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Pizza parlor remains untouched

ORONO, Maine (AP) — Decades have barely touched Pat's, the pizza parlor savored by generations of University of Maine graduates who found it vital to their education.

Yes, many elbows have rubbed the Formica counter down to the wood. Countless shoes left grooves in the slate footrests. The varnish is long gone from the wood benches and booths. The white pressed-tin ceiling looks tired.

But the orange neon sign in the window still beams invitingly "Farnsworth's Cafe." The pizzas taste the same.

Perhaps most remarkable among the eatery's enduring fixtures is Pat Farnsworth himself, the 83-year-old proprietor who in his starched shirt, suspenders and constant cigar is still feeding young people after 62 years. More, if you count the years he worked here in high school.

Revisiting alumni notice.

"They come back and say it hasn't changed a bit — it feels just like home," Farnsworth said on a recent, typically busy day.

He's amused when alumni come in and ask if Pat's still alive.

Alive, and how.

"They call it a disease — workaholic," said Farnsworth, who turns 84 on Nov. 3. "I can't set still."

He ticks off the rare days off: 10 days when he married Frances in 1937, time for back surgery in the 1950s, the odd hunting or fishing trip.

It's not just a life of pizza. This robust, portly man slightly shorter than the average with silvery hair swept back has owned the biggest pig farm in Maine, a canoe factory, a potato-hauling firm, a construction company and a beer hall.

From his college town cafe he has spun out a chain of 14 restaurants across the state called Pat's Pizza. It's all recorded in a black, dog-eared diary of his work life he keeps handy like the pens and pencils jamming his shirt pocket and his ever-ready smile behind wire-rimmed glasses.

But the heart of this son of a chef belongs in his landmark pizza joint.

Most of the year, Farnsworth can be found here 12 hours a day, or more, seven days a week, circulating with the customers, keeping the books in his downstairs office and, of course, making pizza.

Summers, he cuts back to eight hours a day, working mostly nights.

That allows him daylight hours in his beloved vegetable and flower gardens at his lakeside home in Orono, a town in central Maine of 10,573 inhabitants, double that if you count the students.

Many are fans of Pat's tangy pizzas that always

arrive steaming hot even on the coldest winter nights.

Farnsworth has sternly resisted suggestions he update the decor.

"I don't want to change it," he said firmly. "It's just like an antique."

Like his pizzas, Farnsworth resists change and keeps everything dear close to home.

Born in the coastal town of Harrington in 1909, Farnsworth was a toddler when his family moved to Orono.

His daughters, Ann Rosebush, 52, and Pam Savoy, 50, work here full-time. It's also the headquarters of the restaurant chain run by his son, Bruce Farnsworth, 45.

Every one of Farnsworth's dozen grandchildren has earned money waiting tables, rolling dough, stirring sauce, grating the cheese.

As a young man, Farnsworth wanted a college education. He drove to Earlham College in Indiana in his Model T Ford, but homesickness drew him back home. A year at the state university failed to keep him.

So despite a life in the shadow of Academe, it seems the cracking spine of a college text never excited him like the clatter of commerce.

Back in Orono, he returned to the ice cream parlor that employed him in high school. It was the Depression and hard times and soon the owner, eager to sell, let Farnsworth have the place for \$1,000 plus \$50 rent. It was 1931 and Farnsworth was 21 years old.

In two years he added meals and beer to the bill of fare. Pizza came much later, in 1955, and only because a hotel in town had discovered college kids liked the then-novel treat tantalizing America.

"I thought 'It's a fad, it'll go away,'" Farnsworth recalled.

Skepticism evaporated when he saw his own customers using his phone to order pizzas out and bring them back to his cafe. Fad or no fad, it was time to act. "We said we'll have to put in pizza."

Farnsworth sent his wife to Portland's best pizzeria for 10 days to learn the pizza art.

"I said if I could sell 50 pizzas a night I'd be happy," Farnsworth said. "The first night we sold 100."

He still makes about 250,000 a year, hooking freshmen on his 9-inch pies. Thus begins a lifelong hankering for many.

"I've had people say they came back here from California to say they wanted a pizza," said Farnsworth, sipping a cup of coffee and reaching for a cigar.

'Winning' Jockey pleads guilty

LAKE CHARLES, La. (AP) — A jockey who hid in thick fog at the start of a 1990 race and bolted to the finish line to "win" pleaded guilty Monday to perjury for lying about the scam during a previous trial.

Sylvester Carmouche, 34, was charged with perjury after confessing to state racing officials this year as part of failed bid to regain his jockey license.

He served 10 days in jail after being convicted in 1991 of a misdemeanor attempted theft charge stemming from his 24-length "victory" aboard a long-shot at Delta Downs. He testified at that trial that he was innocent.

In March, he admitted to the Louisiana Racing Commission that he had pulled out of the race aboard Landing Officer shortly after the starting gates opened, waited in the fog while the other mounts rounded the track, then crossed the finish line ahead of the pack.

After pleading guilty Monday, Carmouche was sentenced to a suspended three-year jail term, two years of probation, 720 hours of community service, a \$500 fine and undetermined court costs.