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Second Section

Gas, service, restaurant, hotel open 24 hours a day

This truck stop has EVERYthing!



FIFTH WHEEL TRUCK STOP includes Country Kitchen Restaurant, Truckers' Store, Hotel and Take-Out Shop. Since it opened in November 1972 it has serviced the travelling public 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

COUNTRY KITCHEN chefs Steve Csabonas and Bob Beauchamp prepare food as it is ordered. Only daily specials are prepared ahead of time.



CASHIERS Elfi Schrader and Kim Mauro attend to customer at the Truckers' Store where anything from cowboy boots to razor blades to walkie-talkies can be purchased.

As you enter the restaurant a single wooden sign printed in gold letters may catch your eye. Positioned almost directly across from the cash register, it reads:

"Country Kitchen is primarily a truck stop and since drivers are on a tight schedule you'll appreciate we must attend to them first. — The Managers."

Two and a half years have passed since the doors to the Fifth Wheel—Country Kitchen—restaurant, motel, truckers' store and gas bar—opened to the public for the first time. Situated on Highway 25 beside Highway 401 in Milton, the Fifth Wheel has operated 24 hours a day, seven days a week since November, 1972.

Regulars
"We've been coming here since the day it opened," said truck drivers Murray Poley and Leo Crome whose route takes them from their home

in Chatham to Parry Sound to Windsor. "We stop in any time we go by, usually three four times a week. We stop at other places along the way too, but we always eat our dinner here."

Why? "We like the good food and the hospitality," they echoed.

In the booth behind them Percy Hersey, who drives daily from Oshawa to Sarnia said, "I've been coming in here once or twice a day ever since it opened—usually for breakfast and lunch. The reason?—It's an easy place to get to from the highway. Some of the waitresses aren't bad either."

Others interviewed in the booths marked "Reserved for Professional Drivers" said they appreciate the fact that breakfasts are served 24 hours a day. Many commented they liked the restaurant because it was clean and had good food, fast service and friendly waitresses.

Explains complex

Claude Warren and Lewis Loveridge are the owners of the truck stop, but Jim Powers is the man who owns the Country Kitchen Restaurant. In addition to the restaurant, Mr. Powers' job includes management of a take-out shop, and until recently he also took care of things at the hotel.

Mr. Powers who is a graduate of Ryerson's Hotel management course, explained a bit about the operation of the Fifth Wheel truck stop, its restaurant and other facilities.

"To be classified as a truck stop a la American terminology, you must have a restaurant, a motel, a truckers washroom, a store and provide gas and diesel fuel, tire and truck repairs. And, of course, you must be open 24 hours."

"To the best of my knowledge, we're the only ones in Canada who provide all of these things."

Others incomplete

Mr. Powers said there are several other large truck stops in Canada, but the others were all missing something—be it a truckers' shower room or a truckers' store.

Two reasons were cited by Mr. Powers when asked why there aren't more full-service truck stops across Canada. "First of all, they have to be a good distance apart since a tractor-trailer can travel about 200-300 miles on a tank of gas. And secondly," he explained, "nobody has realized the potential."

"To be open 24 hours a day is not as complicated as one might think," he said. "It just means adding another shift to the 18 hour day most

restaurants already have. The menu here is basically short-order orientated. Nothing is prepared until you order it, with the exception of our daily specials which are stews, roasts and meals of that nature. They must be prepared ahead of time."

Menu revisions

Asked how he manages ordering large quantities of food in advance in view of today's fluctuating food prices, Mr. Powers said, "We check our labor costs and our food costs daily. From this we determine price changes. Since the restaurant opened, he said he's had to change the prices on the menus four times. He's presently working on the fifth."

Approximately 65 people are employed at the Country Kitchen Restaurant and a dozen more work in the adjoining store and hotel. Rick

Lillico and John Dunstall are in charge of scheduling all of those people, including bus boys, cooks, waitresses, cashiers and managers. What this means is sorting out full-time and part-time help, accommodating those who want special days off, and many times interviewing new people for jobs in the many areas of the Fifth Wheel complex.

"It's really not that difficult," claims Mr. Lillico. "On a 24 hour schedule on an average day, it takes 15 waitresses, two cashiers, seven bus boys (who are also the dishwashers), seven cooks, two chambermaids and clerks for each shift at the hotel and store and one manager for each shift at the restaurant."

2,000 a day
A graduate of the restaurant and management course at George Brown, Mr. Lillico is one of the managers at Country Kitchen. He rotates hours with managers John Dunstall and Al Schouten, who learned their trade through experience and guidance from Mr. Powers.

There is a total of 110 seats at the restaurant which services approximately 1,500 customers a day in the winter and 2,000 daily during the summer months.

"During the winter we're just the right size," said Mr. Lillico, "but during the summer we're a little too small."

In an attempt to take some of the pressure off the restaurant a take-out shop was opened last summer for those interested in quick, self-service snacks and meals. In the beginning it was open about 16 hours a day, but as the summer progressed it became more and more apparent that Canadians do not care to use self-service facilities when they go out to eat.

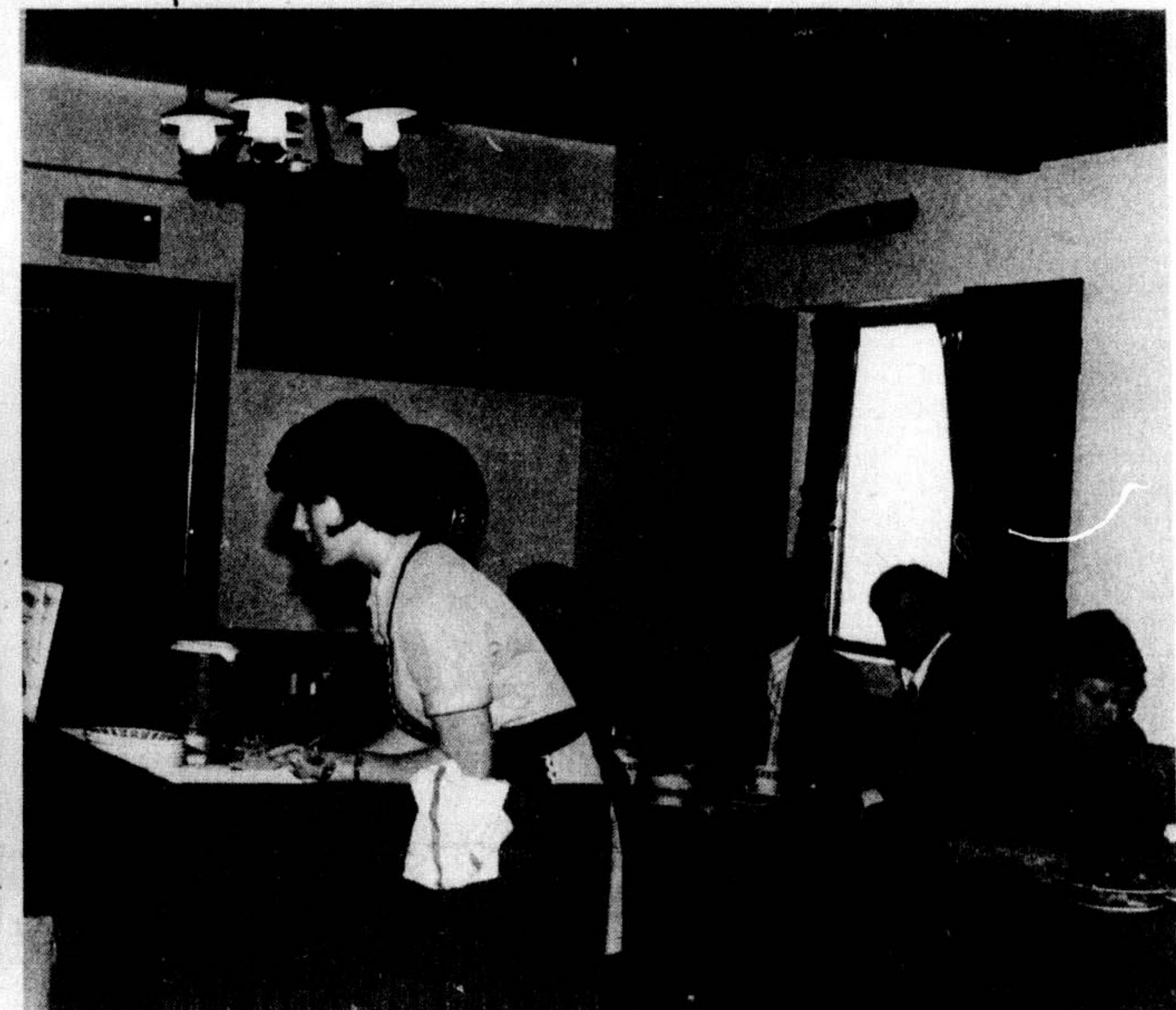
Rather line up

"It was a funny thing," Mr. Lillico commented, "but many times last summer people told me they would prefer to stand in line and wait to be served in the restaurant than to eat at the restaurant."

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FIFTH WHEEL CELEBRATED its second year of business last November. Owners Jim Powers, Claude Warren and Lew Loveridge cut the anniversary cake at a Christmas party.



ALTHOUGH FIFTH WHEEL is primarily a truck stop, everyone is welcome to eat at the Country Kitchen restaurant. Here Waitress Jane McCarthy writes down a lunch order for a table of businessmen.

Two former drivers own truck stop

A photo-story by
Ann Hauprich-Nielsen

Would it surprise you to learn that the two men who own Fifth Wheel Truck Stop in Milton were themselves employed as transport drivers only 20 years ago?

Their success story reads like the script to a hard-to-believe, happy ending motion picture. In this instance the stars are Lewis Loveridge and Claude Warren who came to Canada from different parts of England, unknown to one another, shortly after the second World War. With little more than a few personal belongings, and for separate and individual reasons, they came to stay on neighboring farms near Oakville.

First to arrive was Mr. Loveridge.

English Air Force during the war to learn to fly," he said. "Then I returned in 1948 when the war was over and decided to settle here. I bought a farm around the Fourth Line outside Oakville and worked for a milk transport company in that area part time as well."

Mr. Warren ventured to Canada a few years later on an Assisted Passage Loan from the government. He told of their meeting in 1953:

"When I got to Canada the first place I found to live was on a farm outside Milton. Just by coincidence, Lew was living on the farm next to where I was staying, so I'd go over to visit him once in a while since we were both from England."

"We were both driving

transport for a local company. Our job was to pick up milk from the farms in this area and deliver it to the dairy. Then Lew bought a small house rather cheaply off the Department of Highways and moved it over to his farm. He invited me to rent it from him and live on his property, so I did. It was then we really started to work together. We'd pick up milk from 4 a.m. to 11 a.m. from the local farms. Lew would drive from Derry Rd. to Trafalgar Rd., and my route was from Derry Rd. (where the hospital is now) to Appleby Line. In the afternoon we'd work the farm together."

Bought company
In the fall of 1954 the two

formed a partnership and went into business officially for the first time. They bought up the milk transport business they had been working for.

"It wasn't much - only two trucks," recalled Mr. Warren. "We called it Loveridge and Warren Milk Transport."

"I'll never forget the day," laughed Mr. Loveridge, "It was the weekend of Hurricane Hazel—October 15, 1954. We couldn't get our milk delivered because all of the bridges were washed out!"

In spite of the rough start, the two persevered until at last their milk transport business had grown from two to 22 trucks. They were also partners in a milk products organization called "Dairy Gold" which is still in operation in Oakville.

Opposites
Mr. Warren said he and Mr. Loveridge went in and out of businesses together several times between 1954 and the time they started plans for the Fifth Wheel.

"We never had a falling out, though," he said. "We always stayed friends... we just had different interests. Really, we're opposites; I'm the quiet one, Lew's the talker. But sometimes—and especially in a business partnership—that can be a very good thing."

It was in 1967 the two first started talking about what is now the Fifth Wheel Truck Stop.

"We got the idea for it while visiting truck stops in the USA when we were driving transport," Mr. Warren said. "To get money to finish the project we had to see our milk transport business. Originally we had land

optioned on the opposite side of Highway 401, but there was some trouble with sewers—so we had to buy the piece of property where we are now."

Traffic count
Mr. Warren said he really didn't think which side of the highway they were on would make much difference in the amount of business they got at the truck stop. As it turned out, he was right.

To determine the amount of business they could expect to receive in a given 24 hour period, Mr. Warren and Mr. Loveridge took turns sitting on top of an old building on the property, counting the trucks on 401 as they whizzed past. Mr. Loveridge took care of the traffic counts by recording and calculating them in a special book. When the final traffic count was completed, Mr. Loveridge found the answer to their question astounding. He discovered that for a truck stop at that particular location to be a success on a 24 hour basis, it needed only one per cent of the total truck traffic daily.

"We had been planning to have a restaurant at our truck stop, but neither Lew nor I knew anything about managing or taking care of a restaurant. Then Jim Powers came along with his idea about the Country Kitchen Restaurant. He was working for a chain of restaurants at that time and had lots of experience in the business. He seemed to know what he was talking about, so Lew and I said, 'O.K.,' build your restaurant here." As it turns out, we made a very good decision—Mr. Powers knows the restaurant business inside out. We don't interfere at all in his end of things."

Name fits

The next thing to be decided was a name for the truck stop. Why Fifth Wheel? "It was really the only name that seemed to fit," said Mr. Warren. "The fifth wheel on a truck is what the trailer hooks onto...we talked about calling it the King-Pin...which makes the fifth wheel turn on its axis, but decided Fifth Wheel sounded much better."

"That's how the whole thing came about," he said.

"We first started to pump fuel in February of 1972, eight months before the restaurant opened. We were only pumping about 500 gallons a day then. Since that time we've pumped up to 10,000 gallons of gas and diesel fuel in a given 24 hour period," said Mr. Warren. He went on to explain that it takes between 100 and 125 gallons of fuel to fill up the tank of a tractor-trailer.

Complete service
What kinds of repairs can a

truck driver expect to find service for at Fifth Wheel?

"If the fellow's got a problem, we can fix him up," said Bill Warren, mechanic at the Fifth Wheel Gas Bar. "We have a weigh scale, two mechanic shops and a tire shop. If a guy blows his motor along the road, we'll send a tow truck out to get him and order a new motor for his truck."

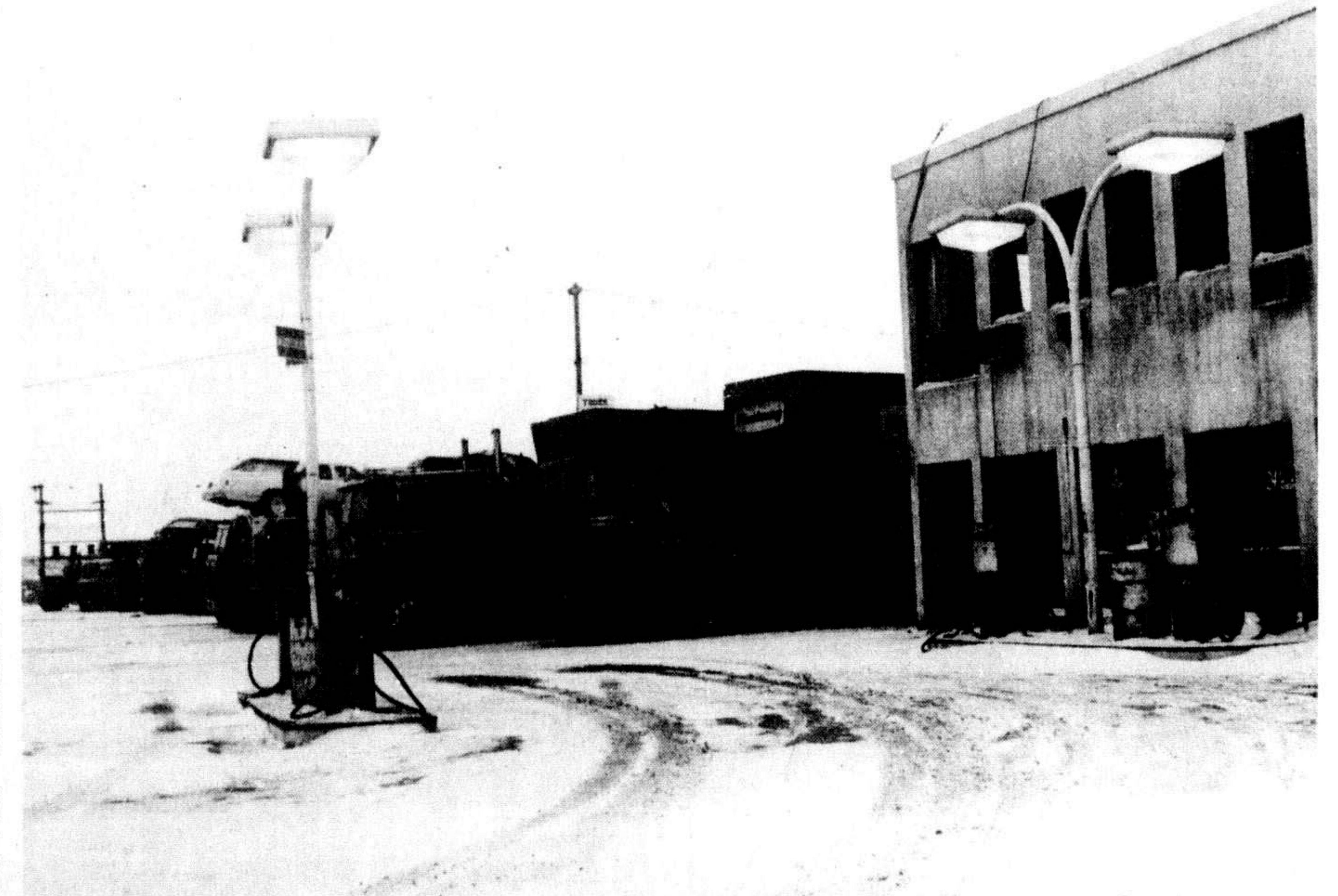
Steve Fergusson operates Provincial Towing Service,

located at the Fifth Wheel. He drives a wrecker that can tow anything up to 125,000 pounds.

With all these extras, the Fifth Wheel Truck Stop in its entirety is certainly unique in Canada. And who but the two men from England, having spent 20 years of their own lives experiencing the needs of a transport driver, could have devised such a complete stopping-off point for travellers?



MECHANICS Fred Swetman, Bill Warren and Peter Spells see to it that this truck gets the full service.



LINES OF TRACTOR-TRAILERS can be seen parked beside the pumps at the Fifth Wheel

nearly any hour of the day.