

Livesey

Delivery boys tipped 10 cents at Christmas

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At Christmas or Easter some customers would tip him 10 or 20 cents. Full-time employees at Livesey's included John's two sons, Jack Jr. and Don.

Their work environment was cool because the meat had to be kept fresh.

"It was cold in the store. All you had for heat was a wood stove in the back," says Meldrum.

The floor was marble and the junior employees covered it each morning with sawdust bought from Mott's Lumber.

Livesey bought live animals at stock barns and had them slaughtered. Meldrum recalls heaving quarter sides of beef from a truck on to his shoulder and hanging them on a rack of hooks in the front of the store. Each quarter of beef weighed between 125 lb. and 150 lb. It was heavy work but "there was a knack to it," he says.

Employees made linked sausages with a sausage machine. Livesey ground his own pork

and beef and then added spices. The sausages came out in one roll and were twisted into smaller pieces.

Work began between 7 a.m. and 7:30 a.m. and the store opened when the first customer arrived. Telephone orders began around 8 a.m. When the doors were closed at 6 p.m. there was another one or two hours of cleaning to be done. The two large butcher blocks, knives and meat trays had to be washed and the meat taken from the display counter and put in coolers.

The store's busy time was Christmas when 500-600 turkeys were purchased from George Gow. The birds' feathers had been removed but the turkeys were otherwise whole. They were hung in the front window, on the rack and in the refrigerator.

"Just about everywhere you looked, there'd be turkeys," recalls Meldrum. He worked cleaning them from noon to 11 p.m. for about two weeks before Christmas. A typical deliv-



A window display with turkeys near Christmas.

Intell. Oct. 17, 1994

ery trip at this time meant carrying five or six birds.

Quinte resident Jake Nelson, who worked at Livesey's from 1946-to 1949, says some people gave him pairs of mittens for a tip during holidays.

He recalls delivering meat to Albert College and the Hawthorn Inn, then located near the Ontario School for the Deaf (now Sir James Whitney) on Dundas Street.

Nelson says he earned a good wage for the period but took the job for another reason.

"I wanted a bike and the advertisement said, 'bicycle supplied.'"

Before closing Saturday night, Jack Livesey Jr. gave Nelson some hamburger meat because it wouldn't keep over the weekend.

Working for Livesey wasn't easy, says Meldrum, because the "old style" butcher demanded everything be exact. Nelson agrees.

"He was an Englishman. He wanted everything done the right way and if you didn't, he told you about it." But if Meldrum and Nelson didn't appre-

ciate Livesey's meticulous ways at the time, customers probably did. As well, there was a big heart behind the demanding boss.

Meldrum recounts an anecdote about his grandfather.

Customer George Sedore lived nearby in a dilapidated house with a dirt floor and no stove. He shared it with several other people and was the only one who worked. On Friday nights, after he'd gone to sleep, the others would steal his pay. When John heard of this, he began keeping part of Sedore's pay at the store for him.

As well, Livesey loved flowers and grew them on his farm.

Female customers were pleasantly surprised when a bunch of gladiolus were presented to them by Livesey.

Around 1961 the store (along with Kellaway's and the restaurant) were destroyed by fire. Livesey had no insurance and didn't re-open.

When Meldrum left high school he took a job with Bell Canada.

Nelson eventually started an insulation business and is now retired.

Fralick went to work for a grocery store in the meat department.

Livesey died Dec. 30, 1969. Don died Mar. 7, 1981, and Jack Jr. died Sept. 18, 1982.

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