

Two area business owners pass away on same day

By REBECCA BRIA
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Two former Back Mountain business owners died on the same day last month.

Former Shadowbrook co-founder and co-owner Peggy Welch Stevens, 80, died on Tuesday, Sept. 16. Robert A. Rave Sr., 87, co-founder and co-owner of the former Rave's Garden Centers, Robert A. Rave Sr., 87, also died that day.

Rave's Garden Center was a place many Back Mountain residents visited for years to buy plants and gardening supplies. The store existed for many years in the Back Mountain and in Wyoming, Ashley and Clarks Summit.

Rave was a graduate of Kingston Township High School and earned a bachelor's degree in commerce and finance from Pennsylvania State University. He served as a sergeant in the United States Army in Italy during World War II.

In 1950, Rave and his brother, Lou, started a business across from Cadie LaBar's on Memorial Highway.

"At that time, there really weren't too many of them (garden centers) around," said Scott Rave, Rave's son. "He and his brother both had a love for plants and grew up doing things with plants. He saw it as an opportunity to do business."

But the location proved to be problematic. The landlord wanted the Rave brothers to buy the store but, worse yet, the extremely close proximity to the highway caused damage to the plants.

"Many Sunday mornings at like 4 in the morning, the police would call and my dad would have to go down there because people would be drunk and drive into the shrubbery," Scott said. "I have a paper on which my father wrote, 'Some of our friends thought we got our start in business because of money we received in accidents.'"

The Raves closed the Dallas location and opened a bigger store just one year later on Memorial Highway in Shavertown. The lot was about 1000 feet south of the current traffic light on Route 309 and Center Street. Rave's aunt, Florence Rave, lived directly behind the store across Toby Creek and a footbridge over the creek allowed Rave to easily walk to his aunt's house which served as the landscaping headquarters.

In the late 1960s, the Raves once again relocated to another spot in Shavertown, about a quarter of a mile south of the old location on Memorial Highway.

Other stores were later opened in Ashley, Clarks Summit and Wyoming.

Rave's sons, Robert Jr. and Scott, bought the business in 1996. Lou Rave died in 1998. Robert Jr. and Scott closed the remaining stores - the Shavertown, Ashley and Clarks Summit locations - in February 2004.

"He had a great sense of humor and would joke around with people," Scott said of his father. "He would try to get them (customers) the plants they needed for the area he wanted to plant. He would work all day, come home and eat dinner and go back and work until the sun went down."

Once, the elder Rave had a run-in, literally, with a customer.

"Jack Palance, the actor from Conyngham Township, used to come to our Ashley store," Scott said. "One time, my dad literally ran into him. He was going to use our bathroom and my dad was coming out. Jack Palance said something to him that was funny, something



SUBMITTED PHOTO
Robert A. Rave Sr., 87, co-founder and co-owner of the former Rave's Garden Center, died on September 16.

like, 'Is there a two-seater in there, or no?'"

Scott says his father was a pioneer with Christmas displays in garden centers and the Rave store would completely transform into "Christmas Villages" during the holiday season.

About 22 years ago, casual outdoor furniture also became a big part of the business.

Peggy Stevens graduated from Tunkhannock High School in 1945 and worked at a bank until she married her husband, Robert, in 1948. Robert had worked on Shadowbrook, his family's farm in Tunkhannock, as a milkman.

The same year that Robert and Peggy married, they also took over ownership of the farm. In 1955, the couple opened Shadowbrook Dairy Farm and sold their dairy cattle in 1957 to start the Shadowbrook Housing Development.

The Stevenses later expanded their business to become Shadowbrook Inn and Resort, featuring a motel, bowling lanes, dining room, bar, campground and an 18-hole golf course. When the restaurant first opened, Peggy cooked all of the food herself. That was in addition to being a homemaker and a mother of five children.

After Robert and Peggy sold Shadowbrook Inn and Resort in May of 1981, they retired to Sun City Center, Fla., about 40 minutes south of Tampa on the state's west coast. Peggy had a circulation problem and could no longer tolerate northeastern Pennsylvania winters.

Peggy took pottery classes at Manatee Community College in Bradenton, Fla. and became a skilled potter. She taught pottery classes and she and her daughter, Gail Vieczorek, created a local business together called P and G Creations.

"She was always a crafty type of person," Vieczorek said of her mother.

According to a story in The Times Leader's archives, Peggy did pottery demonstrations at the 17th Annual Wyoming County Arts and Crafts Fair in Meshoppen in 1994. She and Vieczorek brought along crafts from P and G Creations.

"I don't know if our turnout will be as good as other years because of the heat," Peggy said in the story. "But there was quite a crowd watching me demonstrate the pottery wheel."

Peggy purchased a home in Eaton Hills in Tunkhannock during the summer months after Robert died in April 2006.

For the past three years when in Florida, Peggy assisted her daughter, Betty, and son, Jack, with their business called Java Cow Ice Cream Café, a coffee and ice-cream shop in Sun City Center.

"When they would do catered things, she would help put the hot fudge in the ice-cream and other things she could do sitting down," Vieczorek said.

Peggy also baked quiche, a dish made primarily of eggs and milk or cream in a pastry crust, every morning to be sold at Java Cow Ice Cream Café.

"We're going to miss her cooking, that's for sure," Vieczorek said. "She was a very happy person. She would do anything for anyone. She just loved to be around people."

OBITUARIES

DeCINTI - John M. (Jack), 63, of Palm Beach Gardens, Fla. and a former resident of Dallas and Harveys Lake, died Friday, Sept. 19, 2008.

Born in Wilkes-Barre, he was a graduate of G.A.R. Memorial High School and attended the former Wilkes College. He had been employed as the sales manager at Wilkes-Barre Wholesale Company, Wilkes-Barre, and manager of Cosmic Train and Gallery Lounge of Edwardsville.

He was a member of the Moose Lodge, Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

Surviving are his wife, the former Barbara A. Sabol; brother, Fred, of Southlake, Texas; nieces and nephews.

Memorial donations to the American Cancer Society, 190 Welles St., Forty Fort, PA, 18704.

HIBBERT - Harry C., of Eaton Terrace, Tunkhannock, died Saturday, Sept. 27, 2008.

Born in Chicago, Ill. on January 20, 1915, he joined the Reserves after his high school graduation and worked as an instructor for the ATF and FBI as a sharpshooter expert. He retired from the U.S. Coast Guard after 22 years of service and then went to work as an engineer for Dielectric in Raymond, Maine.

He was a member of the Church of the Nativity BVM in Tunkhannock.

Surviving are daughters, Maria Elena McKee, of Patchogue, N.Y.; Cindy Hibbert, Nassau, N.Y.; and Melissa Tucker, Beverly, Mass.; four grandchildren and eight great-grandchildren.

JOHNSON - Billie Beatrice, 97, of Dallas and formerly of Downingtown, died on Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2008.

Born in Springfield, Ark. on January 16, 1911, she attended local schools and beauty school. In 1930, she married Kenneth Johnson and, for over 30 years, they traveled with the U.S. Navy. In the

1960s, they retired to Florida where Billie became a realtor until moving to Pennsylvania in 1997.

She was a lifelong member of the Methodist Church, recently attending Downingtown United Methodist Church. She was a member of the Eastern Star and the National Officers' Wives Association. She resided at Bellingham Retirement and Simpson Meadows Retirement Communities until 2006 when she moved to The Meadows Manor in Dallas.

Surviving are her daughter, Sue J. Taylor, of Downingtown; three grandchildren; six great-grandchildren.

Memorial donations to Hospice of the Sacred Heart, 600 Baltimore Dr., Wilkes-Barre, PA 18701, or The Meadows Manor, 200 Lake Dr., Dallas, PA 18612.

KUFFA - Reta, 84, of Tunkhannock, died Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2008.

Born in Avery Station, Lemon Township, she was a member of the Nativity B.V.M. Church, Tunkhannock, and its Altar and Rosary Society. She was a 1941 graduate of Tunkhannock High School.

Surviving are her daughters, Barbara Dillon, Flushing, N.Y.; Nancy Fisher, of Springville; Joanne Kuffa of Wapwallopen; and Debra Goble, of Tunkhannock; sons, John A., of Dallas; and David, of Tunkhannock; 15 grandchildren; 16 great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews.

Memorial donations to Trigeminal Neuralgia Assoc., (TNA) 925 NW 56th Terrace, Suite C., Gainesville, FL 32605-6402 or Nativity B.V. M. Church, Tunkhannock.

PETROSKAS - Geraldine H., of Harveys Lake, died Wednesday, Sept. 24, 2008.

Born on August 30, 1919, she was a graduate of Luzerne High School. She studied nursing at Margaret Haig School of Nursing, New Jersey and Nesbitt Hospital in Kingston where she later worked as a supervising nurse.

She worked for many years as the project nurse for Bechtel Corporation at Mehoopany and Berwick. She also assisted Dr. Arthur Sherwood in private practice in Tunkhannock.

She was a member of Our Lady of Victory Church at Harveys Lake. She had served as a Eucharistic Minister and on numerous church committees over the years.

Surviving are her daughter, Peggy Cronin, of Harveys Lake; two grandchildren; three great-grandchildren.

Memorial contributions to Mercy Center Personal Care and Skilled Nursing Unit, Dallas, PA 18612.

PLUSHANSKI - Lois Roller, 81, of Fieldcrest Drive, Tunkhannock, died Thursday, Sept. 25, 2008.

Born in Somerville, N.J. on May 26, 1927, she was a 1945 graduate of Somerville High School and then graduated from Somerset Nursing School. She was a member of the Tunkhannock Presbyterian Church.

Surviving are her husband, Henry; son, Gary, Chicago, Ill.; daughters, Carol Garnecki and Dawn Risley, both of Tunkhannock; sister, Carol Carver, of Morris Plains, N.J.; three grandchildren; five great-grandchildren; several nieces and nephews.

NAYLOR - Leroy J. Jr., 70, formerly of Luzerne and Dallas, died Friday, Sept. 26, 2008.

Born November 22, 1937, he was a 1955 graduate of Luzerne High School. He was a veteran of the U.S. Army. Prior to retiring in 1993, he was the owner of Home-Brite Rug Co. in Kingston.

Surviving are sons, Leroy J. III, West Wyoming; Kevin, Pittston; four grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; and brother, James, Geneva, Fla.

VALENTINE - William A., 77, of Tunkhannock, died on Sunday, Sept. 28, 2008.

Born on December 19, 1930 in

Tunkhannock, he was a graduate of Tunkhannock Area High School. Upon graduation, he enlisted in the United States Air Force, serving in Colorado and abroad in England.

After returning home from England, he worked for Sikorski Aircraft in Connecticut, then with American Housing in Allentown. He was a 40-year member of Local Labor No.130 of Scranton.

Surviving are his wife, Mary A.; children, Bill, of Scranton; and Cindy Marcy, of Tunkhannock; two grandchildren; a brother, Robert, of Florida; a sister, Betty, of Tunkhannock; several nieces and nephews.

Memorial donations to the Russell U. M. C. c/o Peggy Ellsworth, 2 Lemon Creek Rd., Meshoppen, or Mehoopany Ambulance, Mehoopany.

WEAVER - Timothy M., 47, of Dallas, died Tuesday, Sept. 23, 2008.

Born in Dover, N.J., he was a carpenter by trade and worked for various contractors in the area.

Surviving are his parents, Jennie Condon Weaver and Harry Weaver; brother, Harry, Center Valley; sister, Cathy Reeder, Sweet Valley; step-mother, Mary Weaver; step-brother, Robert Knowles, East Greenville; step-sister, Betty Jean Ramick, Quakertown; nieces and nephews.

ZURINSKI - Frank W., 74, of Harveys Lake, died Friday, Sept. 26, 2008.

Born in Luzerne, he attended Luzerne Schools. He was in the U.S. Army, stationed in Germany, and was discharged with 100 percent disability. He was a member of Our Lady of Victory Church, Harveys Lake and a lifetime member of the D.A.V. and the N.R.A.

Surviving is his wife, the former Marian Maceiko; children, Debbie Jones, of Riverview Fla.; Mark, of Clark Summit; Judy, of Erie; two grandchildren; sisters, Susan Stolarick, of Lehman; and Eva Katchick, of Whitehall, N.J.

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