



Gérard Thibault, 1917-2003

Gérard Thibault, the seventh of ten children, was born on April 21, 1917, in Armagh, Bellechasse County, Quebec. After completing his secondary studies at the Laval Normal School and graduating in 1934, he was offered a teaching position at \$500 a year, but he declined. He preferred the restaurant business, a field he explored during his summers, and which could earn him four times as much as teaching. On July 10, 1938, Gérard Thibault purchased a small, eighteen-seat restaurant, Chez Gérard.

His success was such that in less than a year, he had to increase his restaurant's capacity sevenfold. Thanks to the growing reputation of his cuisine, he acquired L'AIGLE CANADIEN, renamed CHEZ PAUL, and opened a new restaurant in the Saint-Roch district, CHEZ ÉMILE, in 1942. In 1951, he conquered the Upper Town by opening Quebec City's largest restaurant, À LA PORTE SAINT-JEAN, with a capacity of 350 people. Starting in 1948, Gérard Thibault began his career as a promoter, aided by chance and by Charles Trenet. Having experienced the atmosphere of CHEZ GÉRARD, Trenet offered to perform there for a pittance. He spent two months there, attracting all of Quebec's elite and cementing CHEZ GÉRARD's reputation.

In 1958, Gérard Thibault opened LA PAGE BLANCHE to showcase up-and-coming stars, and in 1960, he inaugurated LA BOÎTE AUX CHANSONS, which introduced Gilles Vigneault, Pauline Julien, Sylvain Lelièvre, and many other Quebec singer-songwriters. In 1965, he finally opened Quebec City's first discotheques. The ever-increasing fees, competition from large, subsidized venues, and the omnipresence of television gradually diminished Gérard Thibault's role in the entertainment industry. The fire that destroyed the cabaret CHEZ GÉRARD on February 1, 1978, definitively ended his career as an impresario and restaurateur. From then on, he used his retirement to organize his memories and papers, and in 1988, he published CHEZ GÉRARD. THE SMALL STAGE OF BIG STARS, a veritable goldmine of information on the history of entertainment in Quebec.

He became a member of the Academy of Great Quebecers in the field of cultural affairs in 1993 and a Knight of the National Order of Quebec in 1996. Gérard Thibault passed away at the age of 86 on September 3, 2003, at Saint-François d'Assise Hospital in Quebec, following a long illness.

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