

Mary D'Alton

She has been called “Magnificent Mary” and it is for her infectious laughter as much as it is for her role in helping to put Waterloo on the hospitality map.



When she was masterminding the \$3.1 million renovation of the hotel kitchen and new restaurant at the Waterloo Inn and Conference Centre, she stopped at nothing. Hiring Chef Garry Wiffin who trained at the *Savoy* in London, England, her goal for the new *Rushes* restaurant was simple:

“Our vision was clear from the outset,” she said. “We wanted a spectacular four-star dining establishment that would knock peoples’ socks off. Great food. Great atmosphere. And, even more important we wanted it to be a fun place to eat and enjoy a night out.”

Within a few years, *Rushes* was recognized alongside some of the finest restaurants in the world by the Wine Spectator, an international wine authority. Upon receiving the news, D’Alton said, “We were thrilled at the news . . . Winning an Award of Excellence is just what we had hoped for, an international recognition of our dedication to wine.”

As president of the Waterloo Inn and Conference Centre, D’Alton was behind more than \$13 million in renovations to the independently operated hotel. For many years, the hotel was the centre of a flurry of activity in which D’Alton thrived. “I laugh during the chaos,” she said once.

Before joining the Waterloo Inn in 1983, D’Alton had worked at several large Toronto hotels. She immigrated to Canada from Ireland as a young child with her three siblings and parents. Her gift for hospitality was noticed at a young age when she attended the University of Toronto’s St. Michael’s College and became a residence don. “Her Irish charm and contagious laugh” formed the foundation for her future as a professional “people person.”

Her love of people extends beyond her career into the community where she has devoted countless volunteer hours to agencies. In 1992 she received the prestigious Governor General’s Medal for Community Service and in 1998 she was named Kitchener-Waterloo Citizen of the Year. Wilfrid Laurier University, the K-W YMCA Foundation, the K-W Art Gallery and the St. Mary’s General Hospital Board are just some of the institutions to which she has devoted her time.

The same sense of adventure that propelled her forward during the chaos of renovations at the Waterloo Inn and Conference Centre, distinguishes the way she chooses to spend her off hours. D’Alton loves downhill skiing, has sailed around the British Virgin Islands and has traveled to exotic destinations like China, Russia and Thailand.

However, during the hurly-burly of her career and community service, Mary D'Alton relies on a time-honoured form of stress relief. "She believes firmly in the healing, stress-relieving power of laughter."

Photo courtesy of the Waterloo Inn and Conference Centre