GARMA through the years

The Gettysburg Area Retail Merchants Association has been an ever changing entity since its inception in 1972 when it was christened The Retail Merchants Association, Inc., of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania (or RMA). This month we announce another change, this one of leadership.

At our June 10 meeting, our fearless leader, Kathy Gilbert announced that she would be stepping down from the role of President effective June 30. As Vice President, I have assumed the role of President effective July 1. I have those proverbial “very big shoes to fill” as I step into this new position. Personally and professionally Kathy has been a huge role model, mentor, confidante and most importantly, friend. I am ever so thankful that she has always included me and shared with me information that would help me take over the reign of this organization. We are all very grateful that Kathy is staying on with GARMA as a board member. I personally will be glad that when I look to my right at our meetings that Kathy will still be sitting there.

Kathy and I sat one evening looking through old GARMA papers and we were rerouted back in time looking at the names of the original 38 members of the “RMA”. Some of the businesses I slightly remember, as most didn’t survive past the late 1980’s. Most I remember hearing my mom talk about as *the* place to shop in downtown Gettysburg.

So many were specialty stores; ladies clothing, shoes, men’s clothing, appliance stores, hardware stores. Stores that cease to exist anymore because of the advent of shopping malls that housed all of these types of stores in one enclosed location. Big box stores came along and small business owners couldn’t compete with pricing and selection. Or, sadly, as owners got older they had no one to carry on the business after they were gone.

Gettysburg had Coffman Jeweler’s, Blocher’s Jewelry Store and The Charmed Circle (where I bought my high school ring). Ladies could shop for blouses, slacks and dresses at the Carol Ann Shoppe, Tobey’s, Modern Miss Shop and Mary Edith Shop. Children’s clothes could be found at Jack and Jill Shoppe.

Men bought their clothing at Benn’s on Lincoln Square, T&S Menswear or Hershey’s Men Shop. If you needed a new appliance you went to Weishaar Brothers or Baker’s Electronics. Zerfing’s Hardware was the “go-to” place for every little thing you needed for home repair.

Other very honorable mentions that helped define a shopping experience in Gettysburg – Faber’s Restaurant (great milkshakes), Hartzell’s Luncheonette, House of Bender on the corner of Baltimore St/Lincoln Square, G.C. Murphy, Wolfe’s Restaurant (now The Pub) and of course George Olinger’s Trinkets, Treasures and Trash on the corner of Chambersburg and S. Washington Sts., home of the large totem pole in the front window.

I do want to recognize a business that has been a member of GARMA since the very beginning in 1972. Martin’s Family Shoes, located at 26 Baltimore St., have stood the test of time in Gettysburg for over 80 years. They’ve been steadfast in selling great quality footwear and providing great quality service. What a testament to John Fidler and his staff for seeing this business into a new century and coming through a monumental pandemic. Thank you John for your continued support of GARMA and the Gettysburg community.

Thank you all for indulging my walk down memory lane. Thank you to the businesses that have been members who have come and gone. We strive to do great things for this community such as bringing Christmas and Santa to Gettysburg and organizing the Spring and Fall Outdoor Antique Shows that bring great business to the downtown.

Thank you to all the leaders of GARMA, past and present. Thank you Kathy Gilbert for your dedication and determination to keep GARMA relevant to our businesses and community.

If you’re interested in finding out what GARMA is or are a business that is interested in becoming a member, visit [www.gettysburgretailmerchants.com](http://www.gettysburgretailmerchants.com)

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