

Column – 647 words

PLAYING TOURIST

I had one of those days today, the good kind. I was playing tourist in my own community and I wandered into *Back Eddie's* in Paisley and felt changed in a profound way, an almost unexplainable way, but let me try.

I sat above the river on a small shaded deck, sipping mellow coffee in the cool morning air. It was 9 a.m. and the “regulars” had taken their spots, comforted by the habit of belonging, knowing they were welcome, that they fit. I looked up the multiple levels of the old mill that had once processed wool from its raw state all the way through to completion as blanket or other, a mill that harnessed the power of the river, a mill that provided for its community until the train came through and forever changed the pattern of supply and demand. The building is quiet now, resting in its historic magnificence, comforted by the patrons who gather in her to dine, to sip, to share stories and music, to remember and to imagine. I strolled around the *Sticks and Stones Lounge* where friends whispered to one another or laughed out loud, while others read and contemplated. The room is big and wooden. A raised corner houses musical instruments and music stands for impromptu Friday evening jam sessions and I imagine the building keeping time, the rhythm its heart beat.

Back Eddie's is a coffee house that has been serving up a "lifestyle" for several years. Erica and Jim MacNamara have lived in Paisley for twenty years and have stood behind the counter of this magical place for five of those years. As the name implies, *Back Eddie's* is a calm place in the river's current, a resting spot and that is precisely what they deliver: calm.

Erica and Jim are members of their community in a manner we all should boast of. They seek out all the positive resources that this area has to offer by buying meat and vegetables from local farmers and CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture) and preparing the dishes on their menu from this locally grown bounty. They offer fair trade coffee from beans they have roasted to perfection and a menu that appeals to any and every palate. They bring local musicians together in a venue where all are welcome and bring larger performances to the area, hosting them in the more spacious Town Hall.

Jim is an artist, a goldsmith by trade in his earlier days. MacNamara Gallery, just down the street, houses his work of extraordinary variety and uniqueness and marked their beginning in the community seventeen years ago. Erica, with a sound and diverse education in agriculture and related sciences, comes from the restaurant industry, a combination that made her aware and committed to the philosophy that local and fresh is a must, providing food grown safely and properly; a conscious and wise decision, one we must all adapt to, sooner better than later. But what struck me as I chatted with Jim and Erica was the deliberateness in which

they live their lives. I was inspired, moved to model my living in a similar, conscious way and wanting to abandon the old habits, the “it’s easier” excuse.

The coffee shop offers for sale a variety of foodstuffs, hemp food products, teas, organically made Mapleton Ice Cream to name just a few. *Back Eddie’s* aims to fill your senses, literally, with good food, good music, and good times.

Erica and Jim are in the process of building a home completely off the hydro grid, a project they have taken the time to research carefully and thoroughly. It was my lucky day to stumble upon this oasis, this example of the best parts of us and I applaud them. I can’t wait until my next discovery. There are lots of treasures out there in this amazing area we call home.

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