

Soul food from the rock

Newfie fries a hit in Halton

STORY AND PHOTO BY JENNIFER ENRIGHT

There's a place in Halton Hills that attracts its share of hungry Newfies from one week to the next. You won't have to go far to find it. Look for the old Ford truck converted into a kind of restaurant off Trafalgar Road near 10th Sideroad.

You'll see the construction crews there as they work on widening this portion of the road in downtown Ashgrove. Truckers stay away from the place now as it's just too hard to maneuver into the parking lot to get some of the food served at Louanne's Famous Fries. Newfies, well, let's just say they can't stay away from the place. This is one heck of a magnet for people from the Rock. Newfie fries are hard to find, but they are served up with a smile and with love by Louanne Wright, right at this spot.

Hard to believe but Louanne is no bona fide Newfie. She's Canadian, but she was born – dare we say it – in Slovakia, formerly the republic of Czechoslovakia. She still remembers the date she arrived in Canada. It was September 15, 1968.

For the last five or six years, she's made her home in Norval. And last summer, she decided to buy an Ashgrove eatery formerly known as John's Frys. Frys, she says, was deliberately misspelled as part of the business name.

A year later, Louanne has become known as a purveyor of fine Newfie French fry fare. Customer Ken Yates, who hails from a tiny village in the Trinity Bay area of Newfoundland, figures she has to come from some place on the Rock. Somehow. He's mystified. "She's got to be part Newfie."

Whatever she is, she's a fine cook by Newfie standards and she learned the culinary art of making Newfie fries all on her own. She says when she bought the place she found an old handwritten recipe book in the back that included a recipe for Newfie fries. She decided to try the recipe, and since then she has included it on her menu.

Louanne's sign that greets motorists as they travel through tiny Ashgrove announces that she sells poutine, a Quebecois version of French fries with gravy and cheese, as well as Newfie fries. Both items are popular ones on her menu, but of the two it's the Newfie fries that get the most attention. "People come by and say, 'I've never heard tell of it.'"

These fries, being Newfie fries of

course, are rather unique. Depending on what part of Newfoundland you're from you can have different versions of the same dish. Louanne says some of her Newfies think of these fries as fries with Turkey stuffing and if gravy is added that's something extra. Then there are her Newfies who know the fries as the meatier variety complete with gravy, sauteed onions, and Louanne's own special mixture of spices. Don't bother asking her the secret ingredients because she's as silent on this one as Colonel Sanders.

Louanne realizes that people sometimes think of fries topped with gravy and other fixings as heart attack material; but she's one of those more health conscious cooks. Not to worry. "They are all healthy calories. I use Canola oil for frying and it's better for you. It's not lard. With the ground beef I don't just fry it and leave the fat in it. I drain the fat off."

The ingredients are just as important as how she cooks these spuds. Louanne buys almost everything in Georgetown – the meat, the onions, the unidentified spices. But we have to say this. Lord thunderin' French fry. There isn't one iota of Newfie material in these fries. Even the potatoes come from St. Jacobs, Ontario. You'd think they might be PEI spuds since that island is at least getting closer to Newfoundland territory. But, no, these are Upper Canadian ones that might not sit right in a Down Easterner's mouth.

But that's not what really counts. These culinary delights have what matters: they've got Newfie heart; they are soul food from the Rock; they make you feel invincible like Popeye the Sailor Man; they might act as an aphrodisiac. In short, they've got spunk. And they sure are easier on the gut than a bottle of screech (better leave that to clean out your engine). As Louanne says, "It's got the spirit of Newfoundland. It's got some magic potion in it. It makes you better looking."

For someone who embodies that Newfie spirit we don't have to look far on this sunny day in August. Sitting at the picnic table outside Louanne's place is one of her regular Newfie customers. That same Ken Yates born in the Trinity Bay area orders some of her famous Newfie fries, as he has on many other occasions. The servings are big. Louanne doesn't skimp on size, but, hey, if you're dealing with Newfie appetites

then you might as well think Jonah, the whale. The price for a large serving is \$5.25 and \$4.25 for a small serving.

Ken now resides in Woodstock, Ontario and works for Approval Fencing, a company based in Ashgrove. Ken isn't perfect, and as you should know even Newfies aren't always the top of the crow's nest. His buddy, Danny Gunn of Ashgrove, can't hold back the comment when it's mentioned that Ken smokes Players Filters. We learn that his chosen brand is OP; otherwise, known as Other People's. There are also one or two imperfections in Ken's own family. My stars. He wed a non-Newfie from Ontario of all places. And his son, Kirk, likes Newfie fries too, but he also likes poutine. This is a disappointment to Ken, but he can explain this easily enough. "My son likes it (poutine), but then he's not 100 per cent Newfie."

But it's not Kirk we're really interested in, it's Ken. Just take a look at Ken's forearms and you'll see feistiness etched all over them. On Ken's limbs we see an artist's canvas filled with tattoos; we see Newfie spirit transformed into art. There's the dragon, the bulldog and the heart embossed on one arm. And then the tiger looking into its reflection in a pool of water on his right arm. But the bumblebee with boxing gloves that's probably the best.

Just looking at Ken suggests the possibilities out there for the rest of us



Ken Yates, who works at Approval Fencing in Ashgrove, knows a good Newfie fry when he sees one. Ken, who hails from Newfoundland, likes the kind of Newfie fries made by Louanne Wright. Louanne is the owner of Louanne's Famous Fries, a restaurant near the corner of Trafalgar Road and the 10th Sideroad.

kith 'n' kin

Wedding

Kevin Talbot & Lisa Tribble



Laura, Danielle, and Andrew are pleased to announce the wedding of Lisa Tribble and Kevin Talbot. These two soulmates are to be forever joined on August 21st, 2004 at St. Paul's United Church. May their day be wonderful and filled with lots of joy and memories, and may the rest of their lives be filled with ever-lasting love.

WE LOVE YOU MOM & DAD.

non-Newfies. If we eat a few of Louanne's famous fries perhaps we can grab a bit of Newfie spirit even for a little while. Who knows? Maybe someone will like the cut of your jib or the rake of your mast. Maybe you'll turn into an insect with plenty of moxie.

But more than likely – if you're a non-Newfie anyway – you won't be able to finish your serving of fries. Newfie spirit, after all, is so strong even big guys can't always handle it, like the boys at T and T Auto in Ashgrove for example. Sometimes Louanne says they just can't finish one of her Newfie dishes. As she says, "It's filling. It's like a meal in itself."

"Americans to invade Halton"

Civil war re-enactment at Country Heritage Park

BY DONNA DANIELLI

Country Heritage Park will play host to a living history display the weekend of August 21 and 22. Between 100 and 150 military history re-enactors will descend on the park for an American Civil War Re-enactment.

"One of our goals is to educate the public, not only about the American Civil War, but also about the Canadians who fought for both the Confederacy and Union armies," explains Mark Somerville, a member of the Board of Directors for the non-profit organization, the American Civil War Re-enactment Society. Somerville is also the commanding officer of one of the units who will

be present throughout the weekend.

It is a little known fact that many Canadians fought in the U.S. Civil War. "You had every type of person from every walk of life, for many different reasons," he says. "They came from all ranges of life from farmers to doctors, a lot of them were looking for adventure." Somerville's organization will be sending five member units to Country Heritage Park, including the 49th New York Company D. This Union infantry unit counted 16 Canadians as members during the war, including John McVean who won the Medal of Honour. The Re-enactors will also represent the 10th Louisiana Company C,

known for its contingent of Irish Canadian soldiers, as well as the 2nd Louisiana Medical Company, Donaldson Artillery Company and the Soldiers Benevolent Society. Camps illustrating each vignette of living history will be set throughout Country Heritage Park all weekend, allowing visitors the opportunity to experience just what life was like during the time of the Civil War.

"Our whole function is to educate the public on how Canadians were involved in the Civil War," says Somerville. "People will be able to come into the park and spend the day learning a different part of Canada's history, that it wasn't just Americans fighting in the Civil War."