



Photo by Dan Tamkin



Nancy and Steve Butcher



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Back in the Good Ol' Days...

Nutcracker Family Restaurant, Pataskala

In the center of the community of Pataskala, Ohio, there is a place called Nutcracker Family Restaurant. There has been a restaurant on that site for many years, but Nutcracker has been there for sixteen of them.

The Butchers, married for 20 years, started with a 1900s ice cream shop downtown, then moved to the current site to open a restaurant. Nancy Butcher gave the restaurant the name Nutcracker because she hoped the colorful statues would remind people of the happiest time of year, Christmas. Steve Butcher added his own touches with 50s memorabilia. All those touches added up to a great community gathering place, and the Butchers appreciated their customers and neighbors just as much.

On January 2, 2005, a local police officer on routine patrol noticed the traffic signal in front of the Nutcracker was blinking. Thick fog made it hard to

investigate, but as the officer looked for a reason for the obvious electrical problem he noticed flames licking from the roof of the popular restaurant. Firefighters gave it their all, but when it was all said and done, the building was a total loss. The Butchers returned from a holiday vacation to find there was nothing left.

Steve Butcher remembered, "We had to tear everything out right down to the foundation. It looked like an impossible task, but the community stepped up and helped out every single day. Local students even collected change to buy the Nutcracker that stands at the front entrance. Turn over many of the more than one hundred fifty nutcrackers that line the windowsills and you'll usually find the name of the person who brought it to us written on the bottom. People still bring us things for the restaurant all the time."

Steve considered the new building a fresh slate, and his love of all things 50s,

from the black and white tiled floors to the neon signs, kept him scouring eBay for decorative items. "I had so much luck finding things that I decided I wanted to locate a band box. Sure enough I found one and sent the check. What arrived was a very expensive box of junk. My wife was not happy, but I told her I'd find someone to fix it. That sent me back to the internet and I eventually located Brad Frank Restorations. I sent him my box of junk and I waited."

Weeks later Nancy Butcher asked her husband, "What ever happened to that band box you bought?"

"Just as I was about to contact him to ask that question myself, Brad sent me some pictures of his progress. The box of junk had been restored to a candy apple red band box," Steve said.

Eventually, the much anticipated band box arrived in Pataskala, where it found a new home over the jukebox. Put a coin



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in the jukebox and the curtains open to reveal a seven-piece band and crooner on the tiny stage. The singer's head turns, the men play their instruments, and, when the song is over, the drapes close on the miniature world until the next song. Very few of these unique pieces were made, and even fewer are still working across the country. In an increasingly digital society, it is a treat to watch this mechanical band perform.

Ask anyone in the area and they will tell you the Butchers brought more than good food and a friendly place to meet your neighbors to Pataskala. After the restaurant fire, Steve was elected mayor. He was involved in the creation of "Veterans Green", a public green space adjacent to the city's Veteran Memorial, now the permanent home of the local Chamber of Commerce's farmers' market. His leadership and devotion to the community has impacted the Pataskala community in a positive way.

Steve Butcher is also a retired Ohio Air National Guard veteran, but that doesn't mean he has retired his support of veterans. Each Memorial Day and Veterans Day, Steve and Nancy feed veterans for free at Nutcracker. Part of the price of any paid dinners on those days is donated to the USO. For his ongoing work to benefit American veterans, Steve Butcher was inducted into the Ohio Veterans Hall of Fame.

What's good at Nutcracker? You might want to try the "all you can eat" specials Tuesday through Friday. Their homemade pies are legendary, and they serve delicious Lynd's applesauce year round. Stop in and chances are you'll be greeted at the door by Steve or Nancy Butcher. They're just north of interstate 70 at the intersection of state routes 310 & 16 in Pataskala; but if you get lost just stop and ask one of the locals for directions to "The Nut".  DC

Nutcracker Family Restaurant has been featured in a number of books, such as Eating Your Way Across Ohio: 101 Must Places to Eat by Karen A. Patterson, and How to Become the Restaurant of Choice by Bill Marvin. You'll find more about them on the web at www.nutcrackerpataskala.com.



Brad Frank Restoring a Classic

Brad Frank has a long list of skills that are necessary to perform his job. He is an electrician, a talented metal fabricator and machinist and a skilled cabinet maker; he does body and paint work, silk screening, and refrigeration repair.

At the age of fourteen, Brad was already intrigued and working for an electrical company, and would later work as an industrial millwright. Most of his skills were developed on the job, but he chuckled when he said, "I'm the prime example of why they need to keep those shop classes in high school."

When the phone rings at Brad's shop in Chatsworth, California, it might be a movie producer, actor or rock star. These days it could be a contact from a customer almost anywhere in the world.

Brad Frank is one of only a handful of people in the USA who repairs and restores antique arcade games, jukeboxes, pinball machines and soda dispensers full-time as a business.

I was fortunate enough to catch up with Brad when he made a repair stop at Nutcracker Family Restaurant in Pataskala, Ohio a few weeks back. He was on a ladder, performing a tune-up on the Chicago Coin's Band Box that Steve and Nancy Butcher have in their 50s-themed restaurant. Brad had restored it several years ago and stopped by to do a little service work on it after all of these years entertaining the customers. It is one of only eleven still known to be in operation in the country.

Brad was zigzagging his way back to California after a trip to a warehouse in Hagerstown, Maryland, where he loaded his trailer with vintage arcade games. These are pieces he will take to his shop and restore for shipment to Holland. "My client is a self-made millionaire in Holland who wants to leave some mechanical history to his community. He's restoring a building and creating a museum, and these arcade games and musical machines from the early 30s to present will be on display there. He is 60% of my business these days," Brad said.

Opening his trailer, he pointed out an old arcade game that sat in a tangle of

damaged wires, fractured glass and boxes. "I've been able to locate a photo online, so I know what it was supposed to look like. I'll likely silkscreen at least three of the back glasses in case they break one at some point. I generally spend a minimum of six to eight weeks per item restoring these things, but that depends on the restoration, making of parts I have to do and the amount of damaged pieces I'm given. Often it's almost like starting from scratch. The trick is to look past the junk and see the customer's vision for a restored project."

Over the years, Brad was a go-to man for movie producers who needed period items for their movie sets. He provided the Seeburg "B" jukebox for the movie *We Bought a Zoo* and numerous TV shows. "We really don't make a lot of movies in California anymore, so that business is slim."

That doesn't mean he doesn't do work for a lot of show business greats. He still gets calls to service Arnold Schwarzenegger's CD jukebox. "About once a year you have to go in and clean the cigar smoke from the CD's," Brad smiled. "Rick Springfield called me for repairing his jukebox. When I got there he was sitting at the kitchen table helping his kids with homework just like a regular dad."

Brad also had to repair the Wurlitzer 950 that Johnny Depp's girlfriend bought him for a Christmas present after the movers dropped it down a flight of steps. "Quentin Tarantino has an AMI Continental 2 jukebox he's dubbed "Amy". He wanted to use it in his *Death Proof* movie, so we ended up crating and moving it twice. Once was to shoot the scenes in Austin, Texas, and the second time was to reshoot more scenes in Santa Barbara, California."

Even magician David Copperfield needed to call upon Brad's special kind of magic when he needed some cabinet scratches repaired on his prized violano, a very rare, self-playing violin.



The restoration of items like old gasoline pumps and soft drink machines has become very challenging for this artist. "I do all the bodywork, repair or recreate all the moving parts and restore the refrigeration system. It's painting the item that has become so difficult. The environmental pollution laws in California are very stringent, and they've really complicated the painting and restoration of things like old arcade machines and such. Some of the restorations can only be done using the old type of paints and techniques that were used when the machines were made years ago. I have literally been forced to take them out of California for painting and bring them back to my workshop for completion. When a customer is paying \$10,000.00 to \$40,000.00 for a restoration, they do not want it painted with latex house paint. They want it restored with the same products that it was made with."

Brad seems to have a special affection for the Chicago Coin's Band Boxes he restores. In 1985, he took control of the Chicago Coin's Band Box name and started making replacement parts. Later he trademarked the name and started manufacturing them new. "There were so few made to begin with, and even fewer still in one piece. I repair and rebuild the ones that are sent to me, but I also make them and sell them all over the world."  DC

For information you can visit the website, www.chicagocoinsbandbox.com, or email Brad at brad@chicagocoinsbandbox.com or brad@bradfrankrestorations.com.

