

El Dorado News-Times, Monday, July 22, 2013

Kind hearts and tasty treats

Betty's Old Fashion never disappoints and never lets a customer go hungry

By Sherelle Black sblack@eldoradonews.com

(Editor's Note: The following article is the 37th in a series on established El Dorado businesses that have been in operation for 40 years or more.)

At the age of 19, Betty Schaub found what most people spend a lifetime searching for — a job that she was passionate about, a job that she wouldn't dread waking up early for and most importantly, a job that allowed her to do what she loved and that allowed her to give back to the community at the same time. Schaub came to work for Phil Schaaf at the ice cream shop he owned on East Hillsboro Street in 1966. When Schaaf decided 10 years later that he wanted to give up the ice cream shop and another restaurant he owned on North West Avenue, he asked Schaub if she would like to purchase one of them. She knew without a doubt she wanted to take over the ice cream shop. "I've always wanted a restaurant," she said. "I had already worked here for 10 years and felt attached to it." According to Susie Blanchard, Schaub's niece, the business has been around since 1934 and is the oldest, original eating establishment in El Dorado. Now, 47 years after Schaub started working for Schaaf as an employee, she is still working 16-hour shifts seven days a week, but now as the owner of Betty's Old Fashion. "I open at five, but I get here around 4:30 to begin baking and cooking," Schaub said. "It doesn't bother me working 16-our shifts. I've done it all my life."

Blanchard, who has helped out at Old Fashion since she was nine, said Schaub works so much that the shop is her home away from home. "My husband says I'm married to it," Schaub jokingly added. When Schaub first began working, customers could come in and dine. Now, the room has been turned into a kitchen area to offer a larger variety of food choices. "About 15 years ago, we started doing lunch plates," she said. "My customers kept asking me to start serving breakfast, and I did. Then it progressed to lunch plates and now I also serve Sunday dinner." The shop also sells salads, sandwiches, cakes and pies on a daily basis. Something a visitor might find a little peculiar is that Betty's Old Fashion has what Schaub states are really low prices for good quality food.

Blanchard, 44, recalls the price of Old Fashion's hamburgers being \$1.55 when she was in high school and today the burger is only \$2. "Everyone is always shocked that we have really good prices," Schaub said. "I don't overprice my stuff. I should go up if I want to make some money, but I try to keep it to where people can afford it because everything is so expensive these days. I

don't make the money I use to make, but I'm doing well."

Although Schaub may work long hours on a daily basis, through her shop she is able to touch many lives without ever having to leave the inside of her establishment. Schaub recalls many moments when she has generously fed children that came by her shop. "Little kids that use to come by, that are now grown, will come back and say 'Mrs. Betty you will not believe what an impact you made on me when I was little and you would give me an ice cream cone or a hamburger when I was hungry,'" she said.

Blanchard said Schaub can never say no when it comes to helping those in need, particularly children. "They would say, 'Mrs. Betty, I'm hungry,' and she would say 'OK, I'm going to get you something to eat,'" Blanchard said. "The magic words are 'I'm hungry' when it comes to Schaub's weak spot." Schaub said she remembers a man that needed to borrow four or five dollars for gas money and she gave it to him. She said 10 years later he came back and repaid her and said "I never forgot you helped me when nobody else would."

"I've been there myself," she said. "God has really been good to me and I try to pass it back to the community, because they help me make a living. They (loyal customers) are all just like family." Blanchard added she does an excellent job of letting the community know she cares about them. "If somebody dies, she's making a cake or sending flowers," she said. Schaub also donates food items to organizations or churches in the area when they are having an event. She recently donated to the Boys and Girls Club. Schaub laughed as she said, "Everybody says 'I ought to be rich by now and I should quit working' well, if I would stop giving things away."

She added that it was never her intention to get rich, but just to do something she loves and at the same time make an impact on the community. "I enjoy giving," she said. "They (the community) have been good to me and they look after me. I try to give back what God gave me. God has been so good to me"

Raymond Owens, 31, who has been working for Schaub at Old Fashion since he was 12 years old, can personally testify that she has and always will be a motherly figure in the community. Schaub said although Owens has his own family, he calls her mother because she helped raise him. "He said 'If it wasn't for me he would probably be in the penitentiary by now,'" she said. Schaub mentioned he has never been late for work and has only missed one day of work to her knowledge, and that was when she made him go home because he was sick. "He's a good worker," she said. "He is also my most loyal worker."

Blanchard said "When you work here you just don't become an employee, you become family." Just like Owens, Blanchard also has her own personal reasons for thinking of Schaub as a mother. Blanchard had taken a liking to the shop and had no interest of leaving to go off to college, but Schaub, knowing the importance of education, convinced her otherwise. "She told me, 'you don't want to work here for the rest of your life, you need to go to college,'" Blanchard said. "She encouraged me to further my education and try to do better for myself."

The community almost lost their motherly figure when Schaub drove in front of a 18-wheeler, causing her to be ejected from her vehicle in 2008. Fortunately, she survived the wreck and

without a single broken bone. Blanchard added the time she spent recovering was the only time she missed work. "God had his hands wrapped around her," she said. "She was thrown hundreds of yards to the church parking lot. She only spent 24 hours in the ICU, and only missed 10 days of work." Schaub said she has truly been blessed with the ability to be able to work after so many years and such a horrific accident.

When asked what the secret to sustaining her business for so long has been, Schaub answered, "we make everything ourselves." She added, "We make our own patties, we cut our onions ourselves, everything we do is from scratch. We put everything on our burgers and we don't charge extra for things like pickles, mayonnaise, lettuce, onions — it's all included."

Through the years Schaub has served many people in the community, turning most into regulars with her gracious ways, her delicious pies and cakes and her soft-serve ice cream. Schaub said unfortunately there are plans to expand Hillsboro Street from a two-way to four lanes, and when that time comes, Betty's Old Fashion will be no more.

"They haven't come to talk to any of us on the street yet, but we are all wondering if we are going to be here," she said. "I'm not ready to go, but when and if they do decide to buy me out in order to expand the street, I will retire. I hope I don't have to retire."

Blanchard added they aren't going anywhere unless they make them, but until then, they will continue to be open seven days a week. When Schaub retires she said she will miss her customers more than anything. "I enjoy my customers and getting to visit with them the most," she said. "I love talking to them, especially when they come back from places like California and visit with me. They say when they come back to El Dorado there's three places they have to visit, and that's here, Minute Man and the Spudnut Shop."

Blanchard said although the community would miss Betty's Old Fashion tremendously, she thinks they will miss the lady with the kind and generous ways even more. "Betty is everybody's friend," she said. "She is a pillar in this community, especially on this side of town. She is an angel."

Betty's Old Fashion is open 5 a.m. to 9 p.m. Sunday through Saturday. For more information, call (870) 863-9015 or visit 1334 E. Hillsboro St.



Old fashioned eatery: Pictured are, from left to right, Susan Blanchard, Owner Betty Schaub, and Raymond Owens.