

The Shack: A Jessieville tradition

BY ROB ROEDEL

At one time most small communities in Arkansas had a couple of things in common. Everyone in the community supported the local school and gathered at a local restaurant near the school. This is still the case in Jessieville where the citizens support Jessieville schools and gather at The Shack to catch up and enjoy some great food.

Jessieville High School and The Shack are located across the highway from each other on scenic Arkansas 7 and are the heart of the community, which is located just outside of Hot Springs Village. The school specializes in educating youth and The Shack specializes in providing good, old-fashioned dairy bar fare for locals and visitors from across Arkansas.

The Shack was opened by Bill and Glenda Cockman in 1972 after they designed and built the establishment, which has since been expanded. Their daughter, Sonja Wilson, is now the operator, but her parents still help out with the operation, along with other family members.

“Our name was originally The

Snack Shack, but eventually it was shortened to The Shack,” Wilson said. “We are always busy when there is an event at the school and we have many regulars. We really get to know our customers and notice if they aren’t here.”

Over the years, The Shack has changed and worked to improve its menu. For instance, in 1972, the eatery used frozen beef patties to make its hamburgers. Today, the beef is freshly ground daily and a classic hamburger patty press is used to ensure that the hamburgers have a perfect form. According to Wilson, patty presses are not used in many restaurants anymore.

“Our business has grown as people have discovered and crave the hometown goodness that we provide,” she said. “Lots of people come back here to relive their memories. They often say that they crave a Shackburger and shake and want their children to try the food they enjoyed years ago.”

I craved. So Wilson offered me a Shackburger.

The Shackburger was a quarter pound of perfectly cooked ground beef loaded with freshly cut toppings. It had excellent flavor and brought back memories of my parents and grandparents taking me to similar drive-



The Shackburger is a classic must try.

ins and dairy bars as a youngster. The melted cheese married in bliss with the impeccably seasoned beef. A nice order of “crispy on the outside and warm on the inside” French fries made for a perfect memory-fulfilling combination.

The Shack serves U.S. farm-raised catfish, which the staff hand trims to ensure that patrons get perfect strips of golden-fried catfish. My sample was served with a fresh-cut salad and was a healthy alternative. The cornmeal breading used on the catfish was very flavorful.

In addition to the menu items, The Shack offers daily lunch specials,



The Shack features U.S. farm-raised catfish.

the eating essentials

THE SHACK

7901 Arkansas 7 North
Jessieville
(501) 984-5619

Hours of Operation

Monday - Saturday
10:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.
Closed on Sunday



including spaghetti, chicken fried steaks, hamburger patties with grilled onions, grilled chicken breasts, fried chicken strips and chicken fried chicken. The home-cooked side offerings include mashed potatoes, green beans, deep-fried okra and coleslaw.

The Shack also serves hickory-smoked pork sandwiches. The family smokes the pork on site for a barbeque that draws people across Arkansas.

The Shack is also well known for ice cream specialties. Made-to-order shakes are available in banana, cherry, caramel, hot fudge, peanut butter, pineapple, pumpkin and vanilla. Other ice cream-based treats include banana splits, hot fudge brownie sundaes and blizzards.

Wilson brought a hot fudge sundae to my table. I wanted to jump up and give her a hug. It was loaded with loads of rich, warm fudge topped with whipped cream and nuts.

And, yes, a cherry was placed on top. Heaven, pure heaven to the taste buds. I closed my eyes and memories of my childhood flooded into my thoughts.



ROB ROEDEL

A hot fudge sundae is one of the many ice cream treats at The Shack.

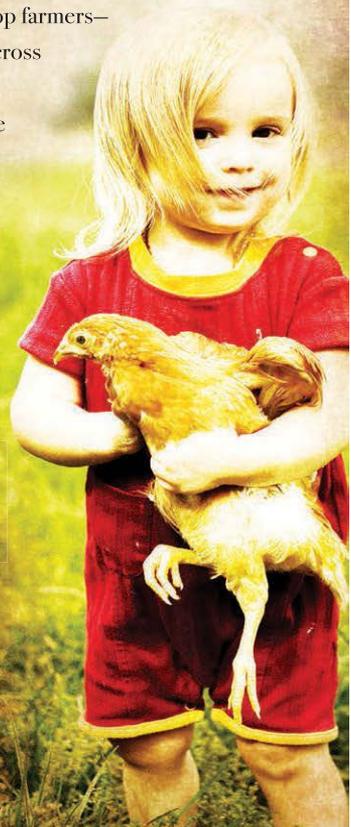
For great hometown service, excellent food and the opportunity to remember memories from your youth or make new memories, stop by The Shack in Jessieville. ■

Dining recommendations? Contact Rob Roedel at rroedel@aecc.com

ROOTED IN RURAL ARKANSAS

Committed. Strong. Reliable. Trusted. Member-owned.

From your local farmers' market grower to large row crop farmers—we finance it all. More than 10,000 customer-owners across Arkansas trust Farm Credit. With \$2.6 billion in assets, the Farm Credit financial cooperatives of Arkansas serve agriculture, rural communities and the rural lifestyle. Customer-owners enjoy benefits like patronage refunds which total more than \$152 million since 1997. Are you Farm Credit?



FARM CREDIT

800-444-3276

ARFarmCredit.com

farms of all sizes • fruits, vegetables, row crop and more
hobby farms • country homes • home construction
livestock • poultry • land • equipment • vehicles • ATVs



Wiederkehr

Wine Cellars
Celebrating 135 Years of Excellence

Award-winning Cuisine • Swiss Family Vineyards
Free Cellar Tours • Wine Tasting • Liquor Store

Weinkeller Restaurant

Present this for **25% off**
DINING

All Open on Sunday

ARKANSAS' OLDEST AND MOST AWARD-WINNING WINERY

www.wiederkehrwines.com • 800-622-WINE • Exit 41 on I-40