

THIRD SECTION

THE LEELANAU ENTERPRISE

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'Dick's Bar' is finally 'Dick's Bar'

He's taken "orders" for nearly a half-century and still is but he's not giving as many orders now in semi-retirement.

He's known far and wide as Dick - but that's not his name.

He sold his Dick's Pour House bar in June to his son - whose name is Richard - and now "works" for the business he owned and operated for more than 42 years

It was the mid-point of the Great Depression in the spring of 1935 that Plamondon, then 22, "got fed up" with the "credit and (no) cash" problems of the family retail business and struck out on his own. He rented a store and attached house at the southwest corner of St. Mary's and Meinard Sts, for \$30 a month, got his liquor license from Lansing and started his "cash - no credit" business.

His father, N.J. Plamondon, operated a general store and Grocery still run today by two brothers, N.J.'s Grocery. At the time N.J.'s cousin, O.J., ran a competing store in the town across from the then-new tavern.

Young Plamondon had seen enough groceries, merchandise and clothing go out of the family store "on credit" without being paid for to turn his interest in business to a no-credit, cash-only operation. Lake Leelanau was hard hit by the Depression, with the town bank paying off "only 10 cents on the dollar."

Plamondon recalls bitterly that the bank manager, the owner's son, "had the nerve to order and receive a \$55 made-to-measure suit - I fitted him - and then leave town still owing us."

The first Dick's Bar also sold hamburgers and sandwiches, and even had a soda fountain. "Lots of time guys would come in for a beer and their wife would sit next to them with a pineapple sundae," Plamondon recalled.

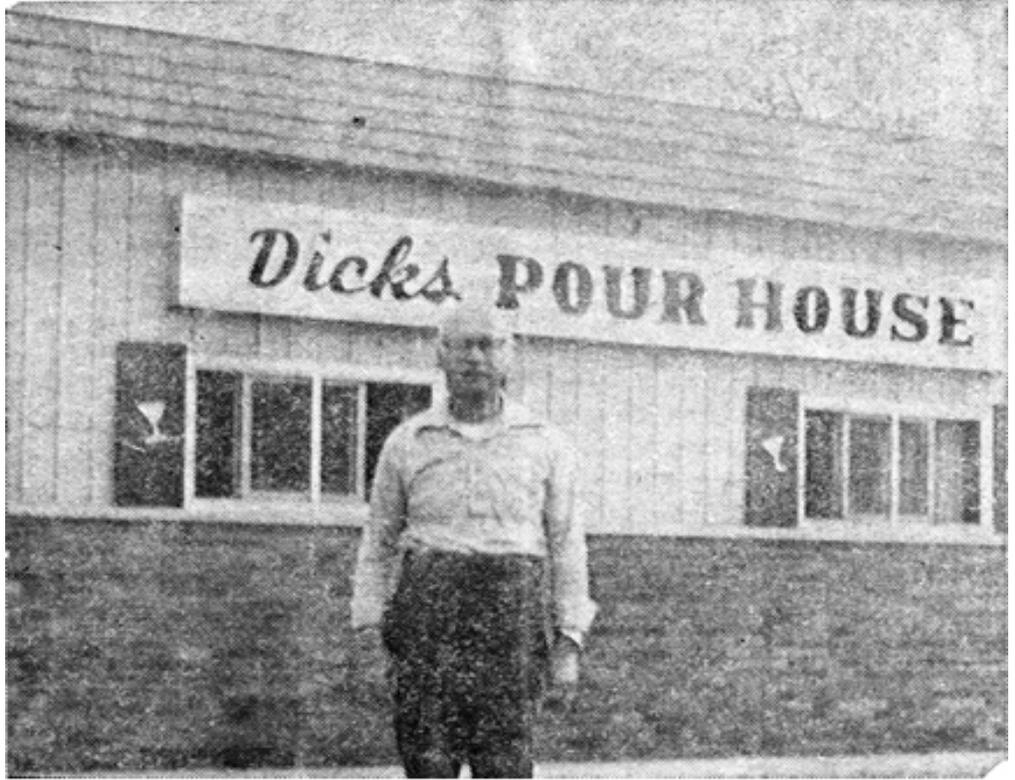
The hamburgers of 1936 sold for 10 cents, the meat was bought at N.J.'s at the going rate of 3 pounds for a quarter. Prices were comparable for other items, judging by ads in The Enterprise at the time. O.J. Plamondon sold 20-gauge roofing in 12-foot lengths for \$1.25; the Leland Auto Co. had a special on gasoline - "5 gals. for 83 cents, 6 gals. For 90 cents, including tax."

Plamondon's first of 43 state liquor licenses cost \$100. The cost is now more than \$500 per year.

His was not the first saloon in town. Dan's Powerhouse having opened after the Great Experiment - Prohibition - ended as 1934 dawned. Dan's is still operating, but has had several owners down through the years.

Many State Liquor licenses have been in the same family for many years, but "few if any" have been operated continuously by one person, state officials say.

The Depression years were a time of nickel beer at the bars ("take out, bottles were 15 cents"). So in addition to hamburgers and ice cream, a tavern owner relied on other items to help pay the rent - such as punch boards, pin



**"DICK PLAMONDON AND HIS TAVERN
... bar "misnamed" during his 42-year career**

ball machines which paid off in coins and slot machines, all later made illegal.

Before the "slots" became illegal in late 1936, Dick's Bar had high-income days of \$42.60 and \$59.60 on the nickel and dime machines.

One drink in a bar such as Dick's today can cost as much as \$1.50 - that is the amount of his total sales on his "worst day". Plamondon doesn't recall the day, but says "maybe it was a big blow" that kept his sales to \$1.50 on Feb. 10, 1939.

The weather of that day, a Friday, was reported in The Enterprise as "31 degrees, severe windstorm, hail, rain."

After the existing bridge over the Narrows was built in 1939, replacing the former bridge at the foot of Meinard St., Plamondon built a new building at its present location, opening July 1, 1940. An addition was constructed in 1947. After several decades as Dick's Bar, the name of the business was changed a few years ago to Dick's Pour House.

"Times were different" in the bar business in the 1930s, Plamondon recalls. "We used to have a lot of fights. We only had farmers and resident resorters around for customers then. And some of the farmers would load up on home-made wine at their homes, come into town and have 1 beer and they'd get into big fights."

Nowadays, the bar has a side room away from the bar which serves as a gathering place for local youths, where they play Foosball and drink pop.

The now semi-retired bar owner is a member of the Plamondon family, of French descent, which is one of the largest familial groups in the Lake

Leelanau community. He was graduated from St. Mary's High School and is still an avid sports fan of St. Mary's teams as well as the town baseball team.

Plamondon and his wife, Sue, a part-time employee at Milliken's, have raised eight children. She, too, calls her husband "Dick".

Richard C. Plamondon, the bar's new owner, worked for his father for several years in addition to selling real estate. He is now a Realtor with his own office, and is chairman of Leland Township's Zoning Board and Harbor Commission.

An avid fisherman, the senior Plamondon now looks forward to spending more time on Lake Leelanau - "if the boss'll give me the time off," he says. He also plans to do a little more traveling, visiting his children and their families; four children live in the area, four others in spots from the Upper Peninsula to Tennessee. The traveling will be a new experience for the bar owner who never had a regular bartender during his 42-year career, and who countless days "worked the whole shift alone - 9 a.m. to 2 in the morning."

And the name? Ralph Joseph Plamondon grew up as "Dick" and few realize that isn't his real name but merely reflects the early nickname of "Dickey Bird", given him by his grandmother decades ago.

But now, with its new owner, Dick's Bar is really Dick's Bar. And "Dick" is the hired help.