

Who could ever forget what it's like to be 17 and with wheels — especially candy-apple red wheels — E6



# VALLEY Life

SUNDAY, AUGUST 28, 2005 • SECTION E

## Coming up

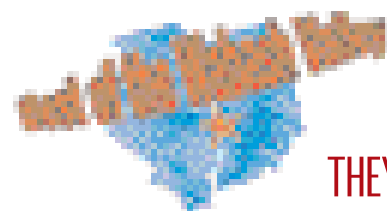
Best-selling author and investigative reporter Bob Woodward kicks off the Indiana State University 2005-2006 University Speakers Series. — E4

## Leisurely

You can take a reasonably short trip and cool off all at the same time by journeying to Michigan's Upper Peninsula which boasts more than 300 waterfalls — E3



# Where friends become family



## THEY SAID IT

"We drive over for fish! Best fish ever."  
— Vera Nicholson, Bloomington

"Sizable portions. Everything's good."  
— Iris Bass, Center Point

"Everyone is treated like family. You feel like you're at home."  
— Angie Michael, Clay City

"You feel like family, always welcome, great food, reasonable price. Meet friends, never rushed!"  
— Roger Hofmann, Brazil

"The people are very friendly and the homemade pies are out of this world."  
— Carolyn Nash, Terre Haute

"The food is great."  
— Everett and Donna Ellis of Sebring, Fla.

Best of the Wabash Valley: Bob and Angie Freeman (at top) took top honors in the Best of the Wabash Valley Best Corner Cafe vote with their restaurant, Bob & Angie's Hometown Cafe. Above, Angie serves up lunch to the crowd in the Clay City eatery. At right, cook Joni Dyer prepares burgers for the afternoon rush.

Tribune-Star/Bob Poynter

## Bob and Angie's uses friendly persona to draw crowds

BY SHEILA K. TER MEER □ TRIBUNE-STAR  
Clay City

A brass bell jingles and Erin Rene Freeman runs to help an elderly woman through the door of Bob & Angie's Hometown Cafe.

Ruby Michael is no stranger to Bob and Angie's 5-year-old little helper.

A customer for 20 years, Ruby has watched "Erin ne" grow up into the kindergartner she is today.

Another regular, Tim Rood, comes in two or three times a day. After 10 years, he, too, is considered family at his home away from home at 711 Main St. in the heart of downtown

Clay City.

During the cafe's formative years, other customers bounced baby Erin on their knee while her parents nurtured their dream into the successful restaurant and catering business it is today.

The cafe's friendly persona is what draws customers from Brazil, Bloomington and Terre Haute to this small Clay County town surrounded by fields tightly laced together by two-lane ribbons of highway.

"Where friends become family," Rick Voll of Terre Haute noted, quoting Bob and Angie's sign on his entry form



nominating it "Best Corner Cafe" in the Wabash Valley.

Other satisfied customers named the cafe for its salad bar, Friday night all-you-can-eat fish buffet and the Big Freeman, a 3/4-pound bacon cheeseburger with a special homemade sauce.

The cafe also specializes in daily lunch buffets, dinner specials, pizza, fresh breaded tenderloin and fresh-cut Mayberry fries, added when the town gained notoriety as "The Mayberry of the Midwest."

Bob bought the cafe in 1985 when he was 21 and it was the Firehouse Restaurant. In 1989, the former Clay City "Eel" married hometown girl Angie Dryer, thus the name change to Bob & Angie's Hometown Cafe. (It was the sign makers idea to keep "Restaurant" on the new sign.)

Six days a week, Angie is the grill cook and Bob bakes the homemade pies. (He also makes the pie crust.) Angie's sister and several teenagers, including their exchange student Edward, help cook and

wait tables.

Eighteen months ago, Bob and Angie turned the building next door into a banquet room to give their overflowing buffet crowd "a place to sit down and visit and not be rushed," Bob said. News quickly spread that the new dining room was open for catered school reunions, family homecomings, holiday parties and business luncheons.

Bob and Angie occasionally open the banquet room on a Monday, their day off, to offer the townsfolk the same fine dining experience they can find in the big cities, without the long drive, the traffic, the higher price at the gas pump.

Angie's elegant sit-down dinners served on fine china, with crystal stemware, soft music, candles and white linens adds "a little bit of flair to Clay City," Bob said.

Customers are impressed that they can get that in such a small town.

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## WHAT TO KNOW

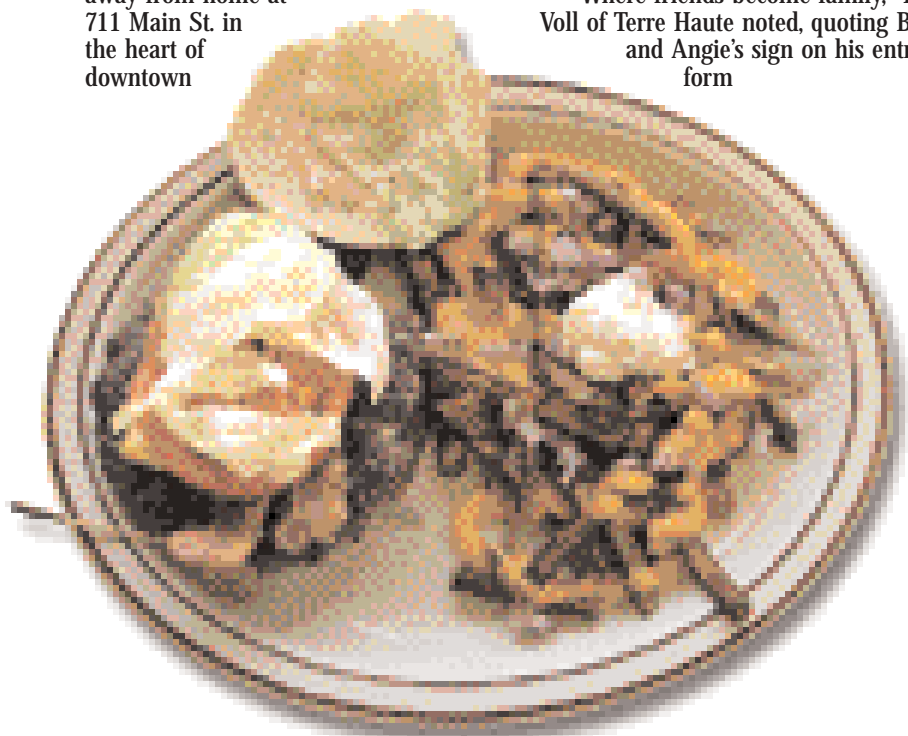
■ Owners: Bob and Angie Freeman

■ Where: 711 Main St., Clay City

■ Hours: 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Tuesday-Saturday; 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. Sunday; closed Monday

■ Contact: afreeman@ccrtc.com or (812) 939-3909

■ The Freemans' Web site will be updated soon. Visit them at claycity.net/hometowncafe



◀ Come and get it: The Big Freeman burger and Mayberry fries are hot items at Bob and Angie's Hometown Cafe in Clay City. The Big Freeman is a 3/4-pound cheeseburger with bacon strips, lettuce, tomato and homemade sauce.

Tribune-Star/Bob Poynter

## Inside

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■ Looking for a pet without the responsibilities? Try a "Nintendog." — E11

## News tip? Story idea?

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EAT GOOD FOOD.

Baesler's

