

Stella's Charles-Ten Restaurant: 1942 - 2016

Mel Montemerlo



The Charles-Ten Restaurant was:

- the longest-operating restaurant in Windsor Locks
- a family owned and run restaurant
- a place where everyone knew your name
- host to five generations of patrons
- a Polish restaurant that served great Italian food, and was fun on St. Patrick's day
- a restaurant/bar with a fiercely loyal clientele
- A WINDSOR LOCKS INSTITUTION

Charles Tenerowicz started the "Subway" bar in the cellar of his father's apartment in the 1930s. In 1942, his family and friends built the "Charles-Ten Restaurant." The family lived in the small apartment above the restaurant. When the restaurant first opened, it employed two chefs and seven waitresses, and there was live music.



Stella and Charles Tenerowicz

The Charles-Ten Restaurant opened in 1942. Its history is one of the entrepreneurship, hard work and tenacity of Charles and Stella Tenerowicz, their daughter, Ann, and their long-time bartender, Brian Rocheleau.

Charles was a World War II veteran and a true American hero. He was part of the invasion of Normandy, and was awarded two Purple Hearts, which were on display in the restaurant until it closed.

At his restaurant, Charles worked 16 hours a day, seven days a week. At first, they hired cooks, but Stella later became the cook. When Charles' died in 1970, Stella also became the manager of the restaurant. She did that until she started to have health problems. At that time, she called her daughter, Ann, who was working in Boston as a secretary, and asked her to come home and help out at the restaurant for a brief time. Ann took over the restaurant in 1983. She ran the restaurant for about 33 years. Her parents had it from 1942 to 1983, which was 41 years. Ann had it almost as long as her parents did. As long as Ann was there, the restaurant had the same bartender, Brian Rocheleau.



Ann Tenerowicz and Brian Rocheleau

There was an original menu from 1942 on the wall of the restaurant with the following prices: Shrimp Cocktail 30 cents, spaghetti and meatballs, 50 cents, Hamburgers 15 cents; Steak Diner for \$1.50 and Beer 10 cents.

Stella had a number of signs hanging the restaurant which demonstrated her wit and wisdom. One said: “The customer is never right, and they are darn lucky to have a nice place like this to come to.” Another sign said, “What you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here.” A third sign provided Stella’s motto: “Eat before you come here to eat.” The reason was that since there was only one stove and one cook, the wait for food could be quite long.

Jack Redmond wrote a “Cabbages and Kings” column on the Charles-Ten restaurant. It appeared in the April 24, 1992 issue of the Windsor Locks Journal. He did it based on a number of long interviews with Ann. Ann told Jack that she wanted to be able to retire “while I still have my own good health and to enjoy life’s pleasures”. After running the restaurant for about three decades, Ann put the restaurant up for sale. It was sold in 2016. The last day of operation was July 28, 2016. The final week was a long celebration. Ann sold all of the memorabilia via a silent auction. Many of the regulars came back to say good bye to the restaurant and to wish Ann and Brian well.

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