

THE COUNTRY STORE

By Erik Vidstrand
The Southwest Portland Post

Golden Touch restaurant to remain open for now

Hold the presses: the Golden Touch restaurant, located at 8124 SW Barbur Blvd., has received a temporary reprieve and will stay open at least until May 2017.

According to Jeremy Messer, son of the owner George Messer, deliberations between the restaurant owners and property owner brokered a deal to keep the Golden Touch open, at least for now.

"I wanted to call you before you went to press," the younger Messer said days before the paper's deadline. "We're going to remain open!"

While eyes are focused on large apartment complexes and transportation issues in Southwest Portland, a large developer has proposed a 101-foot tall commercial and residential building where the Golden Touch has resided since 1982.

According to the permit, the applicant proposes to construct approximately 223 dwelling units (up from a previous number of 140), commercial space for a Natural Grocers, and 452 parking spaces.

In anticipation of future transit and bicycle improvements at this area, a sizeable right-of-way dedication of 7,200 square feet approximately 20 feet in depth will be required.

Pacific Typewriter has already vacated

the property. They moved down a mile away. The restaurant was going to close its doors at the end of this month.

"It began one day during lunch several years ago," explained waitress Chelsea Messer, who married the owner's son. "Developers were seen walking around the property without any communication to the staff."

"The lease was up in April," said her husband as he flipped pancakes and prepared tuna salads.

A few seats down, Dale Carper, from Gresham, was finishing up his breakfast and was shocked to hear about the potential closing.

"I've been coming here since the '90s," he said. "This is high quality, affordable food done right with home-style cooking."

"The property owners tried several time to break our lease," Messer said. "According to them we were in violation of 'anything'. We used all our savings to sue them and lost."

The restaurant was rented for the set of TV series "Grimm," and also the set of a Harley-Davidson photo shoot. Former Governor Barbara Roberts used to eat here and many Trailblazer players have eaten here over the years.

"We're going to be here another year. Please spread the word," Messer said.

Barbur Boulevard Rentals and related homes for sale, just \$10 million

Right across the street from the Golden Touch Restaurant, lies an institution, and museum of sorts: Barbur Boulevard Rentals. This property, too,



Owner Scott Edwards and son Casey, take a break outside their rental business. The property is up for sale. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

will soon be redeveloped making room for additional commercial and residential options in an area growing by leaps and bounds.

Owner, Scott Edwards has put the property up for sale but is definitely not retiring or selling the business. He's looking for space in Clackamas or Washington counties.

Locally owned since 1958, Barbur Boulevard Equipment Rentals was started by Richard Edwards, Scott's father. At one time, Edwards had 25 bulldozers and 25 tractors. With changing demographics and zoning changes, Edwards has no option but to move along.

"People hire gardeners and landscapers these days," Edwards explained. "They don't need many of the items I have for rent."

Edwards complained about the high property taxes in Multnomah County and the state raising the minimum wage to the highest level in Portland.

"This will cost me even more expenses," he sighed. "I will probably raise my prices."

He has 25 employees and expands to about 40 in the summer months. Edwards started working for his father at age 15 filling gas cans and carrying equipment to customers' trucks.

According to Edwards, the latest

price tag for the property is \$10 million. That includes several homes and an old farmhouse where some of his relatives live.

"I've had a few offers already," Edwards said as he showed off over 200 high chairs and numerous shelves of tents and tablecloths.

"But what the potential buyers had in mind didn't fly with the city," he said. "The city is not business friendly. Permits are needed for everything and are confronted with countless regulations."

The Golden Touch will soon be redeveloped. Light rail or rapid bus transit will eventually run down Barbur Boulevard spawning even more developments. Other local businesses are being torn down or remodeled.

"I've seen Safeway get remodeled twice," he said.

Edwards pointed out a gorilla in a cage sitting next to an old dunking tank.

"You can rent anything here," Edwards beamed, "from a wrench to uh, well, a gorilla in a cage!"

While one can, stop by and see his collection of old photos of the area, animal trophies on the wall, and his hunting and fishing expeditions around the world. You can't rent those though.

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The original booths await more customers now that the Golden Touch restaurant will remain open for another year. (Post photo by Erik Vidstrand)

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