

If These Walls Could Talk: Ely's Restaurant

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Richard Shapley came by his knowledge of the restaurant business naturally. His uncle, Mark Shapley, opened [Shapley's Restaurant](#) in Ridgeland. That restaurant was the inspiration for Ely's, and in opening his own restaurant, Richard channeled his family's heritage in a most creative way.

[Ely's Restaurant](#), located at 115 West Jackson Street in Ridgeland, opened in February 2008. Located on the upper level of a corner building, the elegantly appointed dining rooms overlook the railroad track and Jackson Street. Patrons ride up the outside elevator and step out to the door of Ely's Restaurant.

Inside, the sleek, modern interiors give a feeling of cosmopolitan sophistication. "I wanted people to feel like they were somewhere other than the Jackson area. "My goal is for people to feel like they are in a big city, but with a more comfortable atmosphere. I wanted a clean, sleek interior so that guys could come in and eat a big steak, but the ladies would feel like they were in an elegant place."



Ely's was named after Richard's grandfather, Elias Shapley. "His friends called him Ely." On the walls are vintage photos of Elias Shapley as a young man. One photo, in particular, shows Elias looking particularly dapper. "I love this photo," said Richard. "Just look how much swagger he has." There are other vintage family photos, including photos of the Tuminello family. "That's my dad's side of the family, in Clarksdale." There is a photo of Richard's mother as a young woman, fishing pole in hand, and a photo of his great uncle with a Shapley grocery truck in Leland, Mississippi. "I called my grandmother and asked her for some of the old family photos, and she couldn't imagine what I'd do with them. I think she was pretty tickled when she first saw them in the restaurant."

The photos are all consistent in size, with sepia toned tinting. Framed in sleek aluminum frames, the juxtaposition of the old photos in the sleek restaurant is very visually interesting, and it gives a message to the customers that family is important to the Shapleys. "I like the photos because it gives a glimpse of who these people were. It really depicts who our family was, and I wanted to let people in on it."



Richard had a strong idea of how he wanted his restaurant to look. "I owe so much of the look of the restaurant to my friend, Bridget Tisdale, who owns [Easely Amused](#). She's a great designer and if you see something you like in here, chances are, she had something to do with it. If there's something you don't like, it's probably something I insisted on having!"

Ely's bar area is relatively small, yet very comfortable and accommodating. The bar and series of tables set along a banquet are topped with shiny stainless steel. A television behind the bar provides up-to-date sports information, but without blaring it in your face—it's simply there if you want to watch it. Simple wooden bar stools set atop steel frames line up neatly at the bar.



The dining room areas are relaxing and comfortable, but with an edge of elegance that lets diners know they are in for a treat. “I like the idea of people feeling satisfied both with their food, and visually as well,” Richard said. Unlike some big-city restaurants that serve tiny portions of over-thought selections, a meal at Ely’s will leave you full and happy. “We still believe in solid center-of-the-plate items, be it a steak or nice piece of fish. We don’t serve tiny portions, because we want our guests to leave feeling satisfied.”



Richard said the restaurant has evolved over the past four and a half years. “The look is the same, and I’m proud of that. We’ve come a long way, polishing the rough spots, and we are pleased with what we are doing here.”

Ely’s is open Monday through Saturday, from 4 PM until... To see the restaurant’s menu and to learn more, visit their website at www.elysrestaurant.com.



Ely’s Restaurant & Bar

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