



For Pat Murray, the family restaurant in downtown Minneapolis "was his life."

# Pair built legends one meal at a time

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Generations of Twin Cities residents and out-of-town visitors have celebrated good news and special occasions at a table set by Pat Murray or Jack Kozlak.

On Friday, those who worked alongside the iconic restaurateurs and dined at their legendary Minneapolis steakhouses — Murray's downtown and Jax Cafe in northeast — will celebrate their lives. Murray died Monday at age 72; Kozlak

**Restaurateurs Pat Murray and Jack Kozlak, who died within days of each other, spent years setting the standard for fine dining in Minneapolis.**

died Thursday of heart disease at age 84.

They each went into a family business that helped define fine dining for Minnesotans and worked hard to keep the supper club era alive.

"These were top-notch gentlemen who survived in eras when other chains and corporations go in town and then blow in and blow out pretty quickly," said St. Paul restaurant owner Pat Mancini, who, like Murray and Kozlak, took over the reins of a family-owned supper club.

Dining continues on B2 ▶



Jack Kozlak of Jax Cafe. "We were a steakhouse and we didn't go for fads," said his brother, Bill.

« THESE WERE HUGE MEN. IT TOOK THEM YEARS TO BUILD THE BUSINESS. » Pat Mancini, St. Paul restaurant owner

# Pair built dining legends meal at a time

## ◀ DINING FROM B1

"I don't want to call us dinosaurs, but it's certainly a throw-back to the supper club era," Mancini said.

"They worked table to table and took pride in everything they did. There are not too many family restaurants left that have survived from generation to generation. Like farmers, it's hard work. ... It's a testament to them that they kept the businesses alive."

Murray's signature menu item has long been its "silver butter knife steak," and a neon sign outside the restaurant at 26th S. 6th St. glows with those four words, signifying the permanence of the 28-ounce strip sirloin carved tableside and served for two.

Murray's parents, Art and Marie, began the family business in 1933 as the Red Feather Cafe in north Minneapolis.

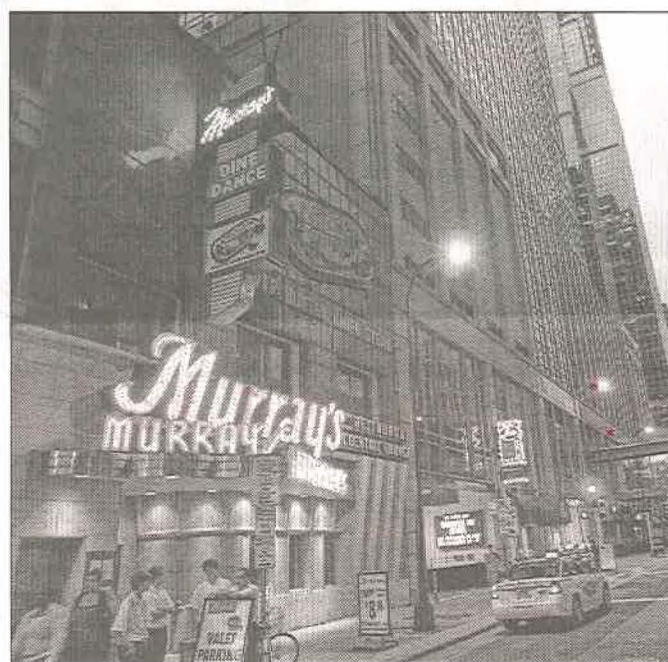
From there, they moved the business in the late 1930s into the Russell Hotel at 4th Street and Hennepin Avenue. The Murrays moved to their current location in 1946.

Pat signed on in 1960, and the family legacy has continued with children Tim, Jill and James now in charge.

The restaurant "was his life," Tim Murray said Tuesday of his father. "It was the biggest part of his life from the time he was a teenager."

With its white linen table cloths and napkins, and fine table settings, Murray's attracted the biggest names in politics, entertainment and athletics.

Garrison Keillor paid homage to Murray's in a 1997 essay in Time magazine, writing: "The menu harks back to the Age of Steak; a place where a fifty-ish couple can enjoy a Manhattan and tuck into a chunk of cow and au gratin potato."



File photo by TOM WALLACE • twallace@startribune.com

Said Mayor R.T. Rybak: "Almost everything in Minneapolis has changed" since he was younger. "Murray's hasn't."

Gertrude and Joseph Kozlak started Jax Cafe in 1943. In 1959, they brought outdoor dining to the Twin Cities, delighting guests with a shaded patio and trout stream.

"We were a steakhouse and we didn't go for fads," said Jack Kozlak's brother, Bill. "You got to know your customers."

Both Jax and Murray's became icons in the Twin Cities because of their staying power, said Phil Roberts, chairman and CEO of Parasole Restaurant Holdings.

"They influenced the restaurant scene and anyone who didn't look up to them is an idiot," Roberts said.

Both Kozlak and Murray — and their children who've taken over in recent years — have given generations of families a place to celebrate grandpa's birthday, toast grooms and dine before prom.

But more importantly, they've provided a place where life has stayed somewhat the same.

"You go in, sit down and have a little two-hour escape from all the crap that happened to you during the day," Roberts said. "You're in their world. They're treating you well, the food is

tasty and you're indulging.

"It's a safe harbor where you feel like cocooning. You feel like your back to a time when things were a hell of a lot better," he said. "They're rooted in a time 30 years ago and it's comforting. It's familiar surroundings. You're not being challenged to eat sea urchin stuffed with salmon roe. You're going to sit down and have a hunk of cow and a piece of fish."

For Minneapolis Mayor R.T. Rybak, it's about memory of coming downtown to 9th and Nicollet, where his dad ran the Walgreen's. And there was Murray's.

"Almost everything in Minneapolis has changed since I came down to meet my father at the Walgreens. Murray's hasn't," Rybak said. "If these institutions can survive the '60s when every institution changed and the boom and bust of the '90s and now, they'll survive a few more changes."

Pat Mancini knows about the line between respect and innovation. "Are we the exact same restaurant after my father died? Absolutely not. We have to bring in our personal-



File photo by TOM SWEENEY • tsweeney@startribune.com

Jax Cafe, on University Avenue NE. in Minneapolis, brought outdoor dining to the area in 1959.

ities. These were huge men. It took them years to build the business."

Murray is survived by his wife, Joyce; sons Timothy Murray and James Murray; and daughters Christina Brandt, Jill Kummings and Megan Blohowiak.

Visitation is scheduled for 4 to 8 p.m. Thursday at the Washburn-McReavy Edina Chapel, 50th Street and Hwy. 100, Edina. Memorial services are scheduled for 10 a.m. Friday at St. Olaf Church, 215 S. 8th St., Minneapolis, with visitation

one hour before.

Kozlak is survived by his wife, Ruth; sons, Mark and Paul; daughters, Diane Kozlak, Mary Myers Lynn Satt and Carol Braun; 12 grandchildren and one great-grandson. Visitation will be from 5 to 8 p.m. Thursday at Kozlak-Radulovich Chapel and at 9 a.m. Friday at Church of the Holy Cross, where services will be at 10 a.m.

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