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Dexter Queen Celebrates A Tradition

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*By Annabeth Miiler,
ShowMe Times Editor*

Back in 1949, it was a little spot on the undeveloped western end of Dexter. It was known as the Daisy Queen, and Leon and Gwen McGarrity served ice cream and fountain soft drinks. Before too long, the McGarrity's started serving hamburgers and hot dogs to go with the soda.

But Leon learned to smoke meat, and he soon began making what has today become a Southeast Missouri classic. Leon named his most popular sandwich, the "Pig", made of sliced barbecued pork, topped with slaw and his secret mustard sauce. And eventually Gwen stopped peeling those potatoes that came in 100 pound sacks, and they bought crinckle cut frozen fries, and today's favorite Pig Basket joined the menu.

On Saturday afternoon, Gwen McGarrity joined today's owners – Lori Hawkins and husband Dana Hawkins – for the dedication of a special mural on the western side of Dexter Queen. Painted by local muralist Bob Whitehead, the artwork depicts a special era in Dexter Queen lore – complete with classic cars and a special section dedicated to Leon and the old Daisy Queen days.



Hawkins' and Dexter Queen hosted a classic car show to celebrate the new mural. Classic cars – just like the ones that would “circle” the Dexter Queen in the 1950s and 1960s – were lined up and ready for viewing. With old time “rock and roll” tunes in the back ground, it was a trip to yesteryear.

Leon and Gwen McGarrity owned Dexter Queen for 32 years. Due to the high heat and humidity, Leon – now 91 - was unable to attend Saturday’s event. Gwen attended in his absence. But the legend that Leon created back in 1949 is still served every day thanks to Lori and Dana Hawkins who celebrate the Dexter Queen tradition.

Photos Above: Top - Gwen McGarrity and Lori Hawkins with the "Dexter Queen Girls;" Middle - Lori Hawkins and Gwen McGarrity next to the mural of Leon; Bottom - The Chamber of Commerce Ribbon Cutting Celebration for the new Dexter Queen Mural. (SMT photos by Annabeth Miller)



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