

It's a family thing at Kopper Kitchen

BY COURTNEY GAILLARD
THE CHRONICLE

You will know The Kopper Kitchen by the pig and bull-shaped wood grills that stand outside of the restaurant on the corner of Fifth and Cherry streets. Owners Jeter and Peggy "Mama" Floyd, both retirees from R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co., are on a first-name basis with many customers who've been eating at their restaurant most of their lives. Stand out front long enough and you'll be sure to hear a passerby on foot or in a car yelling out "Hey, Mama" to Peggy

Location: 241 W. Fifth Street
(corner of Cherry and Fifth streets)
Hours: 7 a.m. to 3 p.m. (hours may expand during festival)
Price range: from \$5.99
Phone number: 724-2691

Floyd.

The Floyd family has been serving customers Southern American cuisine since 1999. Son Milgo Floyd, who manages the restaurant, explained that his father decided not to rename the restaurant once he bought it out of respect for the previous owner, Robert Kerrigan, who ran the business for decades.

"He could have changed the name, but he appreciated the nostalgia of an establishment that had been there for 30 years," Milgo Floyd said.

The Floys are no strangers to entrepreneur-



Kopper Kitchen owners Jeter and Peggy "Mama" Floyd pose with their son, Milgo, the restaurant's manager, and Milgo Floyd's son outside of the Fifth Street eatery.

ship, with several businesses - ranging from a charter bus business to a salvage business - under their belts.

Known for their biscuits, fried chicken and Mama's Meatloaf, the cafeteria-style eatery offers greens, turnips and collards every day. After all, as Milgo Floyd put it, "There's some

people who think that greens are medicine."

Corn bread, fried fish, home-style steak and gravy - all of your basic "soul food" staples - also can be found on The Kopper Kitchen menu. Hamburgers and hot dogs also are offered for those wanting a taste of Carolina, Georgia, Texas and New York-style dogs. The restaurant boasts a country-style breakfast complete with omelets made to order any way you want. Desserts also are made upon request for those who crave something on the sweeter side.

"There's a little taste of everything that's down-home, country cooking," Milgo Floyd said.

He said the restaurant's menu is heavily inspired from his father's days as an employee at the K&W Coffee House, which once stood where the Adam's Mark Hotel is located.

As many eating establishments are placing smoke-free signs in their front windows, The Kopper Kitchen allows smokers to light up during their meals. The family feels the local tobacco industry's history is too much a part of the community to refuse customers the right to smoke cigarettes.

The restaurant relies on foot traffic from convention crowds at the M.C. Benton Convention Center, which is located a few blocks away, Milgo Floyd said. The menu will expand during the busier convention seasons to suit a variety of visitors.

"We have a very good rapport with a lot of our regular customers. Most of them work downtown and they love down-home cooking," Milgo Floyd said. "Our regulars, we love them and we have a special place in our hearts for them."

Over the next year, customers may notice the restaurant undergoing some renovations. But not to worry, Milgo Floyd said the restaurant will maintain its down-home feel that so many have come to love.

"When you hear how much people love the food - it really makes a difference and makes it all worthwhile," Milgo Floyd said.



Rhodesa Jones and Idris Ackamoor in "They Speak Through Us."

Play channels voices of greats from yesterday

CHRONICLE STAFF REPORT

Rhodesa Jones and Idris Ackamoor will bring "They Speak Through Us" to life with the help of guest artist pianist/composer Rudi Mwongozi.

From the wailing blues that have contributed to the foundations of American music, to the rhythms of the tap masters, to the screaming saxophones of bebop, cool, and avant-garde jazz, African-Americans have birthed and sustained a vibrant cultural contribution to contemporary American culture.

In the process, their art has created dynamic changes in our society that have derailed segregation, protested injustice, and trumpeted positive political change.

Many of the artists themselves have paid the ultimate price: Bessie Smith's death at the hands of Jim Crow, Bird's (Charlie Parker's) great addiction, Albert Ayler's murder. It is the intention of the three artists to act as conduits through which the spirits of some of the great departed African-American artists can speak.

What would Billie Holiday and Lester Young say to the present and future generations of artists if they were able to speak today? "They Speak Through Us" tries to answer that question and many more.

Venue:
SECCA

Schedule:
Aug. 9 at 8 p.m.

Price:
\$35

Profile: Sherman Hemsley, Living Legend recipient

SPECIAL TO THE CHRONICLE

Sherman Hemsley will receive a Living Legend Award Aug. 4 during the NBTF Opening Night Gala.

Hemsley is best known for his Emmy Award-nominated role as George Jefferson in "All in the Family" and "The Jefferson's."

Hemsley also starred as Deacon Frye in the hit series "Amen" from 1986 - 1991 and provided the voice of Richfield in ABC's "Dinosaurs" from 1991 - 1994. He first became interested in acting with performances in elementary school plays. After a stint in the service, he attended Philadelphia Academy of Dramatic Arts to perfect his craft. He worked as a postal clerk by day and actor by night. As a member of the Society Hill Playhouse, his performance in the stage play "The Blacks" prompted a noted Philadelphia director to



Hemsley

encourage Hemsley to pursue work in the New York theater.

In New York, he became part of the famed Negro Ensemble Company and took private acting lessons from Lloyd Richards, which led to a spot in Vignette Carroll's Urban Arts Group. In 1968, Hemsley made his Off-Broadway debut in "The People vs. The Ranchman," and his Broadway debut in "Purlie Victorious" followed. When "Purlie" closed, Hemsley joined the touring production of "Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope." It was during the San Francisco run that Hemsley was spotted by producer Norman Lear and asked to play the role of George Jefferson.

After "Amen," Hemsley became part of the cast of "Goode Behavior," playing an estranged ex-con father struggling to make peace with his strait-laced college dean son.

In recent years, he has starred on stage in productions of "Norman, Is That You?"; "I'm Not Rappaport"; and "The Jefferson's - The Stage Play," with the original cast. Hemsley was nominated for a 1995 Cable Ace Award for his work in the spoof of the film "Dumb and Dumber" at the MTV Movie Awards.