

The Rockwood landmark draws visitors from near and far, sharing in the newfound pride of North Halton

# Schneider's has something for a sweet tooth

By CHRIS AAGAARD  
Herald Staff Writer

As a large group of Grade 6 students from Georgetown's Centennial school stood riveted with fascination, confectionery chef Bill Given did things to candy none of them had ever seen done before.

The air inside Schneider's Reliable Sweet, a Rockwood landmark and somewhat of a national oddity, tingled with an accumulation of smells that day: several varieties of mint, chocolate, roasted peanuts, spice and the essence of this and that had combined to produce an almost intoxicating aroma.

At that particular moment, Mr. Given was making a Schneider candy called "Chicken Bone". He'd gathered, minutes earlier, a pool of molten candy into a manageable ball by working it on a marble surface.

But it was the next step which held the students' attention. The ball of candy, still about 200 degrees Fahrenheit in temperature, was slung onto an ordinary hook. As Mr. Given stretched it out and slung it back on the hook several times, the clear brown lava metamorphosed, attaining a rich golden lustre like pounded brass.

When the "pulling" process was over (a similar process with candies made from white sugar produces the white lustre of candy canes), the hot ball was polished in a time-honored and unmechanized way, described in the trade as "bumming". The ball was draped with a cloth and Mr. Given slid his backside along its squashed length until the candy achieved the desired sheen.

Considerably flattened by this unusual process, the candy moved to the next step in which a core of freshly roasted peanuts was rolled into it. With all the exposed seams sealed shut, Mr. Given moved the cylinder of Chicken Bone, weighing about 35 pounds, to a long table.

**HEATLAMP**  
With the help of a heat lamp and two assistants, Mr. Given stretched out cords over ten feet long. One of the assistants ran a special wheel up the length of each cord. The result was several long cords of Chicken Bone, broken like link sausages.

Schneider's makes about 200 different kinds of candies at the Rockwood factory located right on Highway 7. Not all are made at the same time. Certain seasons, like Christmas and Easter, bring out demands for special candy.

While the Schneider's name remains on the storefront, the factory actually belongs to a young businessman named Pat Hearne who took over the operation from Frank Schneider five years ago.

Frank and his brother Clarence, who passed away about a year ago, maintained the store when its founder, their father Harold, died in the 1950s. Harold Schneider moved into the building to make candies in the late 1940s, Mr. Hearne said, explaining that he came upon the store quite by good fortune while looking for warehouse space for another business.



Giant candy canes in hand, Schneider's Reliable Sweets owner Pat Hearne stands in front of the company he purchased about four and a half years ago, his first plunge into the confectionery market. Schneider's has been a candy-making landmark in Rockwood for over 40 years, churning out a remarkable variety of delicious home-made flavor sweets which can be found in some of the finest confectionery stores in Canada. Mr. Hearne recently opened up the front part of the factory into a merchandising outlet where passers-by can stop to purchase factory-fresh treats.

Eventually, he bought the entire operation and went into business for himself, a candy-making greenhorn who had to learn fast to ensure that Schneider's stayed afloat.

**LONG BEFORE**  
The building itself hasn't always borne the Schneider's name and had a rather colorful history long before the first Schneider's reliable sweet was gobbled.

It's a concrete structure, one of the first in the area, Mr. Hearne speculated when The Herald visited recently. Early in the century, Rockwood residents were familiar with the concrete base on which it sits as the foundation for the community's outdoor skating rink, flooded annually by rechanneling a few thousand gallons of the nearby Grand River.

If visitors look carefully,

they can see a faint sign painted on the front of the building between the second and third floors. It informs us, by best reckoning of its faded inscription, that a chap named Smith built the first two stories of the building and ran a tire retreading operation there in the 1920s.

The balloon tires made the business obsolete, batteries were manufactured there, but in the midst of the depression, the building was vacated.

Senior citizens can recall how during the Big Band Era preceding and during World War II, the third floor of the building was known as the Paradise Park ballroom and its primary use until the Schneider family took over was entertainment. Harold Schneider started his candy-making business in Brampton, event-

ually moved it to Guelph (in the old Legion building) and finally settled in Rockwood where it continues to flourish.

Mr. Hearne is excited about prospects for new business offered to members of the North Halton Tourism Association.

**LARGE STORES**  
"Thanks to the association, we're getting people out from more varied areas, we're getting good exposure," Mr. Hearne said.

Schneider's main market is in Ontario, but because of its uniqueness as a small candy factory making its products largely by hand, orders arrive from across Canada. One can find Schneider's candies and chocolates in larger retail stores, but they generally supply smaller specialty shops.

In addition, passers-by can stop and purchase right at the factory while viewing the candy making operation through a large, plate glass window in the factory outlet. A Schneider's outlet has also opened in Bramalea.

"What we have here is a top-of-the-line product," Mr. Hearne maintained. "We supply specialty shops and fill a gap in that intermediate market-place."

Soon after he took over, Mr. Hearne realized that it was almost impossible for the company to compete with highly-mechanized, high volume confectioners. He began to fine-tune his markets.

The nature of the business is to have seasonal sales peaks and valleys, Mr. Hearne noted, adding that he's trying to iron out some of that oscillation by promoting the factory as a tourist spot, selling ice cream in the summer and building an awareness of Schneider's products.

"The factory outlet right here has been a complete and utter success," he said. "Business has been great."

**SOFT CANDIES**  
The number of employees at Schneider's varies according to production, but on the average, 14 people have regular work there.

Mr. Given has become Schneider's hard candy expert while soft candies especially fudges, are the

responsibility of transplanted British Columbia confectioner Mike Zaiser. His creamy "Premium" fudges are famous among Schneider's regular visitors.

Chocolate moulding is done upstairs in a large warehouse-like portion of the building. The nutty, sweet smell of chocolate has permeated the walls after decades of candy making and will likely always be a part of the building's history.

Rows of plastic moulds of sizes and shapes too extensive to list line one side of the floor, dwarfing a comparatively small machine which keeps the chocolate at the right temperature and is the hub of the mould-filling operation.

At one time, Mr. Hearne recalls, the chocolate moulds were filled by hand in a rather slow and inefficient manner. Mechanization has taken over somewhat in the form of a compression hose and centrifuge device, but an employee is still required to fill each mould with the hose and clamp the completed moulds on the centrifuge to make sure that the chocolate fills every contour.

Automation has helped

production, Mr. Hearne acknowledged, but it hasn't reached a point where it takes away from Schneider's old-fashioned personal charm.

In fact, much of the success in recent years can be attributed to the workers and their sense of the corporate family, he agreed.

"There is no question about the closeness of these people," Mr. Hearne said. "One of the main points we stress here is that we have to work as a group."

Making candy can be a particularly tricky job; one must almost have a "psychic" feel for the recipe to ensure that the combination of ingredients, flavoring and heat turns out a product that's as familiar now as it was 30 years ago.

Chocolate, Mr. Hearne said, can be particularly tricky. In order to make perfect candy, chocolate must be tempered, a combination of heat adjustments to prevent the finished and cooled product from obtaining a dry, white flakiness.

Schneider's factory outlet in Rockwood is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day except Sunday. Business hours Sunday are noon to 5 p.m.



Third  
in a  
series



Candy maker Bill Given works with a 35-pound chunk of still-hot and malleable "Chicken Bone", a house treat at Schneider's Reliable Sweets in Rockwood. Moments earlier, the candy was poured on a marble working table. As it cooled, it was gathered into a ball and as Mr. Given slings the candy on and off a hook, it will begin to take on a golden, glossy appearance—a process known as "pulling".

(Herald photo by Chris Aagaard)



## Video boom hits town - competition no worry

By ANI FEDERIAN  
Herald Staff Writer

Three new video stores opened up in Halton Hills this month, and their owners aren't worried about the competition.

"A video store can only handle so many people," Video Flicks owner Mike Marks said. His shop opened officially Dec. 17 in the Halton Hills plaza. "There's a big demand in this area, enough for all three stores."

The owner of the Guelph Street Video Station shop agreed.

"Money is supposed to be tight, but people seem to be spending it regardless," Barb Patcheson said. Video Station opened in Georgetown Dec. 1. "I think this was a good time of year to open the business."

It was over a year ago that the first video shop opened in Halton Hills. H and H Video is now located in the Georgetown Marketplace and its owners aren't worried about the new competition. They're well-established in town.

Their business is doing so well they opened another on Acton's Mill Street Dec. 2.

The video bug is catching. Shops renting video tapes and the expensive Betamax and Video Home System machines are finding more and more of their customers investing in their own equipment and joining the video clubs simply to borrow from their library of films.

**SPRING UP**  
There are over 50 Video Station shops in Ontario, Mrs. Patcheson said, with most of them in Toronto and suburbs. An American company started in California, Video Station now has 500 franchises in Canada and the U.S., she said.

"They're springing up really fast," Mrs. Patcheson said. "You can use your membership at any of the franchises. One customer I have said he used it in Florida."

It was only a year ago that Mrs. Patcheson and her husband Vince bought their own video machine from Milton's Video Station.

"We were in there all the time getting movies, and in October this year, my husband was asked 'How would you like to open a Video Station?'" Mrs. Patcheson said.

The Milton store was getting customers from Halton Hills and felt there was a need for another video shop in the north.

"I think with the rural areas to draw from, there should be enough busi-



With ten per cent of Halton Hills residents owning their own video machines at present, Video Flicks' owner Mike Marks and wife Sue anticipate their new shop in the Halton Hills Shopping Plaza to do well. More and more people are investing in machines and Mr. Marks compares the growing interest in video to when color televisions came out. At first, few people could afford to buy color TVs. Now, everyone has one. Mr. Marks sees the same thing for the future of video.

(Herald photo)

ness for all the stores in Halton Hills," she said.

**SAME SIZE**  
Milton is about the same size in population and it has three video shops and they're all kicking, Mrs. Patcheson said, comparing.

Located in the former Photorama store at 130A Guelph St. the new Video Station has undergone some redecorating to become a video store.

Mrs. Patcheson said they liked the Guelph Street location because there's lots of traffic passing their shop, making it highly visible. Also, the location provides parking right near the store so customers don't have to walk far with the heavy machines.

"Most people here have the Betamax machine, so we have to expand in that direction," Mrs. Patcheson said. The Georgetown Video Station has 150 tapes so far in its collection, with films in both VHS and Beta cassettes.

"Video is the up and coming thing. I've heard a lot of people complaining about Pay TV people with cottages up north who only get two TV channels. For them, video is the answer," Mrs. Patcheson said.

"It's much more comfortable to sit home and watch your TV screen. It's much cheaper than going to the show, especially if you have a family, and you don't have to stand in line."

During their first week of business, they had films booked for Christmas.

Up in the Halton Hills plaza, the new Video Flicks store is also a franchise. Owner Mike Marks explained there are 17 Video Flicks stores in Toronto, Mississauga, Brampton, Streetsville and Milton. He owns the store with his brother Paul.

To operate successfully, a video store needs 400 clients, Mr. Marks said. Right now, about ten per cent of Halton Hills residents have video machines. Of a population of 20,000, that means 2,000 people have their own equipment. In turn, that means the population can support four stores, he calculated. Mr. Marks anticipates the ten per cent to grow to 25 per cent in the next few years.

Mr. Marks finds the plaza a good location, with people stopping by and looking in his windows.

(Herald photo)

### Poverty 'overwhelming'

## Local Y's delegates to Peru return home to sleepless nights

By ANI FEDERIAN  
Herald Staff Writer

Interest rates are 60 per cent at the banks and there's a 70 per cent inflation rate. This isn't the Bank of Canada's outlook for our national economy in 1983. It's the hard reality of life in Lima, Peru.

Returned Dec. 1 from a trip to Lima, Cheryl Lightowers and Irene Fairles of Halton Hills were affected by their 16-day stay in that South American country.

"The poverty is overwhelming," Mrs. Fairles said. "It's unbelievable." Mrs. Lightowers agreed, saying she could never go to Lima as a tourist.

"You would come away unable to sleep at night because you'd feel so badly that you weren't doing anything to help them," she said.

**THREE YEARS**  
The two Georgetown women went down to Peru to evaluate the YMCA project in Lima. The project is sponsored every year by the Georgetown Y through its annual Walk-a-Jog-a-Thon in May. They left Nov. 15 with three others, representing the co-operative sponsorship of the Owen Sound, Guelph, Cambridge and Georgetown Ys.

Mrs. Fairles is chairman of the international development committee of the Georgetown Y and the vice-chairman of the Y's board of directors. Mrs. Lightowers is the past president of the board and a member of the international development committee.



Most of the families squatting on the outskirts of Lima, Peru, are a mix of Indian and Spanish. They come from the countryside and start building a home for themselves of straw matting. Then it becomes a wooden lean-to, and if they can afford to buy some bricks, it develops proper walls. Because it never rains in Lima, the people can get away without ceilings.

It was three years since the last Canadian delegation evaluated the Lima project. The two women paid for their trips themselves, with some government funding.

Last year, the Georgetown Y gave \$1,400 towards the operation of the Lima Y. With a 1983 budget of \$35,000, the Lima Y depends heavily on the financial backing that comes to it from Germany, Sweden and Canada.

Mrs. Lightowers said the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) matches Canadian donations to the poverty-stricken Peru three to one.

"It's gotten too big for only four Y's to sponsor," Mrs. Fairles said. "Maybe more will join, like the Windsor Y."

The Hamilton Y was part of the team until this year when financial difficulties forced it to back out for 1983. She said international sponsorship became less of a priority for them, and that such priorities vary from Y to Y.

During their 16 days in Peru, Mrs. Lightowers and Mrs. Fairles spent about ten days in Lima's barrios, the shanty towns that spring up overnight as squatters come into the big city from the country-

side, looking for better opportunities.

"The people who live there are like my friends here, except they have no sewage, no water, no electricity, high unemployment and they live in houses the size of my living room," Mrs. Lightowers said.

"They aren't like our welfare people," Mrs. Fairles added, noting Canadian poor, though they have much higher standards of living, are less clean.

With no rain or snow to make a roof necessary, many homes in the barrios are merely made of burlap or brown paper

walls. The floor is mud, and a three foot wide stream of raw sewage winds its way past the homes.

**IN BARRIOS**

To try to solve some of the problems brought about because of the heavy migrations into the city, the Lima Y has started up community programs, sending its four staff into the barrios to teach basic health care. Lice and diseases are rampant, especially tuberculosis, and Y-sponsored visits to the shanty residents have a ripple effect. Knowledge gets passed on from one family to the next, with women being trained as health care workers to go among their own.

"The Y tries to mobilize people to self help," Mrs. Lightowers said. "It gives them knowledge."

It's the only way to reach the 45,000 people living in the barrios, she said.

**TEACH SKILLS**  
The Y is also trying to teach skills which can land the barrio residents jobs in the city. At the Y, the women are taught to sew. Since they have no electricity in their homes they come to use the machines at the Y - anticipating a job in the textiles industry. A new program of making shoes has also begun, Mrs. Fairles said.

Impressed by the advancement and the enthusiasm of the Lima Y in its massive undertaking, Mrs. Fairles said she definitely supports the continuation of the program.

(Photo by Cheryl Lightowers)