Olexa’s Catering has tasty dishes, quaint atmosphere

Sarah Andrews
The Sanford Chronicle

Lampposts stand tall amidst the intimate café tables as facades of homes line the walls. Locals relax and enjoy the ambiance as servers bustle about the cafe. This place may feel like an open-air French square, but it is far from the Eiffel Tower. Olexa’s Catering is nestled away in Mountain Brook Village. The restaurant in Mountain Brook Village is decorated to look like a town square, complete with lampsosts standing between tables. Olexa’s features brunch and lunch items as well as many desserts.

Though it tasted as if it had been reheated, the balsamic vinaigrette make a nice side item. Another good choice is the quiche lorraine. Mixed greens with just the right amount of dressing and window curtains, and the large windows look out on the shops across the street.

Owner Diane Olexa has been crafting desserts like these since the cafe’s opening in 2004. Most dessert offerings here are the cafe's offerings. Some desserts are available only for birthday parties or other occasions, but the wedding cakes are the most impressive items. The prices for private events are not listed anywhere on the website or within the restaurant. For more information about Olexa’s Catering, visit www.olexas.com or visit 2838 Culver Road in Mountain Brook Village.

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Ryan Fitzgerald
The Sanford Chronicle

Ryan Fitzgerald played one of his original songs. Fitzgerald’s album, Edge of Eternity, was released on iTunes at the beginning of April.

Fitzgerald’s album, Edge of Eternity, is out on sale through iTunes and other online stores searchable through www.cdbaby.com. Ryan Fitzgerald said he wrote the songs on his album, Edge of Eternity, “out of a strong need to express my thoughts and insights about the world and maybe draw someone’s attention to something they have never really thought about. I hope to impact people and make them think.”

For now, Fitzgerald plans to continue writing songs and speculate that a new album will be available this summer. People can catch him in concert at Hart's Cobblestone or on the Internet at www.myspace.com/ryanfitzgerald.

Fitzgerald’s album, Edge of Eternity, is on sale through iTunes and other online stores searchable through www.cdbaby.com. He would be happy to sell you one on the sidewalk.
Science professor shares testimony in new book

EMILY WILLIAMS
The Samford Crimson

Since becoming a Christian eight years ago, sci-
ence professor John Brown has devoted his life not
only to teaching, but also to sharing the Bible. His
dedication to sharing Scripture was one of his motiva-
tions for writing his newly released book, Satan: 'The Fallen Angel: Exposed.'

Another motivation for writing the book was his interest in spiritual warfare.

“I have read many interesting books on spiritual warfare, but they were all incomplete,” Brown said. “Satan is very prevalent in various aspects of Christianity, but I feel that no one has written about him, written my book to fill that void.

Brown’s book is structured through biblical accounts to expose Satan as the greatest enemy. Throughout the book, Brown discusses Satan’s role in the past, present and future.

Brown also addresses how to battle Satan with the armor of God.

‘Everybody has a sin that dominates them, but as a believer in Christ we have the ability to overcome that,’ he said.

I want Christians to know that we truly have an enemy. We know his name and who he is, and God has a plan for dealing with him,” Brown said. ‘It’s because of Satan that we have sin. Knowing this enemy is vital to our Christian walk.’

Brown’s personal Christian walk began when he was a child. He said he remembers asking his parents questions that most Christians ask – questions like ‘Why am I here?’ and ‘Why is Christianity the only way to heaven?’

‘My father couldn’t answer my questions in a way that had me convinced,’ Brown said. “I was brought up in the Christian church, but I saw a lot of people in my church who did not live out their Christian lives during the week. Christianity kind of became a Sunday thing for me.’

Though Brown continued attending church, he said he felt spiritually lost. At age 16, he underwent a life-changing experience that led him to the Muslim faith. Brown had been involved in studying world religions and learning about finding a true religion. Brown became Muslim after befriending a Muslim girl who attended his school.

‘It was a very profound belief, and that is what turned me to the Muslim faiths,” Brown said.

‘After I prayed at this mosque, I opened the Quran with devotion, but I have found that to be false. You can be just as devoted at being a atheist, yet you have the truth. ‘

While practicing the Muslim faith, Brown developed a desire to know the Muslim god, to seek him and to pray to him. Freshman year of college, he encountered changes in his personal and professional lifestyle that prompted him to make a decision.

“I was like, ‘God, I thought we had this whole thing mapped out, and you were with me. ’ At that point I didn’t feel that God was with me.”

Brown said he again turned his back on religion. He said it was not until a few months later that he turned to Christianity.

Living in McCalla, Ala., and trying to sell his home, Brown met a real-estate agent who was also a Sunday school teacher. Brown told him that he had studied many religions and knew there was a god, but he did not know the way to that god. The real-estate agent gave Brown a copy of the New Testament and challenged him to read the Bible.

Before reading the Bible, Brown said he prayed this prayer to God: “If you are truly God and you can make the skies blue and the clouds white, then surely you can speak to me and tell me that this is the truth.” As Brown began reading the Bible, he said the “became alive.”

“I kept reading and kept speaking to me in a way that God was there. That was the moment that I knew that this was the truth,” Brown said.

Brown’s book can be seen at www.randomhous-

Get off campus: Vestavia Hills

SLAYN SCHNEIDRIEKE
T he Samford Crimson

As a Birmingham native, I often get requests for restaurant recommendations, inquiries about Birm-

ingham boutiques and panic-stricken calls from my out-of-town friends who have gotten turned around on the interstate.

Unfortunately, I am no expert on Birmingham inns, and I still get turned around from time to time. But I have enjoyed sharing some of my favorite Birmingham spots with my Samford friends over the years.

So, even though I don’t frequent this quaint little section of Vestavia Hills nearly as often as I did through high school, I want to give Samford stu-
dents a local’s perspective on one of my favorite areas for shopping and eating—and a great way to spend a Saturday afternoon in Birmingham.

Driving from Samford, take a right onto Rocky Ridge Road off Highway 280 right before Whole Foods.

After about a mile or so, you will come across the essence of what makes Vestavia Hills so special. After lunch, I headed to Clothes Tree, a boutique and consignment shop.

An added bonus: The salon tax is only 6% percent, which slightly makes up for the higher price point.

Still in the shopping mood, I visited the area gift shop, Fan Stuff, which doubles as a small boutique.

The store features the typical gift array of sterling silver, baby clothes, purses, anything monogrammed, sorority memorabilia, frames, items to be engraved or screen-printed and an impressive couple of racks of elegant special occasion dresses.

The dress collection varies from dresses by Nicole Miller, Betsey Johnson, Jovani and Sue Wong of elegant special occasion dresses.

An added bonus is the store also has some unique pieces of jewelry.

After a full afternoon of shopping, my stomach was already starting to grumble again. If I had not been short on time, I would have several options for dinner to choose from in the area.

Still in the shopping mood, I visited the area gift shop, but the store has a huge inventory in rows of screen-printed and an impressive couple of racks of elegant special occasion dresses.

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