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Kildare's Irish Pub Opens in West Chester

by Jack Mc Cormack

When word got around that the venerable Restaurant and Bar was closing and an Irish pub was to take its place, there were skeptics galore. Was this going to be another pseudo-Irish establishment? Would it be the authentic "goods"? Time alone would tell — and it has.

Fortunately, Dr. Dave Magrogan was the force behind the change. As president and CEO, Magrogan engineered the successful transplantation of the bar in Conway's Public House in Wexford to its new home in Kildare's Irish Pub, 18-22 Gay Street, West Chester, PA.

It is an interesting fact that West Chester is a quaint borough of neighborhood businesses and residences with a state university also a part of the community. The ambience is perfect for an Irish pub. Inside the premises, the ceol and the craic are outstanding. Antique Irish furniture was brought from the "Old Country" to the Chester County location. A firm which specializes in Irish pub decor, the Irish Pub Company, set up Kildare's. It was this concern that was responsible for the Irish pub, Fada, coming to Atlanta in 1996. Dave, a chiropractor in the "real world," was very impressed by this enterprise. He now harbored a strong desire to set up one of his own in West Chester. He also felt that his Irish ancestors would be proud of him. The entire operation cost him 2.5 million dollars. The Guinness Company

came down to investigate what was happening and liked his plans and offered to help him decorate his endeavor.

Needless to say, Guinness and Harp are on tap. The bartenders pour a good pint of this nectar of the gods. The head is one-half to one inch high. They are currently perfecting their skill in making shamrocks on the head. For those who wish a stronger libation, there is Bushmills, Irish Mist, Bailey's Irish Cream, and Irish Coffee. Within the next few weeks, the proprietor hopes to add another popular Irish brew, Smithwick's.

There are breakfast, lunch and dinner menus. The full Irish breakfast is ever popular. Kildare's has an active lunch time when one of the mainstays is "Kildare's Signature Salmon Fillet Sandwich." So popular had the traditional "fish and chips" become that this item sold out on several days. Under the guidance of executive chef Pagnini, the kitchen staff were trained in Ireland. Pagnini has set up menus that feature the best in Irish cuisine and effectively debunk the old attitude that Irish food is only served one way — bland. Some of the really popular items include Irish countryside boxty.

Kildare's consists of two bar-rooms and several other rooms. Weather permitting, there are outside tables on Gay Street and a backyard garden with tables. Reservations are not accepted so that it is best to get there early. The prices are moderate and the

food delicious. The staff, like the owner cannot do enough for the patrons. Different nights are dedicated to different themes. Monday night is set aside for "session." Musicians are encouraged to come and play. "Ladies Night" is Wednesday evening. On Thursday night, a house band plays. From noon to 4 p.m. on Sundays entertainment is provided by Na Geana Faidhane (The Wild Geese) featuring Bob Mc Intyre (fiddle and vocals), Terry Algier (tin whistle, button accordion and vocals) and Jim Oldham (guitar, mandolin and banjo). This very fine trio enlivens Kildare's with a very good selection of songs and instrumentals. Others who have appeared for evening festivities have included Derry musician Oliver McElhone, the Malarkey Brothers and the Hooligans.

As far as Magrogan's future plans are concerned, he wants to continue "to preserve and elaborate upon Irish culture and traditions." He is investigating the possibility of dedicating Saturday mornings to sports that are popular in Ireland: hurling, Gaelic football and football (soccer).

Aside from this incursion into sports, Dr. Dave Magrogan would like to expand Kildare's further in the Philadelphia metropolitan area. On a personal note, the amiable pub proprietor will be getting married soon. Sorry, ladies! We wish Dr. Dave the very best of the luck of the Irish in both endeavors.