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Saratoga County

Caffe Lena to observe silver anniversary

By BARBARA STONE
Staff Writer

SARATOGA SPRINGS — Believed to be the oldest coffeehouse in the country, Caffe Lena will celebrate its 25th anniversary this month.

The coffeehouse has operated continuously right where it started in May, 1960 on Phila Street. Lena Spencer, who has stuck with her "labor of love," said: "If I had my life to live over, I would do the same thing. It has given me an awful lot of satisfaction, gratification and love from everyone. I wouldn't change it, even though there have been some hard times."

Her stage has been the scene of folk, jazz and country-music performances, plays and poetry readings for a quarter of a century. The Caffe Lena also has been a haven for young performers perfecting their talent.

Among those who got a start at Caffe Lena are Arlo Guthrie, Bob Dylan, Tom Paxton (who will perform May 10) and Don McLean.

Mrs. Spencer bakes the pastries served at her cafe, arranges bookings, sets up, takes care of publicity, houses performers and is a total "one woman show."

The celebration in May will feature performances at Caffe Lena and a special anniversary party on May 19 at the Canfield Casino in Congress Park. One of the events of the month was to be a play with Mrs. Spencer as co-star, but she has been too busy arranging for other performances to stage "The Gin Game" at this time.

Already booked are Walt Michael, today; "New Faces, New Voices" — with Joan Kosby and Paul Mercer, Pancho, Michelle Tondreau and Jean Moore with Haley and Daley, Friday; Jackie Washington Landron (who gave the first concert, on May 25, 1960), Saturday.

Also: Josh White, Sunday; Bucky and John Pizzarelli, Monday, open night, Tuesday; Stephen Debyns, Wednesday; Nanci Griffith, May 9; Tom Paxton, May 10; Frank Wakefield and Summit, May 11; Margaret MacArthur, May 12; Gamble Rogers, May 16.

Also Michael Cooney, May 17 and 18; Eric Anderson, May 20, open night, May 21; Carla Sciaky, May 22, open night, May 23; Scott McKenzie, May 24-25; Oscar Brand, May 26; George Drew and Mark Nepo, May 27; Jez Lowe and Jake Walton, May 28; Paul Geremia, May 29; traditional folk music.

In concert

Caffe Lena patrons watch (from left) Townes Van Zandt, Denny Silver and Mickey White in a recent concert. The oldest coffeehouse in the nation celebrates 25 years this month. (Rob Barendse photo)

LENA SPENCER

CDTA to conduct bus service forum

SARATOGA SPRINGS — The Capital District Transportation Authority has announced plans for an informal public forum to discuss bus service in the Saratoga Springs area.

The forum will be held from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. today at the Drink Hall, located across from Congress Park on Broadway. The forum is open to the public.

According to A. Jerome McCormick, CDTA's Saratoga County representative, the forum is being held to give residents an opportunity to review a draft plan for route and schedule changes in bus service in Saratoga Springs.

Representatives from CDTA will be available at the Drink Hall to discuss the new proposal and to take comments and suggestions from residents. McCormick says the authority is hoping to hear not only from current riders, but also from non-riders who have suggestions on how CDTA can better respond to their needs.

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