

## On The Inside

May / June 2004

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# Looking Out

Newsletter of the Michigan Lake to Lake Bed & Breakfast Association

## Letter From The President



Dear Friends:

This is the time to catch up on the last minute projects before your busy summer season is in full swing. The last few windows need to be washed; you've been to the local greenhouse to get another flat of annuals; and the lawn is in a constant state of needing to be mowed. Well just like your own business, ML2L has some housekeeping tasks that need to be done before summer begins.

By now, all members should have received the new 2004-2005 ML2L print directory. I hope all are pleased with the latest issue. I only know of one error (sorry AJ and the White Rabbit) in this printing. Might be a new record!

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If you haven't already done so, send in your photos and information to Turner Publishing for the Pictorial History of Michigan Lake to Lake B&B Association. The goal is to have this published in time for the 2004 Christmas season. I don't want to see the project languish and have to be discarded. Please consider ordering a copy for your B&B. I am ordering a copy for my B&B and a second copy for my local library. Having a copy of this book in your B&B is a beautiful statement of your interest in historic buildings and a testimony to your involvement in your state B&B association.

This issue includes an article from Dr. Ed Mahoney at MSU highlighting a first-ever occupancy forecasting and data collection program for the B&B industry. Once again, because of our close association with Dr. Mahoney and MSU, ML2L is at the forefront; and our members are being asked to participate in this ground-breaking new program. This is a unique partnership between selected state B&B associations, Michigan State University, Bishops University, and American Historic Inns. The system is being tested in only five states this summer and will be expanded to other states later. Individually and collectively, B&B owners/operators will gain insight into what is driving guests to our inns, how we compare regionally within our

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...Pat Materka does it again. One of her best columns yet!

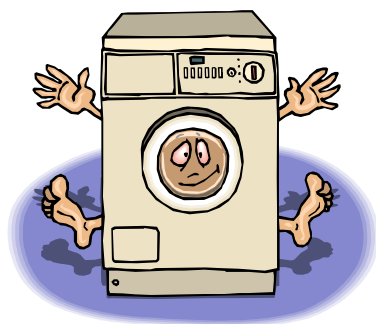
## **For Love of Laundry—True Tales of a New Innkeeper**

Pat Materka, Ann Arbor B&B

*Splish, Whirrrrrr. Thrum.*

Innkeepers move to the beat of a different drummer. The drumbeat of laundry. A beat which, when the washer load is off balance—as can happen when you’re washing king-sized sheets or monster bath rugs—sounds like a five point scale earthquake. My washer once galloped across the room during its spin cycle!

But whether loud or lulling, the thing about laundry is that it is constant. From the earliest guest checkout until you turn in for the night, the washer and dryer are always going. And going. And going.



Is this easiest part of running a B&B? Or the most tedious? Most of us would agree it’s both.

Imagine running an inn a century ago, without washers and dryers, fabric softeners, and stain remover sprays. Thanks to today’s appliances and products, laundry practically cleans itself. It does everything but leap off the mattress and dive into the machine. It’s gratifying to mop or e-mail or greet guests while the wash is running, because you know you’re accomplishing two things at once.

Making beds brings back memories of the summer between college semesters that I worked as a cabin maid at Yellowstone Park. Who’d have guessed I’d be resuming this new “career” four decades later?! The biggest surprise is that there are surprises: here are a few things I’ve learned about laundry. I’ll bet every innkeeper can make a contribution to this list.

- Find a color scheme that works in every bathroom and buy multiple towel sets in those shades. Resist the temptation to coordinate specific colors with individual bathrooms and avoid the frustration of searching for that last matching washcloth! Many innkeepers point out that you can’t go wrong with white.
- Do the same when replacing sheets. The hotel industry recommends having three sets: one on the bed, one in the wash, and a third on reserve in the linen closet. Different color schemes for kings, queens, and twins further reduces the sort and match craziness.
- One innkeeper suggests storing the top and bottom sheet inside its pillow case.
- Whenever possible, leave the beds stripped and “airing” as the sheets are laundered and return them to the bed, eliminating the tedious step of folding and storing.

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## **An Invitation from Dr. Mahoney to Participate in B&B Industry Research**

Dr. Ed Mahoney, Professor and Extension Specialist, Michigan State University

**American Historic Inns** is partnering with **Michigan State University's Recreation Industries Research Center** and **Bishop's University** in the Center for Inn and B&B Research (CIBBR). The center will provide the industry with current and reliable information about (1) Occupancy rates; (2) B&B/Inn performance, e.g. occupied room nights, room revenues, net revenues, advance booking; (3) Guest characteristics, preferences, and behaviors; and (4) The economic impacts of B&Bs. For the first time, B&Bs/Inns will have "real time" access to information to benchmark their performance, monitor both market and industry trends, and document the economic contribution of B&Bs/Inns.

I, Dr. Mahoney, am inviting the Michigan Lake to Lake B&B Association to be one of five test states. Wisconsin and Alaska have already agreed to participate. In order for ML2L to be eligible, we need a minimum of 30 B&Bs/Inns to participate. It would be best if ML2L could get 50 members to participate. The information that will be produced will be invaluable and the time required will be minimal—10 minutes a week and 10 minutes once each quarter. Only B&Bs that participate in CIBBR surveys will be eligible to receive the survey results.

CIBBR will regularly conduct three different on-line surveys. B&Bs/Inns that register and participate will have access to all center reports. State and local B&B associations that encourage their members to participate will also have access to the results, and they can request specialized analyses. American Historic Inns will regularly release results to national and state media.

One of the on-line surveys will be a weekly occupancy survey. The purpose is to provide estimates of occupancy rates for different size and types of B&Bs/Inns in various regions of the country. The information will also be used to generate estimates of B&B/Inn guest spending and the economic impact of B&Bs/Inns. B&Bs/Inns hosts will complete a 10 minute weekly report of occupancy rates on different nights for different types of rooms, suites, guest houses, and cottages. B&Bs/Inns that completed the weekly occupancy survey will have access to weekly occupancy reports. If enough B&Bs/Inns participate, separate analyses will be produced for different states, regions, and possibly associations.

An on-line Quarterly B&B/Inn Performance Survey will also be conducted. B&Bs/Inns hosts complete a short 10 minute survey that compares—higher, the same, lower—their performance on factors such as occupied room nights, net revenues, advance bookings for the last quarter with the previous quarter and the same quarter of the previous year. Reports will be available within 10 days of the close of each quarterly survey.

CIBBR will also establish a National On-line B&B/Inn Guest Panel. Panel members will be surveyed with regard to their B&B/Inn visits, selection criteria, preferences, trip characteristics, including spending in local communities, and their satisfaction with B&Bs/Inns. The goal is to enlist more than 3,000 B&B/Inn customers who will be willing to answer short surveys from time-to-time. B&Bs/inns that assist us in recruiting Panel members by encouraging their guests to participate will have access to the results of different Guest Panel Surveys. We will begin recruiting this panel during Summer 2004.

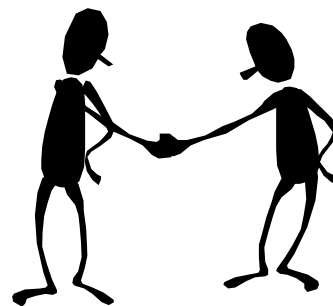
**<http://www.prr.msu.edu/innresearch/>**



## **I've Hired an Innsitter. Now What?**

Janet Lemson, Newsletter Editor

I know you'll want things to run just as smoothly with your newly hired innsitter as they do when you are at the inn. A good exercise, and worth every minute of time you spend on it (now, and in the future), is to compile a reference manual about your inn. A three ring binder works best. Divider tabs can be purchased inexpensively at your local office supplies store. Recommended table of contents might be:



### **Emergency Numbers and Shut-off Locations**

- 911 (and directions to your inn, if needed)
- Your cell number (to be used only in the most urgent circumstances)
- Plumber
- Electrician
- HVAC Contractor
- Locations for water, gas, electric, furnace(s), air conditioning, hot water heaters, well, and septic (e.g. in basement, crawlspace, garage, near front steps)

### **Website**

- Print off a copy of your website's complete details to be used for reference.

### **Occupancy Schedule**

- Print or photocopy a current schedule for the next six months.
- If you do not want your innsitter to work on your computerized occupancy system, make up a Reservations Detail Form including 1. Check in/check out dates; 2. Name, address and phone; 3. How they intend to pay (credit card number and all details, check, cash, advance payment policy); 4. Which room they are interested in; 5. Number of guests; 6. Special occasion (anniversary, honeymoon). Also include any special details on the sheet for the innsitter to review with the prospective guest: Smoking policy. Deposit policy, Check in/out time, Breakfast time, Whether there are pets on the premises, Any food allergies, Guests special needs.

### **Rate Sheet**

- List per room and whether there are any special policies (two night weekend stay minimums.)

### **Voice Mail and Instructions**

- Make this as detailed as possible and ask your innsitter to not erase messages so you can double check when you return.

This may all sound like a large project, but it will repay you tenfold as an everyday reference tool and most especially when you engage the services of your innsitter!

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**Don't forget our  
newsletter deadline**

**July 15, 2004!**

## President's Letter (cont.)

state as well as how Michigan inns and inngoers compare to other states. A maximum number of inns must participate from each state to collect meaningful data and create a valid benchmark. Dr. Mahoney would like at least 50 ML2L inns to participate. I think we can do better than that. How about half the membership, that's 100? Get signed up! The address is: <http://www.prr.msu.edu/innresearch/>

The Lake to Lake Forum continues to gain registered members. This is an extremely valuable free member benefit. If you haven't already done so, sign up for the Forum. Here is the address again: <http://www.laketolake.com/forum/index.php>. If you are already registered, get on and post. Questions are answered and insights are shared, all because we love what we do!

Here's to a profitable summer!

**Cathy Russell**  
President , Michigan Lake to Lake B&B Association

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## ML2L Annual Fall Conference Date/Location Set

Mark your calendars! The date and location for the Annual ML2L Fall Conference has been set. Our annual conference will take place November 8 and 9, 2004, at Brook Lodge in Augusta. Watch your e-mail or snail mail for registration and more information.



Should you have any questions, you may contact Angela Carrier at the Carriage House Inn B&B Retreat in Harrison at P.O. Box 757, Harrison, MI 48625, phone 989-539-1300, e-mail Angela at [innkeeper@carriagehouseinn.com](mailto:innkeeper@carriagehouseinn.com).

## **Platinum Ambassador Members Feel the Boost of Special Promotion**

Herb Boven, Board Secretary, Castle in the Country

This month, June, marks the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Michigan Lake to Lake's Platinum Ambassador Program. Currently, about 46 member innkeepers have voluntarily collected \$1.00 per room night from their lodging guests and sent it to ML2L. This assessment is then used by the association to provide additional marketing efforts to generate more internet traffic to these member properties.

The additional web site promoting Platinum Members is **[www.michiganbedandbreakfast.net](http://www.michiganbedandbreakfast.net)**. This site has been marketed via the Pay Per Click programs of both Google and Overture search engines. An upgraded feature of this site is that the member innkeeper may go into the site, using an assigned password, and update their own listing at any time, including posting up to three new photos. This database-driven site makes it possible to have almost immediate interaction between the innkeeper and the web visitor because the innkeeper can change their marketing message at any time. There is also an added feature to this site that is convenient to the consumer in the ability for them to check availability of those innkeepers who have on-line availability and/or reservation systems.

If you are interested in becoming a Platinum Ambassador member of ML2L, please contact the Executive Directors, Jack or Karen Zibell or any Board Member.

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## **New Visibility From Your ML2L Board**

As if they didn't have enough to do in running their inns, attending board meetings throughout the state, planning conferences, balancing the books, and running our association, your Board Members have agreed to take on a new responsibility.

They have agreed to share their expertise in the newsletter by writing an article (or two or three) for each issue of our newsletter. By arm twisting and coercion, your diligent Editor has solicited their cooperation in sharing their expertise with our membership! Many Board Members are already participating without much arm twisting at all.

This issue's featured articles are from our President, Cathy Russell; Secretary, Herb Boven; and Pat Materka who dares to put on paper the trials of our everyday innkeeping in True Tales of a New Innkeeper.

When I posed this idea to the Board at their June meeting, the room temperature was increasing; and I could feel their bubbling enthusiasm at the prospect of yet another hour or two of their valuable time and expertise spent sharing with our members!

My personal thanks to each one of you for your commitment to the success of our newsletter and your association! .ed

## **Kudos!**

Jon and Linda Darrow, owners of **Saravilla Bed & Breakfast** in Alma, were recently awarded the Gratiot County Community Foundation's Friend of the Foundation Award, in recognition of their commitment and support of the Foundation's charitable activities throughout Gratiot County.

Share your successes with our members. Send your Kudos to Janet Lemson at [jslemson@iserv.net](mailto:jslemson@iserv.net) to be included in a future issue of *On the*

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## **Welcome New Inns!**

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Fax: 231-238-9201  
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201 North High Street  
Northport, MI 49670  
Phone: 231-386-5114  
E-mail: [jane@daysgonebybnb.com](mailto:jane@daysgonebybnb.com)

For more information on our newest members, check them out at [www.laketolake.com](http://www.laketolake.com).

**Success comes when you do  
what you love to do, and  
commit to being the best in  
your field.**

*Brian Tracy*

## **Editor's Choice Recipe**

This recipe intrigued me and when I made it, the flavors were awesome. Low cal too!

### **Japanese Onion Soup**

1/2 Stalk of celery, chopped  
1 Small onion, chopped  
1/2 Carrot, chopped  
1 t Grated fresh ginger root  
1/4 t Minced fresh garlic  
2 T Chicken stock  
3 t Beef bouillon granules  
1 C Fresh shiitake mushrooms  
2 Quarts water  
1 C Baby portobello mushrooms, sliced  
1 T Minced fresh chives

In a large saucepan or stockpot, combine the celery, onion, carrot, ginger, garlic, and a few of the mushrooms. Add chicken stock, beef bouillon, and water. Place the pot over high heat, and bring to a rolling boil. When the mixture reaches boiling, cover. Simmer for 45 minutes.

Place all the remaining mushrooms into a separate pot. When the boiling mixture is done, place a strainer over the pot with the mushrooms in it. Strain the cooked soup into the pot with the mushrooms. Discard strained materials.

Serve the broth with mushrooms in small porcelain bowls, and sprinkle fresh chives over the top. Use Asian soup spoons for an elegant effect.

Mild, a bit salty, with a touch of tang.

Six servings, 25 calories.

[www.eDiets.com](http://www.eDiets.com)

## For Love of Laundry—True Tales of a New Innkeeper (cont.)

- And of course, treat stains on napkins, tablecloths, etc. as soon as you clear the table so that you don't have to scan for them every time you do the laundry.

Finally, I'd like to conclude this column by sharing 365 ways to recycle lint, *blankets* of which are released with every dryer load! But, I only know one; wrap the lint into a ball wound with string and hang it on a tree for the nesting birds. Any more ideas? Send them to [Pat@AnnArborBedandBreakfast.com](mailto:Pat@AnnArborBedandBreakfast.com), and we'll recycle them in the next newsletter.

**Don't forget our newsletter deadline  
July 15, 2004!**



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