



Backgrounder

For over 100 years, **Schuler's Restaurant & Pub** has kept it in the family – and beaten the odds. How rare is this achievement? According to *Family Business Review* more than 30 percent of all family-owned businesses survive into the second generation. Twelve percent will still be viable into the third generation, with three percent of all family businesses operating at the fourth-generation level and beyond. Schuler's, a four-generation, family- owned restaurant in Marshall, Mich., is an institution.

Schuler's attributes its longevity to the foresight of its founder and the succeeding family members who have used their entrepreneurial skills to build a 100-year tradition of hospitality and fine dining.

This historical buffet provides a peek at the character of the people and the events that have brought the restaurant to this noteworthy time.

The restaurant's founder, **Albert Schuler**, was a native of Rome, New York. The adopted son of a traveling butcher, Albert migrated to Marshall in the early 1900s. The owner of a local lunch counter and cigar shop befriended him, and after learning the trade Albert opened a similar business on Main Street in 1909.

In 1920, he purchased a hotel with a small dining room on Main Street, and named it The Albert. It was during this period that Albert became deputy sheriff. It wasn't unusual for Albert to be summoned at the restaurant to attend to matters of the law. He would take off his apron and was out the door. Minutes or hours later, his apron was back on and it was business as usual.

In 1924, he was ready to expand his business. He sold the hotel on Main Street and purchased the Royal Hotel and Restaurant in Marshall, and changed the name to Schuler's. He built a seven-lane bowling alley and soon the combination hotel/restaurant/bowling business became a popular gathering spot for locals and visitors.

Win Schuler, Albert's son, joined the family business in 1934. In 1936, Win, a former high school history teacher and coach, became full owner of the restaurant while his father continued to run the hotel and serve as sheriff of Calhoun County.

Win is credited with expanding the family business into a highly successful string of restaurants across Michigan. His magnetic personality and salesmanship were his trademarks. He believed that personal service set his business apart.

Win's personal service included remembering every customer's name. He worked hard at this art and is legendary in his ability to remember names. After an introduction, he worked names into any subsequent conversation three times. He even wrote the names down and before he went to sleep at night he would go over the new names of the day.

The murals on the walls throughout Schuler's and the sayings etched into the beams in the main dining room are the result of Win's insatiable interest in history. Both have become part of the charm that continues to draw customers from hundreds of miles around to dine at the restaurant.

In addition to acquiring other restaurants, in the late 1930s Win and his brother, Albert, bought a golf course in Marshall. They named it Alwyn Downs. Back then, they charged 50 cents to play a round of golf. They eventually sold the course, but it's still in business today.

During World War II, injured military men and women who were sent to Percy Jones Hospital in Battle Creek heard about Schuler's. It became standard practice for the patients to come to the restaurant at some point during their recovery. Some of the more famous patients included Gene Autry and Bob Dole.

Big Ten coaches and teams have been attracted to Schuler's too. For decades, during the fall football season, Marshall has been referred to as the "Crossroads of the Big Ten." Duffy Daugherty, Biggie Munn, Bump and Pete Elliott, Ara Parshegian, Bo Schembechler, Don Carhau, George Perles and Mark Dantonio are just a few of the Big Ten coaches who have frequented the restaurant.

In 1959, Win's son, **Hans Schuler** became the third generation to join the family business. He grew up in the business and always knew this is what he wanted to do. Under his guidance at one time the family of restaurants grew to nine. And in the Marshall restaurant he's responsible for major expansions and ongoing renovations. Like his father, Hans enjoys greeting his customers. He also has an unusual ability to develop the people working on his team.

Representing the fourth generation, **Larry Schuler** joined the family business in 1984 and now operates **Schu's Grill and Bar** in St. Joseph, Mich.

Very few families in the nation have been in the restaurant business as long as the Schuler family, marking 100 years in 2009. In a challenging economy and changing marketplace, the iconic restaurant continues to thrive while evolving with the times. Great food and hospitality are critical. "We are always looking for something fresh, taking the best of the past and blending it with contemporary trends and tastes", says **Hans Schuler**. "Schuler's remains dedicated to reinvesting in the business and supporting the community in which we operate."

In 2012 a lifetime of leadership and exceptional performance by **Hans Schuler** was recognized as he received the inaugural "National Restaurateur of the Year" award from *Independent Restaurateur*. "This award represents the highest level of excellence in all aspects of the business and recognizes an exemplary commitment to owning and operating a successful independent restaurant," says Jim Young, publisher of *Independent Restaurateur* magazine.

For more information, visit our web site www.SchulersRestaurant.com or phone 269-781-0600.