

Soap Opera A Wash In New Ideas Washateria Provides Its Customers With 'Touches Of Home'



Photograph by Marvin

Grand Opening Celebration At The Soap Opera including: (L-R) Ray Morris-L.V. Chamber Of Commerce-Marketing, Mark Smith-L.V. Chamber Of Commerce-Executive Vice President, Al Stevens, S.D. "Trip" Camper III, Roger Hansen, Dick Stevens, Jeanne Salovich, Chuck Linam, Alicia Berger-Miss Nevada-U.S.A., Dick Carson, Rowdy Gaines-Olympic Swimming Star & Jerry Sandstrom.

It doesn't look like a washateria, but it is.

It's called the Soap Opera, and it's at 3547 Maryland Parkway in Las Vegas. Dick Stevens and Dick Carson, the owners from Las Vegas, say it is so different that "people can't believe it."

It's well lighted and heated and has, among other features, carpeting, sofas, tables and a lamp, color television and a stereo, artwork and plants and a blue, white and earth tone color scheme that adds to the brightness and cheerfulness.

The washateria, which opened late last month and is part of a Louisiana franchise, is in a building with 3,000 square feet of space, about half of which is taken up by the washers and dryers and the other with what Dick Stevens calls a lounge area that includes video games and snack machines.

Customers said they didn't like to stay at some of the other washaterias they had used before, but they didn't mind staying at the Soap Opera. "I sat on the sofa and read" while her clothes were in the washer and dryer, a customer, who didn't want her name used, said, adding that other

washaterias she had used were "dirty and creepy."

Dick Stevens, who moved to Las Vegas in the spring of 1985, was looking for another business venture. After being in business in Shreveport, Louisiana for the past eight years, prior to coming to Las Vegas, was very familiar with the Soap Opera concept. He decided that Las Vegas was ideal for the Soap Opera system.

Dick Stevens and his business partner Mr. Dick Carson of Las Vegas culminated their investment efforts in the opening of their initial Soap Opera store which is to be followed by the opening of a chain of additional stores throughout Nevada.

THOUGHT LAS VEGAS 'DESERVED BETTER'

"I thought Las Vegas deserved better, that it deserved a nice place to do its laundry," Stevens said.

He said many of the other washaterias he's seen are cold and dirty and have cracked, plastic furniture, run-down machines and no security. (The Soap Opera is open 24 hours every day, and

an attendant is on duty all the time; a security man is there between 6 p.m. and 10 p.m. every day.)

S. D. (Trip) Camper III, 32, of Shreveport, a native of Mississippi who founded the franchise company, Soap Opera, Inc., said his family has operated washaterias for more than 30 years, but he admitted that theirs, too, had their drawbacks and that he didn't like to go into them.

'A BETTER WAY'

"I made a divorce from that type of business into our way of business," he said, adding that he decided there was "a better way" to provide the service "and a need."

Camper took "a little from a lot" of innovations he saw in other modern washaterias and came up with his own concept, one he says is less expensive and more efficient than washing at home and one that inspires people "to break the home wash habit."

There are six franchise washaterias in Shreveport and six more are being built there,

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