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SHOULD YOU SWITCH TO CLOTH DIAPERS?

VARIETY

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MAY 4, 2009 • MINNEAPOLIS • ST. PAUL • JOY AND SORROW ARE NEXT DOOR NEIGHBORS. GERMAN PROVERB

**Baker's
no-hit
bid
unravels,
Twins lose**

SPORTS



**barbara
flanagan**
the flanagan memo

Signs of the season: horseshoes, drive-ins

The Flanagan Memo — Re: consider ice cream cones for dogs — oh, yes, and our horseshoe season begins again.

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We have been pitching horseshoes for centuries and it is still a major "sport" in good, old Loring Park. The new season begins June 4 and continues on Thursdays through September.

Do you realize how old and old-fashioned the game is? It dates to ancient times when camp followers of the Grecian armies, who could not afford to throw the discus, took discarded horseshoes, set up a stake and started pitching.

The old game presents a nice contrast to Walker Art Center across the street where, on June 12, there will be a benefit dinner hovered over by Wolfgang Puck and other notable chefs. Sounds tasty, but a bit pricey. One ticket costs \$1,250. You can take a friend or spouse for an additional \$625.

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If you have time on your hands and \$275 — and you can be in New York City by tonight — the Minnesota Orchestra is playing Carnegie Hall. The price of the ticket includes dinner, the concert conducted by Osmo Vänskä and a post-concert reception. Whee!

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Now, about those doggie ice cream cones. Well, they are for real or will be later this month, when Steve Schussler opens his heart's desire, a new drive-in at the restaurant formerly known

as Wagner's, at 3712 Quebec Av. S. in St. Louis Park.

He has been planning this for years, sitting across Hwy. 7 from it, eating there on occasion and yearning. When it came up for sale, Schussler was first in line to buy it. Now, he is gussying it up and giving it a new name — the Galaxy Drive-In.

"But everything else stays the same," he told me, "except I am adding some chicken and we'll be open year-round."

So what about the dogs, I asked? "Ah, you are going to love this," he said. "Dogs are getting free ice cream cones. They will also get dog bones, treats and special hamburger."

In addition, there will be handicapped-accessible tables, two antique jukeboxes, carhops wearing silver old-fashioned coin changers, a giant lawn chess set and more. "Plus, really great food," he said.

Schussler, who came here from Brooklyn 26 years ago, has become very successful with his somewhat wild and wonderful ideas — the Rainforest Café in our megamall was his first.

So make a note on your calendars for the third week in May and drive in.

Schussler, who enjoys the fact that he still lives in the same St. Louis Park house after 26 years, said the former owners of Wagner's, a divorcing couple, both want to stay on to work. "How about that?" he almost sings. "And do you know what? My carhops will probably be on roll-

er skates because they are easier to maneuver in than blades."

All I can say is how about THAT!

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Carol Weston Hanson, daughter of the late restaurateur Reiko Weston, is saluting her mother three times for Mother's Day and it is all for a great cause.

To begin, Hanson and her husband, Tom Hanson — who operate two Fuji Ya restaurants in the Twin Cities — are celebrating their 50th year since its founding.

That happened in 1959 when Hanson's grandparents founded the place on LaSalle Avenue, between 8th and 9th Streets.

"My grandmother, who did not speak English, cooked and my grandfather did everything else," Hanson said. "And he was a former admiral in the Japanese navy. His name was Karon Umetani."

Reiko, who was a GI bride, earned a degree at the University of Minnesota and then plunged into the business, opening the truly Japanese Fuji Ya in 1967 or so. It was on the river and Reiko used to say she picked the site — on S. 1st Street downtown — because it was on the Mississippi River and under a bridge (3rd Avenue Bridge), and that means good luck.

Fuji Ya was a superb spot. I ate there often until the Minneapolis Park Board bought them out in 1990. Reiko died in May 1988.

Coming up Friday, Saturday

and Mother's Day, Fuji Ya will offer a three-course benefit dinner for two people. It is priced at \$50 and includes wine and sake. The main course is my favorite — Fuji Ya's classic tempura (shrimp and veggies).

Funds raised will go to the Como Ordway Memorial Japanese Garden in St. Paul's Como Park. The garden will feature the annual Mother's Day bonsai show.

Other dinners and luncheons will be held during May and June at Fuji Ya. Check it out.

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Onward to Peavey Plaza, a downtown space I like even though it needs sprucing up.

The Minnesota Orchestra has plans to do just that when it more or less expands its lobby, but I fear that much of the plaza may suffer.

I look back to its opening when its designer, M. Paul Friedberg, put in plants, a fountain and nice places to sit, but it was the city's job to keep it up and it hasn't.

Things may have stalled due to the economy, but someday, when work begins, hope for a renewed, stunning Peavey Plaza. And let's revive that wintertime skating pond. It was special.

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One last item about the new Galaxy Drive-In — There will be a bronze statue of a dog named Bozley. Who is Bozley? I didn't ask, but my guess is it was with Steve Schussler somewhere. Vaudeville, perhaps?