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LAS VEGAS

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NOT YOUR AVERAGE GIRL

» *How a Las Vegas workshop is blurring the line between man and machine—one 'bot at a time*

POLYGAMY: freedom, crime o

> TASTES LIKE HOME Fried catfish, scratch-made gumbo and other fresh seafood dishes are always on the menu at the Hush Puppy.



COUNTRY STYLE SINCE '75

The Hush Puppy is still serving fried catfish and Southern hospitality

BY BROCK RADKE

→ This may be a young city, but it moves fast. That's why we celebrate the things that have achieved a certain measure of longevity, like old-favorite restaurants. There aren't many that have been around for multiple decades. We always say we're going to go back and eat there again, but we don't.

Then there's the Hush Puppy, which has moved somewhat stealthily through almost four decades on the strength of word of mouth, loyal regulars and some pretty great fried catfish. When the Ghormley family opened its Southern-style restaurant on West Charleston in 1975, it was surrounded by nothing. You could see the lights of the Strip through big windows while munching on inexpensive steak and shrimp.

The view has changed, along with the rest of the Valley, but the Hush Puppy stays the same. It's a bigger restaurant, having gone through a few additions, and combined with the Nellis Boulevard location (opened in '86) it employs more than 50 people. The menu's bigger, too: There's scratch-made seafood gumbo laced

with turkey sausage (\$6.95), frog legs, fried alligator or oyster po' boys and a snow crab platter (\$18.95) that nearly reaches two pounds.

But the same folks have always been in charge, really nice



Charlie Ghormley worked in construction and found his way to the desert when work was slow and decided to try something else. "This is the old, traditional style of restaurant found in the south, when people used to drive out to the country to eat," explains Roger, one of Charlie's three sons. "When we started here, this was sort of out in the country, too."

Charlie's office is full of photos of country music stars and other entertainers who have stopped by the Hush Puppy. "One time Sammy Davis Jr. was performing in Tahoe and he sent a plane down here to pick up 12 orders of catfish," he says. He's served Slim Pickens, Slappy White, Mel Tillis, Colonel Tom Parker, the Ink Spots, Wayne Newton and Wayne Newton's dad. He went to dinner at Caesars Palace with Eddy Arnold once, and the waitress thought Charlie was Eddy. He almost went into the salsa business with Jerry Lee Lewis; "Great Balls of Fire," of course.

In the old days, Charlie says, they used to see a lot of doctors and lawyers, but many different restaurants have popped up over the years. "This food is kinda beneath some

people, I suppose," he says, but the Hush Puppy's consistent following says otherwise. All-you-can-eat catfish dinners at this humble spot have been passed down through generations. The steaks are the best-kept secret, Roger says, because everyone always plans on ordering seafood.

Though I've always lived on the west side of town and my family's first home in Vegas was mere blocks away from the Hush Puppy, I'd never eaten there until recently. It's every bit the old-fashioned, homey restaurant it looks

THE HUSH PUPPY

7185 W. Charleston Blvd., 363-5988.

Monday-Thursday, 5-10 p.m.; Friday & Saturday, 5-10:30 p.m.; Sunday, 5-9 p.m.

1820 N. Nellis Blvd., 438-0005.

Monday-Thursday, 5-10 p.m.; Friday & Saturday, 5-10:30 p.m.; Sunday, noon-9 p.m.

