

Uncle is Las Vegas chef

A gourmet's delight for Todd's graduation



MMMMMM! -- As indicated by the expression on Todd Toner's face, the food his uncle prepared for his Sunday graduation open house was good.

There are graduation parties and graduation parties.

Then there was Todd Toner's.

His reception Sunday afternoon was catered by the chef of the Quarterdeck seafood gourmet restaurant at the Mint Hotel in Las Vegas, James Reifsnyder.

Reifsnyder doesn't cater just anyone's graduation, of course. He happens to be Todd's uncle.

Todd, who graduated from Cass City High School last Thursday, is the son of Dan and Ellen Toner, 4117 Doerr Road. Mrs. Toner and Reifsnyder's wife, Marie, are sisters.

It was a special reception for a special graduate. Todd Toner is autistic, a developmental disability, exact cause unknown, which occurs in five of every 10,000 births.

Autistic children can have various behavioral difficulties and most spend their lives in institutions. Todd is the first person with autism to graduate from a Tuscola county high school.

He will now be taking additional training at Caro Area Services for the Handicapped, with the eventual aim of being a small engine or electronics repairman.

HIS AUNT AND UNCLE had been planning to come to his graduation for a couple of years as part of a vacation. It was only when Mrs. Toner started asking her brother-in-law for suggestions on what to serve at Todd's reception that he decided he would do the preparation.

It was quite a smorgasbord that greeted the approximately 75 guests who came to the Toner home during the four-hour open house.

There were all kinds of hors d'oeuvres, baked ham, chicken, seafood, salad molds, and desserts, all suitably and beautifully decorated.

Reifsnyder, 54, has been in the restaurant business since he was 14, having started as a dishwasher.

After World War II, he was associated with members of his family in a restaurant in his native Pennsylvania as a cook.

He then was employed for several years as night chef and manager of two inns in Ephrata, Penn., then as executive chef and purchasing agent for the American Legion hall in that community.

He got out of the restaurant business and went to work for Capital Airlines (later merged with United) as a cargo sales manager. He was eventually transferred to Detroit, where he met his wife, who also worked for Capital. They have been married 18 years.

He got back in the restaurant business as executive chef at the Coldwater (Mich.) Inn.

IT WAS 14 YEARS AGO that he, his wife and family moved to Las Vegas, where his mother and two sisters already lived.

The Reifsnyders have two children, Charles, 17, and Lisa, 15. The family lives in Henderson, 13 miles from Las Vegas, but close to Lake Meade, where the chef can enjoy his fishing hobby. (He also makes custom fishing rods).

His first job in Las Vegas was as saucier (in charge of all sauce work and all sauteed foods) at the Golden Nugget.

After two years there, he switched to a small club as executive chef and purchasing agent.

He was there four years, during which time he was accepted into the Fraternity of Executive Chefs of Nevada, which is affiliated with the American Culinary Federation.

Through the ACF, he is now a certified chef, which requires years of experience, outstanding qualifications and background and a careful checking of those credentials before being accepted.

Following the club job, he was employed as a sous chef at the mammoth MGM

Grand Hotel. A sous chef has complete charge of a shift at any one of the restaurants or other food facilities. The MGM has six restaurants, plus employees' cafeteria (for 10,000 -- ten thousand -- employees), commissary for banquets and private parties and room service.

He was there four years as a floating sous chef, working wherever he was needed.

FOR THE PAST COUPLE of years, he has been specialty room chef of the Quarterdeck room seafood gourmet room in the Mint Hotel, one of four restaurants

there.

He has complete charge of the restaurant and staff of 18 (cooks, waiters, etc.). "I run this room just like it is my own personal restaurant," he explained. "The executive chef checks with me once a day and that's it."

The room has a sailing ship decor and eating there, according to Mrs. Reifsnyder, is a "delightful dining experience."

Dining is by reservation only. The room seats 63 persons and is only open from 5:30 p.m.-12:30 a.m.

It is not a place where one

goes for a quick meal. Diners are there a minimum of two hours and can be there as long as four hours.

A full six or seven course dinner, with the most expensive item on the menu (lobster) and appropriate wines can set a couple back \$150.

The cheapest two persons can eat there is a total of about \$50.

When Reifsnyder isn't working, he shares his cooking duties at home with his wife and children.

Marie Reifsnyder is a registered nurse and nursing supervisor at Valley

Institute of Psychiatry. Son Charles is following in his father's footsteps and is working as a chef's apprentice at the Mint.

What does the chef of what is considered the finest seafood restaurant in the Las Vegas area like to eat at home?

Ham and eggs or hamburgers are just fine with him.

In fact, Reifsnyder has no qualms about taking the family to McDonald's to eat. "What's wrong with that?," he asks.



A CHEF'S TOUCH -- Food must not only taste good, it must look good. Making sure everything is arranged just right is Jim Reifsnyder, CWC (certified working chef.) The prepared food covered two picnic tables.

Scouts and folks watch U.S. Army

More than 500 Scouts, Cubs, Webelos, parents and friends from all over the Thumb area gathered at Camp Pine Acres near Caro Saturday, May 17, for the 1980 Scout-O-Rama.

The U.S. Army put on demonstrations in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation, drilling, as well as a special feature of the "slide for life" by the pathfinders of the 101st Airborne.

Cubs, Scouts, parents alike gathered as an airplane (sponsored by the Tuscola County Air-Travelers - T - Cats) dropped over 1,000 table tennis balls. The balls, donated by the "Whoopie Bowl" in Unionville, contained special numbered balls and were exchanged for gifts from the Army, Corbishley's in Bad Axe, and the Whoopie Bowl. Winners of the week-end competition among Scout Troops for best campsite was Troop 554 of Sebawaing.

The Webelos also competed in Webelos Testing.

The first annual Thumb District Pinewood Derby took place with the Cub Scouts racing in age groups.

Because of rain, the Saturday night closing was around an indoor campfire. Everyone sang "Happy Birthday" to the Cub Scouts on their 50th anniversary and to the Scouts on their 70th anniversary.

Scouts to hold model car derby

The Deford Cub Scout Troop 3593 will sponsor its third annual Pinewood Derby race Sunday, June 1. It will be at the Deford United Methodist church. In case of rain, the race will be in the Deford School gym.

Registration begins at 1 p.m. and the race will start at 1:30 p.m.

Twelve trophies will be awarded. The public is invited.

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ALMOST TOO GOOD -- This plate of hors d'oeuvres prepared by Jim Reifsnyder looks almost too fancy to eat. The bird is sliced from a single apple. The Las Vegas chef started preparing the food for the Sunday open house on Friday.

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