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Former Hungry Peddler restaurant set for auction

The auction starts Thursday at 10 a.m. Everything in the building, including wall décor, a phone booth and an antique bar, will be sold and the structure will be razed.

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The former Hungry Peddler, the last of legendary Val Gene Restaurant Group's eateries, goes up for auction Thursday.

Everything inside from the tables and wall decor to the kitchen equipment will be sold and the building at 4500 W Reno is set to be razed. Restaurateur and owner Jim Vallion, the "Val" in Val Gene, said he's feeling nostalgic about this week's auction.

"I've been in the food business basically all my life. And that's the last hurrah," said Vallion, 81.

The location was leased and renamed Shorty Small's, which is the name on the building now.

Vallion has been involved in more than 30 restaurants in Oklahoma City including Herman's Seafood, Texanna Reds, the Eagle's Nest, Harry Bear's, Checkers and Pepperoni Grill (the only one still open, under different ownership).

The Hungry Peddler was the original fast casual restaurant in Oklahoma City, said Peter Holloway, who started as a waiter there when it opened in 1973 and became part owner of the Val Gene Restaurant Group. He now owns Cafe 501 and Boulevard Steakhouse.

Before the Hungry Peddler, Oklahoma City diners essentially had two options: Cafeteria-style food or fine dining, he said.

The Hungry Peddler was a blend of both, with its large salad bar and live entertainment on weekends.

The sale of Shorty Small's marks the end of Vallion's restaurant career, but he says he'll continue at Trochta's Flowers & Greenhouses, which he bought in 1980.



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