

Happy 25th Anniversary to Cheers!

It isn't easy putting 25 years' worth of memories into one story. Back in 1995, Toy Story was released. Michael Jordan announced his return to basketball. And there would still be 10 years until Facebook would be created. For the city of Welland, 1995 was the year Barry Rolph and his father John decided to purchase a small restaurant on East Main St.

This restaurant has come to be one of the most well-known and highly regarded pubs in Niagara, Cheers!

To truly understand how Cheers came to be today, you have to take a step back to Brampton, 1984. Barry's father, John, had just been laid off from his job. At the time, Barry had been working at Tim Hortons, he was only a teenager. Still, he saw potential in the business of coffee and donut shops. As a young entrepreneur, Barry convinced his father to buy a donut shop with him, McDonuts. The hours of the donut shop were long, in fact, they were open 24/7, but that didn't deter Barry and John. They had to work hard in their mind because that was the only way they would truly succeed.

Eventually, Barry and John decided it was best they branch out into a new form of business. They purchased a fish and chips shop, Henry's, right by their old McDonuts. Once again, with little knowledge of how to operate it, they persevered and learned the ins and outs of the business. The Fish and Chips shop was doing great; however, it was relatively small, and a large part of the business was take out. Barry and John missed the donut shop environment where they could connect with their customers and develop relationships. When the opportunity arose to sell the business, the two experienced entrepreneurs set sight on returning to their roots in Niagara. The two just happened to stumble upon a small restaurant and bar in Welland, that place was Cheers.

Cheers before Barry and John was quite different than it is now. In 1995, one-half of Cheers was a fine dining restaurant- the other a bar. They instantly felt the place had a homey vibe to it. It was perfect. So, with a little reworking, a total revamp of the menu and bringing both halves of the restaurant together, Barry and John created their very own Cheers. The two both knew they could use their expertise in fish and chips and introduce a few items they were familiar with. So, they concentrated only on what they knew and then learned the rest.

What many don't see behind Cheers' scenes is the extreme dedication and effort Barry has put into making sure the business succeeds. A whole lot more that goes on than just making food and opening the doors. In the early years of Cheers, Barry would work 13 out of 14 days, with no breaks, and would even sleep on a futon at the restaurant on Friday nights just to be ready for Saturday mornings. The work ethic hasn't changed. During the early stages of the current pandemic, Barry was the only one still working at Cheers, cooking takeout, while keeping his staff safe in their homes. In short, he was as dedicated as anyone could be to make sure his business would succeed. If he didn't give all his time and effort to the business, there is a great chance it could have failed. Barry doesn't make excuses, and for 25 years, he has given everything he has to make sure that Cheers is as successful as it can be. It took years of endless working and trying new things until he began to feel Cheers was making a name for itself.

Over the years has seen many challenges face Cheers. The closures of the nearby factories, Atlas Steel, GenCorp and others took away a large customer base. Still, they bounced back by developing new customer bases and maintaining their relationships with the factory workers. When the No Smoking Bylaw came into effect, they quickly decided they'd put together a patio. A patio that now

has a wonderful mural that Barry's wife, Allyson, helped paint. Over the past 25 years, when push comes to shove, Barry has always adapted and came up with new ideas.

Many entrepreneurs can learn from Barry's 25 years at Cheers because you have to take risks and stick to it long enough to find out if it will work. Barry, time and time again, has taken big swings in hopes that something connects for Cheers. What most don't know is that for every great idea Barry has had, he had countless ideas beforehand that never connected. Those great ideas have made the Cheers what it is today. The award-winning Fish and Chips, chicken wings and burgers are all a part of the unique and homey experience of Cheers.

So how does someone keep a business running successfully for a quarter of a century? From Barry's words, it all starts with your passion and how much you are willing to work at it. Barry cannot stress enough, however, how amazing his staff have been over the years. In Barry's eyes, the only way for a business to truly succeed is if the staff shares the same vision as the owner. Without the tremendous work of his staff, Cheers wouldn't be what it is today.

As we look forward to Barry's 25th anniversary this Saturday, let's say cheers to all the amazing food, experiences, memories, and much more that Cheers has brought into our lives.

To Barry, his father John, his amazing staff (past and present), and all the joy they have given us over the last 25 years,

Cheers!