. "And in this business, not many people can say that after 50 years."

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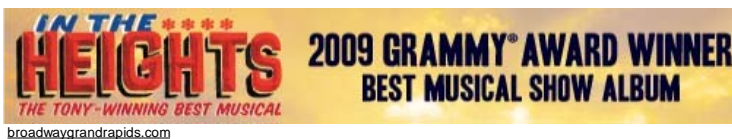
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