

FESTIVAL GUIDE

Passion for polka: Cedar keeps a tradition alive

BY MELANIE TACOMA

Record-Eagle staff writer

Sonny and Bernie Czerniak's love for polka has taken them all over the country and won them trophies. "We're known across the land, you might say," Sonny said. "Anywhere we go, we make a big splash."

But on the first weekend in July, they're right back home in Cedar. This year marks the 22nd anniversary of the Cedar Polka Fest, and they wouldn't miss it.

Sonny explained that he and Bernie have attended the festival since it began because Bernie's father was instrumental to its organization in the early days. She helped him with decorating and planning. However, going to the festival is certainly not all work for the Czerniaks.

"Being from Polish background, when it comes time to dance, we don't work — we dance," Sonny said.

Though the Czerniaks have seen many festivals, they

especially appreciate the outdoor arrangements at Cedar.

"Cedar has the nicest facility that takes care of people for an outside festival, for seating especially," Sonny said. "People like to sit down with drinks and their friends."

Others appreciate the comfortable atmosphere as well. Festival chairman Frank Novak estimated that between 12,000 and 13,000 people attend each year.

"I guess we just do a good job," he said. "We're polka lovers."

This year, the highlight of the festival will be on the last day — Sunday — when the bishop comes from Gaylord to say Mass. A polka Mass is the same as any other, except that all the songs are sung to a polka melody.

"Most Polish are Catholic, so the Mass has been there since day one," Sonny explained. "It's been a long and ongoing thing."

Many visitors don't remember the first years of the festival. Sonny said Cedar draws a young crowd, many of whom don't even know how to polka. But he believes polka is here to stay.

"We do have to wonder sometimes, but (how popular polka is) depends on the area," he said, citing big polka communities in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin as well as in other Michigan communities.

Another thing that varies with location is the band line-up. Sonny said a variety of factors make a good polka band, but that choosing a favorite band comes down to personal preference.

"It depends on which type of dance you do," he said. "90 percent of the kids who do polka do the Chicago hop, as opposed to the '1-2-3,' your basic, old-time, original step."

The bands at the Cedar Polka Fest play a mixture of music that complements

both older and newer dances. The line-up features bands from the northern Lower Michigan area as well as Pennsylvania and Illinois, including John Stevens & Double Shot, Polka Music

Sound and Pan Franek & Zosia Polka Towners.

The Polka Fest runs July 3 to 6. Adult ticket prices are \$5 on Thu., \$8 Fri. and Sat. and \$4 Sun., or \$17 for a 3-day pass. 228-3378 or 228-5562.

Great food in a casual atmosphere

Enjoy the beautiful harbor view overlooking West Bay



Summer Hours

Serving Lunch

Thursday-Sunday

11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Serving Dinner

Tuesday-Saturday

5 p.m. - 10 p.m.

Sunday

Lunch 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Dinner 5:00 p.m. - 9:30 p.m.

Early Bird / Special Menu

Must order by 5:30 p.m.

CLOSED MONDAY

BOATHOUSE
RESTAURANT

Reservations Encouraged
(231) 223-4030

10 miles out on Old Mission Peninsula
Traverse City

John (Jib) Bailey, Proprietor



Record-Eagle file photo

The bands at Polkafest play a mixture of music that complements old and new dances.