

Business

The fires go out Saturday at T&J Bar-B-Q

Owner calls it quits after 15 years

BY MIKE MARCUS
STAFF WRITER

Working 12-hour days, six days a week for the past 15 years has taken its toll on Vincent Jameson, owner of T&J Bar-B-Q in Marshalls Corner.

So after more than 15 years of ownership, Jameson has sold his little corner of the world and will be closing T&J Bar-B-Q Saturday evening.

Passing the grill to Rodney Taylor, an "accomplished barbecue specialist," Jameson said his customers would be in good hands.

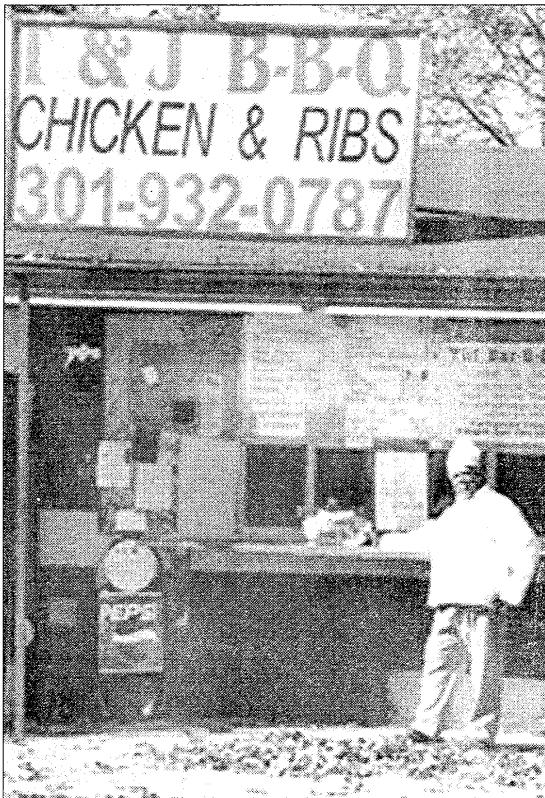
"My 68 years have started to catch up to me," Jameson, a Port Tobacco native, said while tending the fires of his pit barbecue stand on Hawthorne Drive. "I'm definitely going to miss some of the customers. They've been wonderful."

At lunch and dinner, lines of more than a dozen people could be found outside the walk-up windows of T&J throughout the year, Jameson said.

"We've had snow on the ground, and there've been people standing in line," he said. "All I know is the people around here love their barbecue."

During the summer it is easy for T&J to sell 1,500 pounds of chicken and upward of 3,000 pounds of ribs in a week, Jameson said.

"Even with that much meat we never had enough for everyone," he said. "We almost always sold out and had to turn people away. But they always came back."



FRED GEBLER

Vincent Jameson has been running T&J Bar-B-Q on Hawthorne Road in La Plata for 15 years. On Saturday, the Port Tobacco resident will put out the fires for the last time. Rodney Taylor will reopen the business in March.

At lunch everyday, members of road crews can be found at T&J.

"Those fellas that come here every day for lunch. The ones we have known for years are the ones we're going to really miss," Jameson said.

"I've lived in Charles County since 1986," John Neal of Swan Point said. "And T&J was the best find I ever made in the

county. This place is remarkable. I make it a point to drive up from Swan Point at least every week or so because it is just so good."

"We have every type of person you could imagine come here again and again," Jameson said. "From county commissioners, deputies in the [Charles County] sheriff's office and people from the state government to the guy with only three bucks in his pocket. We see and love them all."

Jameson said Maryland may not be known as a "barbecue" state, but everywhere he has traveled people have heard of Charles County's T&J Bar-B-Q.

"I've been all over the East Coast and when people hear I own T&J, they've either been here or know someone who has," Jameson said.

"I can't believe so many people love my little barbecue shack. Every day we have people tell us they drove past

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Vincent Jameson, owner of T&J Bar-B-Q

for T&J," he said.

Jameson believes his cooking technique has something to do with the eatery's popularity.

"I don't cook right over the fire," Jameson said, flipping full racks of ribs, sizzling pork chops and whole chickens. "I let the fan blow the heat from the fire toward the meat. Our wood doesn't burn from flare-up like a lot of places."

"I think it may be the way I cook," he said. "But of course my sweet wife working here helps business, also."

Barbara Jameson is happy to see her husband slow down a little.

"We are free at last. It will be nice to spend some time together when we're not working. Seems like all we've ever done is work and it's never stopped," she said.

But even with the sale of T&J Jameson is not settling down entirely.

"Rodney has asked me to help out some so I am going to work Thursdays and Fridays," Jameson said. "But banker hours, not all day like I have been. Just enough to keep me going."

Jameson, who used to also raise tobacco, is aiming to spend some time at Potomac Speedway and Maryland International Raceway. "Really, I'm looking forward to having the time to do whatever I may want," Jameson said.

Hanging among the handwritten menu in front of T&J is a professional sign thanking customers for all the years of patronage and to its right, a sign welcoming those same customers to Rod's Ribs, opening March 1.

"This is just a changing of the guard," Jameson said. "It's a new chapter, and I hope everyone continues to come here because the food will be as good as it has always been."

T&J Bar-B-Q will be closing its windows at 7 p.m. Saturday

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