

## Ashley's Pastry Shop celebrates 25th year

By Dolores Winkler

For 25 years, Oakwood's "sweet tooth" has been served by Ashley's Pastry Shop on Park Avenue. It was that long ago that Greg and Theresa Hammons purchased the bakery that had always occupied that building.

Their backgrounds brought many assets that would add to their success as entrepreneurs. Greg comes from a family of bakers. For her part, Theresa had experience in marketing and market research with Proctor and Gamble.

Both are originally from Cincinnati. After their marriage, Greg and Theresa moved to Dayton where he headed Rike's bakery department in its then-downtown Dayton location. Another job offer took the Hammons to Detroit where Greg became manager for the J. L. Hudson Department Store bakeries.

Meanwhile, Park Avenue's Oakwood Bakery was sold to Servatti's, a well-known Cincinnati bakery. Six weeks later, the business was on the market again. A friend called the Hammons in Detroit to tell them about the bakery's availability.

They had always wanted their own bakery business. The timing was right, and so, with Theresa only two weeks away from delivering their first child, the Hammons moved to Dayton to become owners of their very own bake shop.



They kept the Servatti's name for about a year, but changed it to Ashley's, naming it after their first daughter who will be – you guessed it - 25 years old this month. They also have a younger daughter, Lyndsay.

“This (quarter-century) milestone is a tremendous benchmark for us,” said Theresa. “We have been very lucky. We have fantastic employees (one of the bakers has been there for 23 years, another for 20 years), and a phenomenal customer base whose patronage has been responsible for our success.” Having had a marketing background, Theresa knows the importance of good customer relations. “It’s all about the customer,” she said, “...and the community,” she added. You will find them supporters of many community events.

No description of Ashley’s can be complete without mentioning the ever-famous “sand tart,” an enigmatically popular cookie that ranks as Ashley’s No. 1 cookie seller. “Where did this cookie come from?” we asked. Is it a family recipe? She provided an interesting answer.

“The original Oakwood Bakery owners had the sand tart recipe, but we couldn’t obtain the recipe. So we sent the cookie to General Mills in Minneapolis to have it analyzed. They gave us a breakdown of ingredients, and with that in hand, Greg tried various combinations until he came up with the most accurate replica of the original.” Today, it is ordered by alumni for their reunions, sent to Oakwoodites around the country and remains unique to Ashley’s.



Eating habits have changed significantly in the past few years, and the bakery business has had to adapt to these healthier trends. “We use more whole wheat, more transfat-free recipes today to cater to the requirements of this healthier-eating public,” Theresa said.

Ashley’s success reflects their ability to keep current with what today’s customers want. Success is also reflected, you might say, in the amounts of flour and sugar used yearly by this small, but mighty, bakery. Think about 150,000 pounds of flour and 85,000 pounds of sugar. That’s a lot of baking that comes out of Ashley’s, the “sweet” center of Oakwood deserving of a celebration cake of its own.