

Under New Ownership, Now Rents Tuxedos Also Century Cleaners Express Is More Than A Cleaners

by Julia Glenn Carter

The notion that some degree of quality must be sacrificed in order to enjoy convenience and a wide range of products and services is readily accepted by many people. But that is not always the case. Area residents will be pleased to know that Tom and Deborah Kitchin, the new owners of Century Cleaners Express at 760 Commerce Drive, dispel that idea. Not only does the Kitchin's business provide a range of services over and above your typical cleaners, they offer clients convenience, speed, and quality.

Located adjacent to the DeKalb Chamber of Commerce--where years ago the reputable Bruns Cleaners was located, and most recently McCreary's --Century Cleaners Express offers a diverse array of services with the intent of making customers' life just a little less hectic.

Fast Drive Thru Service

In a hurry? No problem. Dropping off your laundry takes less time than stopping at many traffic lights when you use Century Cleaners' drive through window. Cleaning services are offered on everything from your usual suit, to leather, fur, rugs, and draperies, to your delicate wedding gown. Did you find a moth hole in your favorite wool skirt? No need to fret; just bring it with you. Century Cleaners does expert reweaving. And while you're there, you can leave your shoes to be repaired, also.

Brides, be sure to keep Century Cleaners in mind after the big day. Staff will take special care with your gown when it is cleaned and preserved. For you ladies who are planning to use an heirloom gown for your wedding, Century will gently restore it to its original beauty.

Kitchin uses state-of-the-art equipment in his business, and only the finest of cleaning products. "For most people today," said Kitchin, "clothing is an investment. We use only the highest quality dry

cleaning and laundry products available, and we have on our staff highly qualified personnel who know how to take care of the many fabrics on the market today."

Experience makes the difference at Century Cleaners. Kitchin, and his wife Deborah, have been in the dry cleaning business for 18 years, and now own four stores in the area. "The dry cleaning business has changed dramatically since I started," said Kitchin, "and it's all for the better. We've kept up with the technology, and are using state-of-the-art equipment meeting OSHA's requirements in California, which are the strictest in the nation."

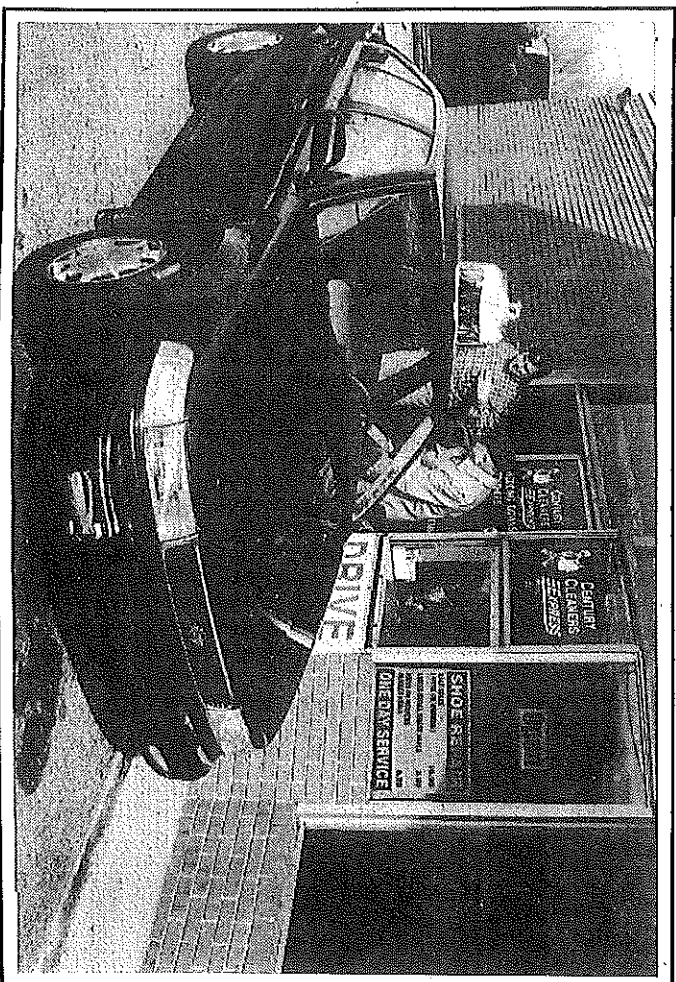
Expert Alterations

In addition to cleaning and shoe repair, Century Cleaners also offers expert alteration services. Staff tailor Denise Stewart has over 21 years of experience, and according to Kitchin is a tremendous asset to the business.

"Denise offers a full range of services," said Kitchin, "from simple hemming to expert wedding gown alterations. She welcomes walk-ins for simple tasks, and will arrange appointments for more extensive tailoring needs."

Tuxedo Sales & Rentals

The most unusual part of Kitchin's business is his will certainly be of interest to area residents is his



Century Cleaners Express offers convenient drive thru service.

tuxedo service. With prom and wedding season rapidly approaching, residents will want to take advantage of the store's excellent selection and great prices. "I was surprised that a community this size did not have a tuxedo business," said Kitchin. Carrying designs from Perry Ellis, Christian Dior, Henry Grethel, Oscar de la Renta, Rauph Lauren, Lord West, After Six, and other major designers, customers can either rent or buy quality tuxedos. In addition to fitting, altering, and ordering tuxedos (with much greater convenience and personal attention than the mall stores) the staff at Century will help customers select accessories. Individuals or entire wedding parties are welcome. "We can help you look like a million on any budget!" Kitchin promised.

So come by, or drive thru, Century Cleaners Express. You'll appreciate the quality and convenience of all the services, offered Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., and Saturday from 8:30 to 5 p.m. Call 378-5146 for more information.

A Decatur Tradition Since 1947

Marguerite Smith's Cleaners

Much has changed in Decatur since Marguerite Smith's Cleaners opened their doors for business in 1947. But customers will tell you that the same standards of quality and personalized customer service that made Marguerite Smith's a Decatur tradition have remained the same for almost five decades.

Marguerite Smith began her own cleaners on West Ponce de Leon Avenue after apprenticing with her aunt who owned the old Wall's Cleaners in Decatur. In 1978, Marguerite's son, Cozart, began running the business and is the current owner and operator. Cozart immediately began building upon his family's tradition of excellence by updating the equipment and systems, adding specialized services, and increasing the size of the staff.

Marguerite Smith's takes pride in having treated everything from such rare treasures as 100 year-old curtains from the plantation at Stone Mountain, a 400 year-old Dutch tapestry, and 19th-Century quilts, to personal treasures such as wedding gowns passed down from mother to daughter (cleaned and preserved both times at Marguerite Smith's), christening gowns worn by many generations, and even favorite teddy bears needing a bath!

Yet the mainstay at Marguerite Smith's and what keeps loyal customers coming back is the day-to-day quality of regular garment care and laundry service. "Clothes are very important to people," Cozart said. "At their job, clothes help them convey image and confidence; at home, a favorite holiday dress may hold special memories. And certainly the special garments entrusted to us such as wedding gowns are very sentimental. We have to be mindful of this with each piece we handle."

Part of this attention to quality is the well-known, old-fashioned customer service at Marguerite Smith's. Another less well-known part of the emphasis on quality is the actual cleaning process using a "perc-free" machine. This process is not only kinder to the environment, but the dry-cleaning fluid costs \$60 per gallon, compared to the \$5 per gallon fluid used at most cleaners. The more expensive fluid is of a higher quality that is gentler on garments, he said.

Additionally, Marguerite Smith's has a top-notch, well-trained staff with years of experience in specialized areas of dry cleaning and laundry production. "We are always amazed," Cozart said, "by people who open dry cleaning businesses with no experience in dry cleaning! It is a very specialized and complex industry. You have to know the science of textiles and chemicals for spotting, the interactions of heat and fabric for pressing, and so much more."

Above all, the staff of Marguerite Smith's knows their business and shares their dedication to excellence with every customer. Decaturites certainly know the difference and come back to Marguerite Smith's year after year.