



Hooligans

by Larry J. Pellet

It's a welcoming back home of sorts for Fruitport High School grad and native son, Dave Gawlik. Gawlik, a 1982 graduate (by some accounts with honors) has literally been up and down, there and back, around the globe and finally retired. Only to find, like the '70s sitcom "Welcome Back Kotter", himself back in the game and into the thick of things where he originally started...good ole Fruitport. Gawlik grew up near East Pontaluna and Cooley, before settling near Pine Park where he has resided for the past 20 yrs.

After high school, Gawlik served in the U.S. Navy for 6 yrs, before embarking on a 29 yr career at Consumer's Power, where he did janitorial work before moving up through the ranks. Simultaneously, he opened up Old World Deli on Laketon Ave, which eventually morphed into Old World Pub and then The Factory. From there, he decided to retire. However, fate had a better idea. The serviceman began having thoughts about wanting to open a meat shop at his previous property at the North Pole ice cream place, with artisan meats, when the idea for converting Pope's Pub into something similar came along.

"We studied Mdot to get the traffic patterns, and I had an architect draw up the blueprints", stated Gawlik. Melissa, his wife, went along with the dream. "I supported him...it was fine."

Witty and whimsical, Gawlick claims to have graduated from Beerginya University (?) and MyWay Institute, and found this opportunity too lavish to resist. Pope's Pub, previous known as the Little Brown Jug (and Heinie's Bar), served for a couple of generations of West Michiganders as the stomping grounds for music, jello wrestlers, post football game gatherings, and folks out on the town hoping to hook up with hometown friends.

"Most people don't even want to try", he surmised, when asked about starting a bold new endeavor.

Now, Gawlik hopes lightning strikes twice as he plans on a food and bar establishment, complete with cherry wood fixtures, decorative "costly" roof ornaments, a piece of his soul and a following of Fruitport loyalist. The flagpole he is using came from non other than SD Warren, courtesy of another Fruitportian you may have heard of, Mr. Doug Melching.

"I want it to be a quaint place, one where you can bring your gal. I don't want any young punks here. But, that is plan A, if it doesn't work, ya

gotta have a plan B...I can always make it a general store".

While he doesn't have a name for the building yet, he says he is considering naming it "Hooligans", in honor of the writer of this story...ok.

With an acre of room out back, Gawlik seems happy and content with his latest endeavor. Enlisting the volunteered help of his trusted friends, including Steve Johnson, Dave Brown, Tom Mumby, Dave Kaiser and Tim Johnson - over a combined 250 years of friendship - the military veteran is taking his time, doing things right, and riding out the storm that Covid 19 has brought in, at least temporarily. He plans to employ up to 6 people, but admits things are already getting pretty expensive due to Covid.



Tim Johnson, Dave Gawlik, and Dave Brown

Ever closer to his goal, the popular entrepreneur says he will be "tickled pink" to be opened by July 4th, once inspections are complete.

With hard work, luck on his side, and a history of success, those old lyrics from the Kotter's comedy show seem quite relevant to him now:

"Welcome back, your dreams were your ticket out
 Welcome back, to that same old place that you laughed about
 Well the names have all changed since you hung around
 But those dreams have remained and they've turned around
 Who'd have thought they'd lead ya
 Back here where we need ya
 Yeah, we tease him a lot 'cause we got him on the spot, welcome back".
 Welcome back, Dave.

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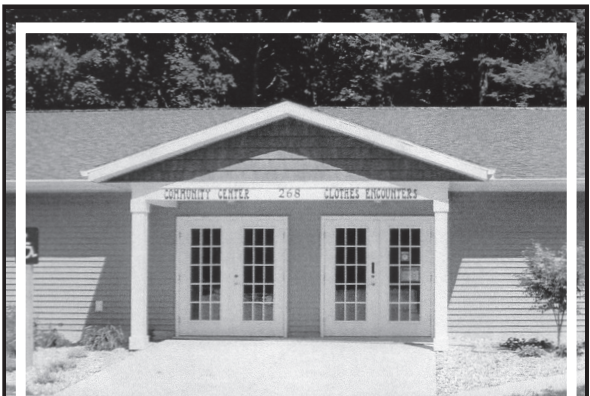
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