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# Owner closes retro diner after one year



The Fountain on 66 at 1101 S. Ninth St. is seen on July 6, in Springfield. Tom Hart, the owner, announced the closure of the '50s theme diner in a social media post on July 6. THOMAS J. TURNEY/THE STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

**'I hope I can find someone to take it over and give it the love and life it deserves'**

**Claire Grant**

Springfield State Journal-Register  
USA TODAY NETWORK

SPRINGFIELD – Springfield's freshest retro diner is closing their doors to locals and tourists, just ahead of the Illinois State Fair.

On July 6, owner of The Fountain on 66 Tom Hart posted to social media with regret he had to inform the public of the closing of his flagship diner.

"After many sleepless nights and restless days, I have made the tough decision to close the Fountain on 66," Hart wrote to social media. "I hope I can find someone to take it over and give it the love and life it deserves."

Hart cited needing to focus funds on his primary business, as well as personal reasons behind the closure.

The business had prepared to be part



The Sunrise Donut sign, one of Springfield's iconic Route 66 landmarks, was officially relit during a ceremony held at Ace Sign Company Museum. The city paid \$22,000 at auction in 2018 to purchase the sign. BRENDEN MOORE/STATE JOURNAL-REGISTER

of the centennial celebration of the Mother Road Route 66 with Hart's first and primary business the Stadium Smokehouse Bar and Grill at 2300 N. Peoria Road.

The retro diner was only open for just over a year, serving up sugary fountain shakes and an all-American food fair at

1101 S. Ninth St. in a '50s style diner.

Serving with a 1941 soda fountain purchased in northern Illinois, fans of Route 66 could walk inside the diner and step back in time while enjoying a bite to eat.

While the retro space was artificially created by Hart, the building itself has a historic influence on Springfield residents who mostly know it as the Sunrise Donuts shop lasting from 1947 to 1998.

Following the closure of Sunrise Donuts, the sign stayed up but a myriad of fresh entrepreneurs have tried their luck over the years at the space including Mexican restaurants to the Route 66 Sunrise Donut Coffee Bar.

The Sunrise Donuts sign is still a classic piece of route history tourists can find at the Ace Sign Co. museum at 2540 S. First St., and Route 66 Motorheads Bar & Grill.

Claire Grant writes about business, growth and development and other news topics for The State Journal-Register. She can be reached at CLGrant@usatodayco.com; and on X (Formerly known as Twitter): @Claire\_Granted

## ANALYSIS



People attend a funeral procession in Qom, Iran, on July 7 for Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who was killed on Feb. 28 in Israeli and U.S. air strikes. PROVIDED BY OFFICE OF THE IRANIAN SUPREME LEADER/WANA VIA REUTERS

# Leader's funeral shows Iran's defiance

Experts: Tehran gains power in new status quo

**Samia Nakhoul**  
REUTERS

BEIRUT – The funeral of late Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was more than a national farewell. The sea of mourners in Tehran sent a message to the United States and Israel that their attempt to break the Islamic Republic had failed.

Rather than looking weakened by the war that began with U.S. and Israeli strikes on Feb. 28, Iran presented itself as defiant, unified and determined to shape what comes next.

That defiance and ability to survive now underpins Iran's negotiating strategy, regional officials, diplomats and analysts say, depicting the funeral as the moment Tehran sought to transform endurance into leverage.

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# Local man's passionate pursuit of Bigfoot came 'with integrity'

**Steven Spearie**

Springfield State Journal-Register  
USA TODAY NETWORK

SPRINGFIELD — Evan Courtney said his father, Stan Courtney, was one of the foremost independent Bigfoot, or Sasquatch, audio researchers in North America.

He just didn't do a lot of arm-twisting about the subject.

"If you asked him (whether) Bigfoot existed, he would say that he wanted people to look at the evidence and come up with their own conclusions," Evan Courtney, the executive pastor of The Fields Church in Mattoon told The State Journal-Register recently. "His life wasn't about convincing people. It was about documenting what he experienced and inviting people into a discussion about it."

Stan Courtney, whose day job was as

a perfusionist (a specialized medical professional who manages the heart-lung machine during open heart surgery) at HSHS St. John's Hospital for more than three decades before retiring in 2007, died June 18.

He was 78 and had been in hospice care in Mattoon, where moved to from near Lake Gillespie.

A memorial service was held in Piasa July 3.

He and his wife, Vickie, raised their three sons just north of Pawnee.

Evan Courtney said his father took a scientific approach to Bigfoot. He had a degree in biology from the University of Oregon and fought fires for the U.S. Forest Service in Alaska for three years.

"Stan was never known for making sensational claims," his son said. "His passion was really collecting data and

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Stan Courtney, photographed at his home on Lake Gillespie, was one of the foremost independent Bigfoot audio researchers in the U.S. He was featured on Animal Planet's "Finding Bigfoot." Courtney passed away June 18. PROVIDED BY EVAN COURTNEY

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