

HAPPY DAYS ARE HERE AGAIN

By Margo Williams

Photos by Micab Parker

Decorating styles have taken a nostalgic look, and the fabulous fifties look is rocking and rolling the decorating scene! Various rooms of the home can travel back to *Happy Days* from retro style kitchens to recreation rooms or game rooms. Where can you go in the Valley to get this classic look for your home?

Look no further than Bars and Booths located in historic downtown Charles Town, West Virginia. This company does it all! From custom designed bars, tables, chairs, diner booths and other furniture to restored vintage jukeboxes, soda machines, kiddie rides, and other unique vintage coin-op items.

G.W. and Barbara Smith began their enterprise over 17 years ago after being inspired by surroundings in a restaurant that transported them on a "back in time vacation." They started a transformation on their back porch in their home in Great Falls, VA. After purchasing an old jukebox, they located an old Coke machine, and then found some used diner booths. (The used booths were quickly replaced with new ones once they discovered they couldn't get rid of that old "bar room smell!") This room quickly became the most popular room in the house. It seemed everyone congregated on the back porch and discovered that by putting records on the jukebox from their guests' teenage years, even the most reserved guests seemed to relax and enjoy themselves!

This is how one couple's collection turned into a passion and a whole second career! As friends asked them to help find them items, they set up a booth at Old Market Antiques in Falls Church, VA... this one booth turned into the whole back of the building with-

in six months, and this hobby was taking on a life of its own.

They relocated to Charles Town ten years ago. Unable to find suppliers who could provide consistent quality restored Coke machines, they purchased a building and opened a restorations division, BITW. This division has become known as a premier restorer of coin-op items. In fact, customers ship machines from as far away as Spain, to take advantage of BITW's premier services.

About nine years ago, a very good customer, Roberta Price, insisted that G.W. find her a bar. He took the order for a bar he did not have figuring he could get a local cabinet shop to build it for him...this did not work out, and Dad's





list of clients for Bars and Booths. Why? You either remember the feeling of comfort in the 1950s era, or you have seen it on T.V. in shows like *Andy Griffith* or *I Love Lucy*. Families were together, crime was not an issue, there was no talk of wars, and the general consensus was a feeling of financial security. It was not a rush-rush society, and times seemed to be generally happy. As a country we embrace the things that bring comfort... kind of like apple pie à la mode!

How can you incorporate this 1950s retro look into your home?

Visit their Website www.BARSandBOOTHs.com to see what other customers from around the world have done. Then give them a call or stop by their showroom and one of their experienced and talented associates, headed by Becky Jones, will be happy to assist you! As the owners state, "We guarantee that we will help create a room where you can take a 'Back in Time Vacation' anytime you choose, and you will not have to wait in lines at the airport."



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Furniture was started by Gene Smith (G.W.'s brother). After building "Roberta's Bar," other bar orders came in and this part of the business has really grown. Today they can custom design and build just about anything you can dream up! Through Bars and Booths, Dad's Furniture designs can now be seen in bars, homes and restaurants all over North America and Europe!

Six years ago they moved into the building at 200 West Washington Street and have remodeled it to serve as an office and showroom. Although about 95% of their business comes from their websites, a lot of their customers travel to Charles Town to see, touch and feel the items in person. Last month they had visitors from Japan, France, and the U.K., not to mention Canada, Boston, New York, North Carolina and other parts of the U.S. Everyone is into this not-so-new decorating craze. Bars and Booths now has customers in every state of the union plus twenty-two foreign countries. Even celebrities, band members, sports heroes and actors are on the



We'll show you how:

You may start small in one section of a room; let's say a kitchen. Add a diner feel with a booth and retro boomerang laminate table in your choice of several colors.

Add the accessories, a Kit-Kat clock and a vintage wall phone. Don't forget the bright canisters! Colors such as aqua, pink and red were coming into vogue.

Add wall accessories, a neon sign, an advertising tin, and a reproduction 1950s era motion picture poster.

Small countertop appliances were very popular in the era; add a reproduction vintage blender, toaster or metal milkshake maker. All of these items can be found at the Bars and Booths showroom or on their website.

For the family room or recreation room, you can go



all out fabulous 50s with a restored vintage or a reproduction jukebox. Add a couple of pinball machines, maybe a slot machine (a great way to save your quarters), and you are well on your way to a game room to be loved by kids and adults alike! For the adult side, add a bar complete with stools reminiscent of the old soda fountains found in neighborhood drug stores. You may purchase the bars in many sizes from super-small to super-sized. Add a credenza that mimics the back of a soda fountain complete with mirrors and one side of your room is back in time! You may add a car couch or diner booth. Both will provide great seating & nostalgia!

Add period accessories such as the neon signs, motion picture posters, and the drink mixer. Of course, no game room would be complete without the vintage

Coke machine! According to shop owner, Barbara Smith, a famous actress recently purchased a home in California that had one of their restored Coke chests. She insisted that it convey as a part of the real estate deal. (This was a \$12,000,000 home.) They are now restoring another chest for the seller!

This new retro style decorating is a fun addition to any room. Start small if the budget doesn't allow for everything at one time and continue adding. Imagine the fun your family and friends will have traveling back in time!

Bars and Booths is located on West Washington Street in Charles Town, West Virginia. Visit their website at www.barsandbooths.com.

