



Historic Bakersfield & Kern County, California
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Dead Business

Bakersfield reviews from 2002

by Gilbert P. Gia

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Barb's Lunch & More -- 19th and "K"

Hamburger and a Wedding.

Barbara Giltner new owner of the old lunch counter has the credentials for food service -- 10 years at the helm of Bakersfield's Schlotzskys. The luncheonette has the same bicycle hanging from the ceiling, and the wall decorations look mighty familiar, but try the menu and you'll know this place is new. Barbara's reworked, refurbished and rethink the old place and she's determined to make sure you'll get a bang for your buck. I had the garden burger-- a great choice of whole-wheat bun, sprouts, avocado spread, and all the rest, and at a great price. Giltner works from fresh products and she makes her own potato salad and apple dumplings, too. She knows how to make great coffee. The surprise is Barbara offers full-service, custom catering. But it gets better. If you want to do a party in a really unusual place, then how about upstairs in the historic Woolworth Building? Got a big luncheon, or meeting, or shower, or reception? No problem.

The Buckle Collection -- 1719 Wilson Road

Belts and Buckles Forever.

Where else but Bakersfield can you see a thousand belt buckles for sale? Don't look on 20th street where the Buckle Collection was three years ago but try Wilson Road where you can find a premiere buckle, four-by-six-inches or a buckle-shield in sterling silver or gold. Wait a few weeks, and you can have that set with precious stones. Don Moon, a man with the salt and pepper beard, also displays 300 country and western belts. And he's got boots—regular, cowboy, custom-made ostrich skin. Don also has Harley items, boots vests, chaps, gauntlet gloves, wallets and other goodies. The packed showroom includes NFL items like hat patches, pin, Broncos candle holders, and then he's throw in Cowboy shot glasses and custom stainless steel travel mugs. Open seven days a week.

Woolworth's Five & Dime Café -- 1400 19th at K

"I did it my way."

He likes Sinatra's music. But what's the coffee guy at East Hills Mall going to be singing when he opens the old Woolworth lunch counter? Gerard, the CSUB student who owns both the coffee place and the hotdog counter a short run across the mall is young enough to be optimistic and afford to take a chance or two. He admits there's no way he can go head-to-head with Quiznos or Sequoia Sandwich Shop, and he's not blind to the history of serious-minded owners who have come and gone from the old Woolworth's lunch counter. It'll be tough, but the kid has energy. I say good for him for preserving the grand old 50s lunch bar. Just one recommendation: How about bringing back the foot-long Kosher hot dog and some really fast lunch-time service? Gerard likes Old Blue Eyes. The first month he's open he said the first song he'll play is *The Lady Is A Tramp*, "Life without care, she's broke, but it's okay," and the second one? "I did it my way."

Complete Computer, 3208 Stein Road at Planz

One-On-One.

Think again before you buy a computer out of town. I'd had it with the Web -- long distance charges and long waits for computer techs, and \$85 to ship a dead computer back to Illinois. Is it possible to get a better system and good service in Bakersfield? Yes.

Gregg McDonnell has followed up on a long-time passion for computers, and today he's three years into his own computer store, one shows impressive changes every time I go in. In December he was setting up a new server for personal web space. The larger part of his business is website and graphic design, and networking. Gregg is plowing every dollar back into the store and is obviously working hard to build a reputation for reliable systems and service. It looks to me like he's in it for the long run.

Chinatown Buffet, 1021 Oak at California

Friendlier than your average.

And more variety than three hours of the Food Network. Something for everyone. Steamed and pan-fried mai-fun noodles or deep-dish apple crisp. Smiling waitresses keep your drink topped and your plates cleared for a second and, gasp!, third trip to the delicacies you skipped, stuffed mushrooms, sushi rolls, pork barbecue, oysters on the half shell. Don't miss the subtle, sweet potato sesame ball from the desert table. On the way out, smile back at the hostesses as she says "Thank you!" and opens the door for you. \$5.95 lunch, \$8.95 dinner. The owner has been here two years at this location, but Chinatown Buffet isn't listed in the yellow pages.

Rock'it Records, East Hills Mall

Bonanza.

The search for big vinyl LP gets a helping hand from Dave who recently moved to East Hills Mall from his Shafter store. Rock'it is a bonanza for dedicated record hunters who call long distance looking for the right label to round out their collection. Dave recently scored a 10,000 record collection at Hanford when an old store that went out of business. Rock'it Records caters to CD music lovers, too, with rows and rows of new and used albums. Dave has glass cases full of

psycho-rock stickers and classic logos. His new and used guitars should be in for Christmas.

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