

but everybody knew him as Cooner. He was there for years up until the 70s, I think," he added.

At one time, four other hardware stores existed on Front Street at the same time., he said. Among them were Smith's, Will's and White's Hardware. But with extra attention paid to their creative and often unusual window displays, the Walker Hardware kept their hold on their regulars.

"Our window used to attract a lot of attention. At Easter time, we hatched ducks out of the eggs and have them in the window, and set them up with a duck pond. People, especially school kids, would come to watch the ducks. It created quite a stir."

At Christmas time, the store window was the stage for puppet shows.

"Some members of the staff would manipulate the puppets behind the stage. This was done on the window and people would stand out on the street and watch it." Over the years Fox won few awards for his creative hardware merchandizing ideas.

Reflecting on the store's employees, he noted: "We had a very loyal staff. At one point, we had more than 20 people in the earlier days. Those days employees didn't move around as much and they were very loyal and they were treated well, too. Over the years, we trained many people who went on to be successful like in their own business. We were a good training ground."

Former MP and the late Jack Ellis was, he said, one among many valued employees who received his retail training at the Walker Hardware.

Fox's uncle died in 1957 while his father died in 1986.

The store was no longer a meeting place in the '80s, he concluded rather quietly.

"We had the same department in the late '80s but we didn't have the toys, no china. We still had the houseware, bakeware and that sort of thing. At the time the downtown area was deteriorating. It came to the point where all the family businesses had to move on. I can remember and this was when I was back in school, on a Saturday you could hardly walk up the street. It was a shoulder-to-shoulder human traffic downtown. Those days are long gone."

In 1989, Fox sold the Walker Hardware to Joe Taibito, who later sold it to the current owner Vince Mancuso. Today, the location is occupied by Maxwell Deli Cafe.

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In the '50s, the company recognized a growing trend involving the decisive role women were beginning to play in buying household goods. The store shelves that once served to present basic hardware and household products to the male clientele began to take on more variety in design, colour and appearance in a bid to attract and hold the attention of the female counterpart.

Reminiscing along, he continued: "It used to be a meeting place. I can remember I was a just a schoolboy and people, especially those coming from out of town, used to buy their groceries and so forth downtown. They'd bring them to our store and leave them and go back out and do the rest of their shopping. We had a corridor that went behind the paint department and there were stairs going down to the basement and they would line their groceries up along this corridor. I remember seeing them there," said Fox.

A man named George Lee used to run a tailor's shop above the store, he added and when Lee retired another tailor by the name of Cooner Day continued to operate the shop. "His actual name was Clarence