

Twohey's Restaurant Celebrates 66th Anniversary

By **CHRISTINA HAMLETT**
The Outlook

Gone are the days of autos with big fins, guilt-free consumption of burgers and fries, and perky carhops to deliver your order on a plastic tray. While economics and surgeon general warnings have respectively downsized what we drive and made us more calorie-conscious, the nostalgia of yesteryear is clearly in no hurry to vacate the corner of Huntington Drive and Atlantic Boulevard in Alhambra.

Beneath the shadow cast by its iconic mascot — a giant head with a clothespin clamped on his nose — Twohey's family restaurant recently celebrated its 66th anniversary as a Southern California landmark. Although carhops are no longer part of the landscape, there's no shortage of patrons who not only have fond memories of them but who continue to keep Twohey's on their list of favorite eateries.

Among its legions of loyal supporters is one of its owners, Jimmy Christos, whose family bought the establishment from the second generation of Twohey's 13 years ago.

"Like many other families in the area, we were initially attracted to this popular institution by its shakes and sundaes," Jimmy said. "I remember when I moved from Boston that every week my wife, Tanya, and her family just couldn't wait to dig into those legendary sundaes. We were definitely Twohey's fans long before we bought the restaurant."

Its history began in 1943 when Jack Twohey opened his first Twohey's restaurant on Arroyo Boulevard in Pasadena. "That restaurant had 37 seats and quickly became known for serving up the finest hamburgers, onion rings and hand-dipped fountain specialties in the San Gabriel Valley," Jimmy said.

He said that its amusing logo — The Little Stinko-O clothespin and tears — was trademarked that same year. "The story is that Twohey overheard a woman exclaim, 'Oh Stinko-O,' when a gentlemen seated next to her was served a hamburger generously garnished with onions and pickles. The phrase and the image stuck immediately."

While the menu has been



Owners and staff of Twohey's Restaurant in Alhambra celebrate its 66th anniversary.

expanded and the facility given a makeover since it was purchased by Jimmy's family and the Mallis family, the core goal has been to maintain its timeless traditions.

"The most popular items have always been the burgers, onion rings, shakes and sundaes," Jimmy said, "but the menu has evolved to include chopped salads, baby back ribs, porterhouse pork chops and succulent lamb chops. Unquestionably, the house specialty remains our award-winning L.A.'s best bittersweet sundaes."

Given the diversity of selections, Jimmy is hard-pressed to name a personal favorite. "I honestly can say, though, that I've gone weeks ordering the potato skillet with Italian sausage for breakfast, the chopped salad — to which I add avocado — the barbecued ribs, the New Orleans saute, the filet of sole or the 'Dagwood' sandwich with garlic fries. And, of course, a sundae with a chocolate chip cookie. Believe it or not, there's not a day that goes by that my family and I aren't eating something from Twohey's."

He defines Twohey's style of home-cooked meals as healthier than chain food restaurants.

"We have eliminated cooking with transfat foods and can take special requests," Jimmy said. "Being an independent restaurant, we can change and update recipes and use few processed foods. We recently did a large catering event requesting salt-free and 100% natural ingredients. They were thrilled with the results."

"And, speaking of catering, we have some new things on the horizon. Where we used to do sporadic catering, we are now getting

inquiries regularly for backyard barbecues, office luncheons, parties and even weddings. We are definitely an alternative choice to the more pricey caterers."

Also in the works are designs for a new soda fountain area which will be nostalgic.

"The most exciting design aspect transforms the back room into a 'red car' trolley theme, where we can comfortably host banquets for parties up to 100 people," Jimmy said. "It will also serve as a private meeting room as well as accommodate birthday parties. We're all very excited about these new designs but will be very careful not to change Twohey's menu and culture."

If "foodie family" were an official label, Jimmy would be the first to step up to claim it. He noted that his brother, Charlie, who has extensive hospitality experience and is general manager, constantly offers new seafood, pasta and quality steak entrees. Some of the recipes, in fact, come from their uncle Jimmy Doulos' restaurant, Jimmy's Harborside, a Boston landmark for 85 years.

"My father-in-law, Paul Mallis, has been a restaurateur for years and has been involved in many local restaurants, including the opening of the first Tony Roma's in California in 1988," Jimmy said. "It's funny when we travel together that we're constantly discussing the next great meal or hole-in-the-wall discovery."

With so many restaurants hit hard by a failing economy, Jimmy feels blessed that Twohey's ongoing commitment to providing value, service, quality comfort food and a

sense of timelessness has enabled it to successfully ride out the challenges.

"There is this feeling of relief from tough times and a belief that everything will be OK again when you're in Twohey's," he said. "When you walk through those doors, you are connecting with previous generations who have faced and persevered through tumultuous events."

"Things will get better, and we'll be here for you. I know most restaurants were down dramatically in 2009, but due to our passionate fan base we were actually up. I think it's always comforting to see familiar faces, receive great value and get reassured that things will be fine again."

Jimmy says Twohey's is an institution that transcends generations. It is not only a part of the community, it is a melting pot of the community.

"We love to see parents bring their kids and watch those children grow in front of our eyes," he said. "They grow up, get married and then bring their own children in. It's really rewarding — how can one not feel a connection? They are not only a part of our family we are a part in their life. First communions, bar mitzvahs, graduations and your first Twohey's sundae — those are indelible memories you will always treasure."

He added: "I love to see people enjoying a sundae, especially when you get children with parents or grandparents spending a little quality time bonding together. And no matter how old you are when you dive into that rich chocolate, I guarantee it brings a youthful twinkle to your eye."

A restaurant's reputation, of course, is only as good as the dedication of its owners and employees to make every dining experience a pleasurable one.

"We have a wonderfully diverse wait staff," Jimmy said. "Some are very young, but what they lack in experience they make up for it in enthusiasm. We also have a few Twohey's VIPs who have been here for over 30 years. We recently had someone retire who was with us for close to 45 years. We value all our employees and regard them as our extended family. Some that leave often stay in touch and drop in whenever they're back in the area."

Jimmy continued: "One of the important life lessons I learned while working from my uncle Jimmy Doulos is to treat everyone with respect no matter their education, background or pedigree. Management rule number 101 is that you never assume anything, so you don't know who the next superstar will be or where the next greatest idea will come from."

With the impending arrival of summer, Jimmy said Twohey's will debut its proprietary premium ice cream. "What better way to complement our award-winning bittersweet than combining it with a pint of old-fashioned Twohey's premium ice cream?" he said.

The bittersweet is available for sale in 10-ounce jars. For more information, visit www.twoheys.com. Twohey's is located at 1224 N. Atlantic Blvd. and is open daily from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m., and until midnight on Fridays and Saturdays. For more information, call (626) 284-7387.

Child Educational Center Plans Summer Fun

For 30 years, the Child Educational Center has been providing early childhood care in La Cañada Flintridge, La Crescenta and Pasadena and has offered a summer program for school-age children since 1994. For this summer, the CEC has announced a number of exciting new opportunities for children entering grades one through seven:

- 10-Week Exploration Series (June 21-Aug. 25). This series offers exciting and enriching one-week camp experiences. Each week will focus on a different theme — cooking, art, animals, sports, stars and space — involving field trips and special guests. The camp is offered in both La Cañada Flintridge and Pasadena, and also includes opportunities for swimming, relaxation and open-ended play time.

- Horse Camp (July 19-23 and Aug. 9-13). In partnership with Altadena Stables, the CEC will offer two one-week horse camp experiences for children entering

grades four through seven. Children will begin and end their day in La Cañada Flintridge, and the CEC will provide transportation to and from Altadena Stables.

- Descanso Discoveries (June 21-25, July 12-16 and Aug. 2-6). In partnership with the Descanso Gardens, the CEC will offer a program of physical activities and adventure in the magnificent garden setting in La Cañada Flintridge. With activities ranging from gardening and cooking to orienteering and science labs, the goal of the camp is to encourage each child's innate curiosity and affinity for the natural world.

With excellent ratios, educated and experienced teachers and a high-quality, caring program, the CEC's primary goals are to promote healthy child development, close relationships and memorable summer experiences.

For more information, a brochure and applications, visit the CEC's Web site at www.ceconline.org or call (818) 354-3418.

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