



FILE photo of Loula Zantiotis as her loyal customers will remember her.

Loula ends 50-year link with the Busy Bee Cafe

IT was the end of an era in Gunnedah at the weekend when Loula Zantiotis, the last of the old-style Greek cafe owners, called it a day at the Busy Bee Cafe.

At 12.06pm on Sunday, surrounded by her family, Loula Zantiotis slipped a new padlock on the door saying "yassou - and thanks for the memories."

Loula has been part and parcel of the Busy Bee since her marriage to Peter Zantiotis in 1955.

Born in 1932 on the Greek island of Kythera, between Peloponnis and Crete, Loula had been staying with a relative in Sydney when she met the young Peter Zantiotis at an Easter dance in Paddington Town Hall.

Unable to speak English, Loula found life in Australia very different to anything she had experienced in her homeland but with courage and determination she became part of the community.

Their life together revolved around the Busy Bee and later their three children Anastasia (Tessie), Lambrous James (Jim) and Emmanuel Nicholas (Manni).

Since the death of her husband Peter in 1996, 75-year-old Loula has continued to run the Busy Bee - although on a much smaller scale.

"This is also my home and I have always enjoyed talking

with customers and friends who dropped in," she said.

"I almost sold out three years ago but the time was not right - and now it is."

Although early history is sketchy, it is believed the Busy Bee Cafe was built in 1914 as part of the Doolan buildings, with the tea-rooms accessible via an archway through the shop next door, leading to the Grand Central Hotel.

According to a 1926 newspaper advertisement, early proprietors of the Busy Bee were Jim and Andrew Zantiotis, also known as Zantos.

Lambros Zantiotis bought the Busy Bee in 1933 and was joined by his son Peter on March 15, 1936, from the Greek island of Kythera in the Ionian Sea. He had come out to Australia on his own as a 12-year-old, with his mother Anastasia and sisters joining the family after the war.

As Gunnedah emerged from the Great Depression, Lambros Zantiotis hired cafe interior designer, Stephen Varvaressos, to install its glamorous art-deco fittings which remain virtually unchanged.

While other Greek cafes in Gunnedah were modernised and altered to cater for a changing generation, the Busy Bee Cafe stayed the same with Peter Zantiotis resisting the urge to install a deep fryer and stove for take-aways at the front of the shop.

Today the Busy Bee Cafe remains a warm and friendly place, with a distinctly comfortable and unhurried atmosphere, in the frenetic world of fast-food chains.

The good news is that Loula will still be part of the Gunnedah community, continuing to live upstairs while new proprietors, Toni and Wayne Faint, and their children Nathan, Jennifer and Caleb, take over the cafe.

Loula's valued customers are already familiar with Toni, who has worked at the Busy Bee for close to three years.

Toni and Wayne are planning to expand the menu to include the old favourites, like fish and chips, hamburgers and hot meals.

Meanwhile, Loula and her family have expressed appreciation to their loyal customers for their ongoing support, especially after the death of Peter Zantiotis.

"We really appreciate everything everyone has done for Mum and the generations of customers who have supported the Busy Bee," said Manni Zantiotis, who now lives in Sydney.

"It has meant a great deal to us as Mum's customers have become her friends."

Life has suddenly taken a new direction for Loula Zantiotis but for those who grew up in the era of Greek cafes, with their friendly hardworking owners, there is a sense of loss and nostalgia.



IT was the end of an era in Gunnedah at the weekend when the last of the old-style Greek cafe owners, Loula Zantiotis, handed over the keys after 50 years behind the counter. Pictured behind the 1930s glamorous art-deco counter, designed by Stephen Varvaressos, are Manni and Loula Zantiotis, left, Wayne and Toni Faint and their son Nathan.

More answers needed on equine 'flu policy

THERE are still many questions to be answered on vaccinations for equine influenza, according to Member for Tamworth, Peter Draper.

Mr Draper said today that his office was still being inundated with calls from people seeking information on vaccinations.

"The Department of Primary Industries has advised me that horses in buffer zones around outlying infected areas are being given priority for vaccination," he said.

"They have also advised that remaining doses from the initial 10,000 NSW allocation may be used for some harness, race and high-level equestrian horses."

Mr Draper said that he was still concerned that too much attention was being directed at the racing industry with too little at-

ention being focused on private horse owners and the recreational industry.

"Tamworth and Gunnedah are in the middle of a Red Zone. It appears that in such an area the authorities intend to let EI run its course, and vaccinations will only be available in adjoining buffer areas to control further spread of the disease," he said.

Mr Draper said it was difficult for many people to understand the methodology behind the DPI programme and despite information on the DPI website, people were still confused on the issue.

"The authorities must communicate their reasoning for proceeding in this manner but, most importantly, they must contain and eradicate EI from the state as quickly as possible," Mr Draper concluded.

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