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NEWTON IN THE KITCHEN

By [Wendy Schapiro](#) [Email the author](#) May 6, 2011

[Business](#)

Honestly Abe

Ninety year old Abe Pilsmaker is a fixture at the New England Soup Factory. Today we celebrate his birthday, his tireless work ethic and his love of great soup.

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WILLIAM RAVEIS REAL ESTATE

About this column: Local resident and foodie Wendy Schapiro chats with Newton chefs and restaurateur about their restaurant, their cooking, their passions and best of all, what makes them hungry.

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Want to send Abe a birthday greeting? Post it here, and he will see it! [Tell us in the comments.](#)



Four score and ten years ago today, Abe Pilsmaker came into this world. A proud father, grandfather and soon-to-be great-grandfather, he is the face behind the register at [The New England Soup Factory](#).

"I opened up this store 13 years ago," states Pilsmaker. "I was 77, and I just applied for a job."

At age 10, Pilsmaker began his professional life delivering newspapers in his hometown of Toronto.

"Things were very rough for us then," he states. "My mother had been widowed and anything we could scrape together, we survived on."

Pilsmaker stayed in Toronto until age 19 then joined the service. When he got out, he met his first wife and they decided to move to the Boston area to be closer to their families.

For most of the next 50 years, Pilsmaker worked in the clothing industry. He started out at a "big company that made clothes for the Army – raincoats for men, not women," he recalls, correcting me when I state that women weren't in the Army at that point ("Don't forget the WACs!" (Women's Army Corps) he admonishes).

When that company closed up shop, Pilsner went back to Toronto to help one of his brothers open a Jewish deli.

"It was a great time to be there," Pilsner says. "But I couldn't stay more than five years. I missed my family, I missed my children." So he returned to the Boston area.

He then went to work for Hickory Dickory, a children's clothing manufacturer, but the sending of work overseas and pressure from the union forced the company to close after 25 years. At the age of 70 1/2, Pilsmaker decided to retire. But that "didn't stick for long."

When he saw that Marjorie and Paul Druker were building on the success of the Brookline New England Soup Factory by opening a Newton branch, Pilsmaker decided to apply for a job.

“Paul didn’t want to hire me,” laughs Pilsmaker, with affection. “He thought I was a little too old! But somebody convinced him that with my resume, I could help out. I’m a company man- the company comes first. So they hired me.”

According to [Marjorie Druker](#), that decision has paid off and then some. “He is an incredible person who shows up for work every day,” writes Druker in an email. “He is such an inspiration. He is funny and just a sweet man.”

The feeling is very mutual, though Pilsmaker’s own chicken soup might be competition for Druker’s. This is his favorite thing to cook when he’s not at work, and he states that there is a secret to making really good homemade chicken soup.

“You need a good base,” Pilsmaker says. “It comes in a small jar, the chicken stock. I chop up all of my vegetables, and I sauté them to get the best flavor. Then I add the stock, water, put in chicken breasts and let it cook for almost two hours. And legs! You can put chicken legs in. They’re cleaner than the breasts and they give it color and flavor.”

Pilsmaker has no plans to stop working or cooking any time soon.

“I have to get up in the morning. Most of my friends have gone by, because they retired. If you don’t use it, you lose it!”

Happy birthday, Abe- and many, many more!

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Evie Lieb

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6:42 pm on Friday, May 6, 2011

Mazal tov, Abe! Wishing you many more happy birthdays! We look forward to seeing you again next month when we come to visit our daughter, Wendy the columnist, and to attend our granddaughter’s graduation from Needham High School. Evie and Larry Lieb

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Marcia Canale

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8:25 pm on Monday, May 9, 2011

Happy Birthday Mr. Pilsmaker....Keep on cooking....

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