

LASTING LEGACY: Restaurateur Schreiner leaves huge impact on Fond du Lac – Bernard Schreiner

A local restaurateur whose name is synonymous with exceptional dining is being remembered for his kindness, trustworthiness, integrity and deep faith.

Bernard Schreiner, 85, died Wednesday at St. Francis Home, where he had been a resident for several months. Schreiner owned and operated restaurants in Marinette and Fond du Lac for 50 years. [Schreiner's Restaurant](#) is considered a Fond du Lac landmark at the intersection of Highways 23 and 41. Paul Cunningham, the first non-family owner of Schreiner's, said Thursday that Schreiner was more like a dad to him than a boss. Cunningham said his own father died in the late 1970s, "so I had my corporate father." Cunningham worked his way up from a 15-year-old busboy to owner of the business with his wife, Joan, in 1992. "He (Schreiner) paid me a great compliment by being owner one day and being retired the next," Cunningham said.

Led by example



Cunningham said "Mr. Schreiner" — as he refers to him — led by example and was always willing to teach. "It was about taking care of others before taking care of yourself," Cunningham said. Managers continue Schreiner's tradition of wearing dress clothes — a suit and tie for the men — and members of the wait staff are known for their pressed white uniforms. Schreiner said the reason for impeccable dress was to "set the tone" of professionalism in the restaurant and make to make sure visitors understood they are important.

Bernard Schreiner [learned the restaurant business from his parents](#), Albert and Regina, who opened The Grill in 1938 near Johnson and Main streets. Schreiner's Home Cooking opened in 1940 when the restaurant was relocated to 237 S. Main St.

In 1953, Bernard Schreiner and his wife opened Schreiner's Restaurant in Marinette, Wis. The couple returned to Fond du Lac in 1968 to help his mother after his father passed away several years earlier. In 1955, Schreiner's was moved to the site of the current Boda's Restaurant. In 1973, Schreiner's was constructed at its present location.

Mentor

Ed Lump, president and chief executive officer of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association, said Schreiner was a friend and mentor. He explained how Schreiner's set a standard for the industry by providing a great value in a "crisp and clean atmosphere."

In the 1970s, Schreiner was on the [board of directors for the Wisconsin Restaurant Association](#). Lump said he proposed a voluntary program that would require managers to take a course and a test in restaurant sanitation practices.

The voluntary program Schreiner proposed three decades ago is mandatory today.

"We went through it voluntarily (in the 1970s) and Bernie Schreiner held the first certificate in the country," Lump said.

"He certainly epitomized hospitality," said Michael Schmal, executive director of the Fond du Lac Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, about Schreiner. "His restaurant is an icon on (Highway) 41. People from all over the Midwest stop there."

Schmal said he is aware that some travelers to Door County avoid the more direct Interstate 43, choosing instead to travel Highway 41 so they can stop at Schreiner's and have lunch.

"Mr. Schreiner greeted all of his guests and made certain the food and service was what they deserved," Schmal recalls.

Schreiner is survived by Maureen, his wife of 62 years; a son, Richard of Milwaukee; and a daughter, SuAnne of Deerfield, Ill.

Funeral services will be held Monday at Holy Family Church, with visitation from 1 to 6 p.m. Sunday at Zacherl Funeral Home, 875 E. Division St.
