

Milton Means Business

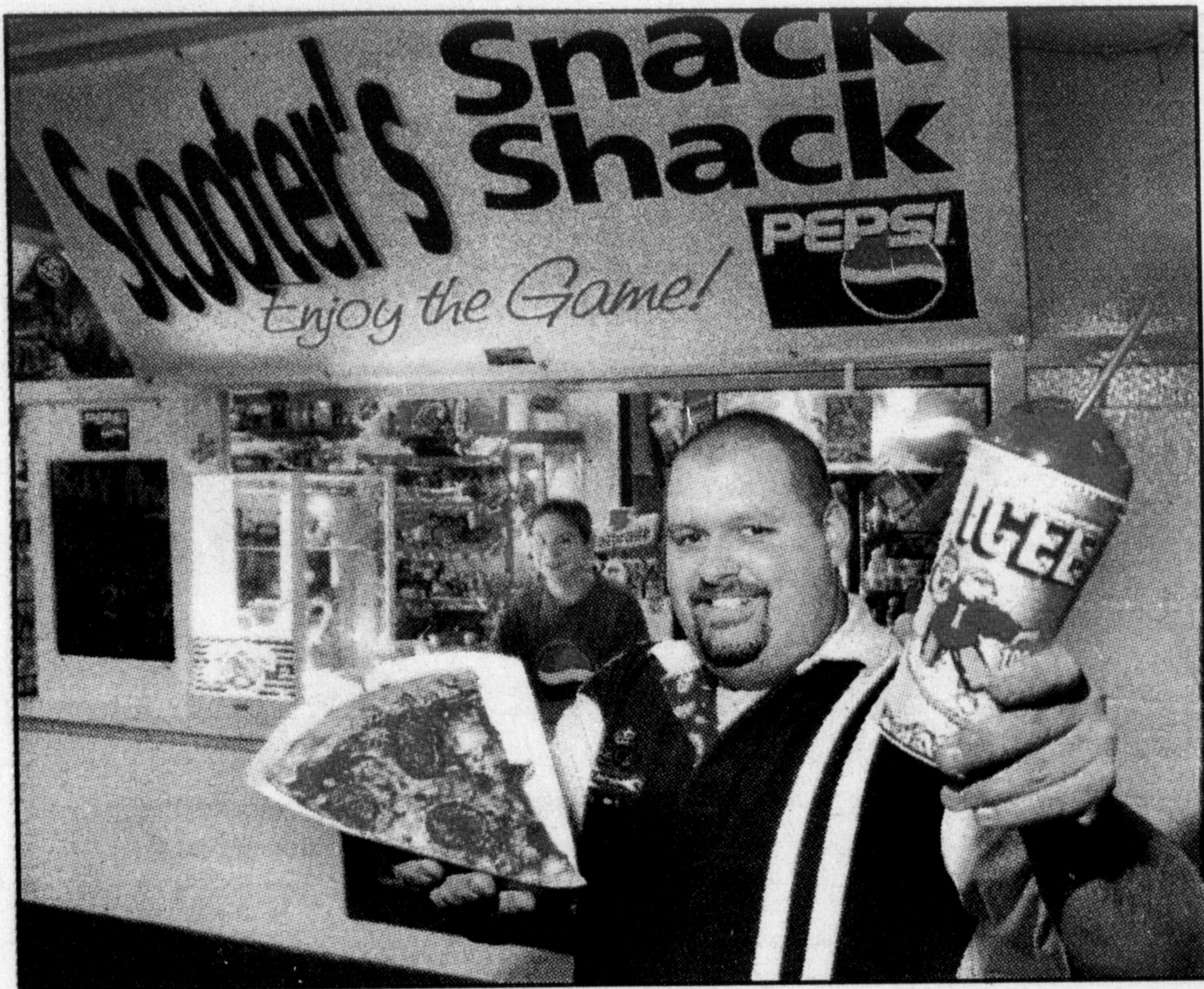


Photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Scooter's Snack Shack, run by Scott Anders and staffed by teens like Darren Yorke (behind counter) offers amazing selection to local hockey fans.

Anders' simple philosophy making snacks big business

By STEVE LeBLANC
The Champion

These days it's not just hockey teams delighting the crowd at Milton Memorial Arena.

Scooter's Snack Shack — which offers enough selection to rival any convenience store — has been scoring rave reviews as well as a whole lot of business from fans since it opened late last year.

Of course the local rink had a concession stand before that, but in its current operator's opinion it was "the same old thing you see at most arenas -- watered down coffee and four or five chocolate bars to choose from.

"I wanted to make this the best snack bar Milton had ever seen," said Scott Anders, who two summers ago submitted a bid and was given the nod by municipal staff to run the snack bars at both Milton Memorial Arena and John Tonelli Sports Centre.

At the time, the 30-year-old was simply looking for winter work for his young Dickie Dee staff — many of whom he would lose from summer to summer without year-round employment.

Inside a few months, Mr. Anders not only had a place for his teens to work but a thriving business and an identity amid the local sports scene.

That's because the soft-spoken entrepreneur attacked his new venture with one simple philosophy in mind — give customers what they want. Said Mr. Anders, "It's really just a matter of trial and error. I bring in different items and if people want it, they buy it. I had to pull teeth to get suppliers last year but now they're coming to me."

More than 300 items can now be found behind the local counter. In addition to pizza, hamburgers, soft drinks and candy there's also a lot of foods most people wouldn't expect at an arena's concession stand — like cappuccino, homemade cookies and hot soup.

"Having hot soup in a cold place just makes sense," said the Miltonian, who over the years has been a minor hockey coach as well as a Big Brother.

Mr. Anders admitted he has trouble keeping up with demand at times, especially at Friday night Merchant games when he usually sells countless pizza slices before the action even gets underway.

Once it does, a number of foods compete for fans' cravings — but popcorn almost always comes out on top. During a typical Merchant game, Mr. Anders and his young staff unload about 50 big bags of popcorn — which translates into about 100 normal size ones.

"Murray Townsend once wrote in his (Champion) column that it was the second best popcorn next

to the one in Markham. I went down there last year to find out why mine isn't first," quipped Anders. "I invite Murray to come down and try it again. I think he'll change his mind."

That kind of light-hearted comment is typical of those heard around the snack bar these days. Merchant executives have taken to inquiring about reservations for his popular establishment while others have suggested a name change, to Scooter's Fine Dining.

Although Mr. Anders gets a kick out of these remarks, he doesn't take all the credit himself. Capable staff — he said — have helped cut down on lengthy lineups, which in turn keep fans coming back.

"The key is patience and training. You've got to teach these kids how to handle money and keep the line moving."

To further increase customer convenience, he set up snack tables at the base of the stands during the Merchants' playoff run last spring — and even had vendors in the stands a couple of times.

All his efforts have certainly paid off at the cash register — so much so that, with a few other side interests like the arena's skate sharpening business and mobile food sales, he's been able to quit his job with a telephone company.

"I'm not rolling in the dough, but then I also never thought this would turn into a full-time gig."



Jim Gordon
B.A., F.I.C.B.
Account Executive

IG Investors Group
INVESTORS GROUP FINANCIAL SERVICES INC.
I.G. INSURANCE SERVICES INC.*

69 Main St. E., Suite #3
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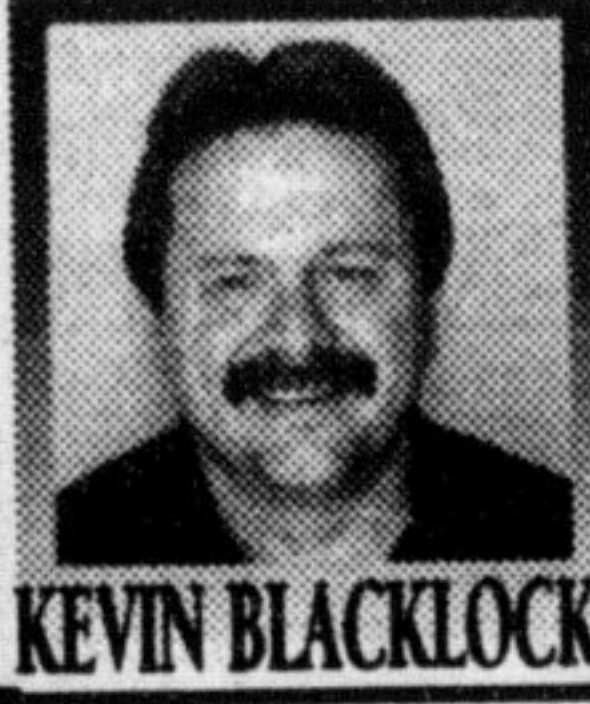


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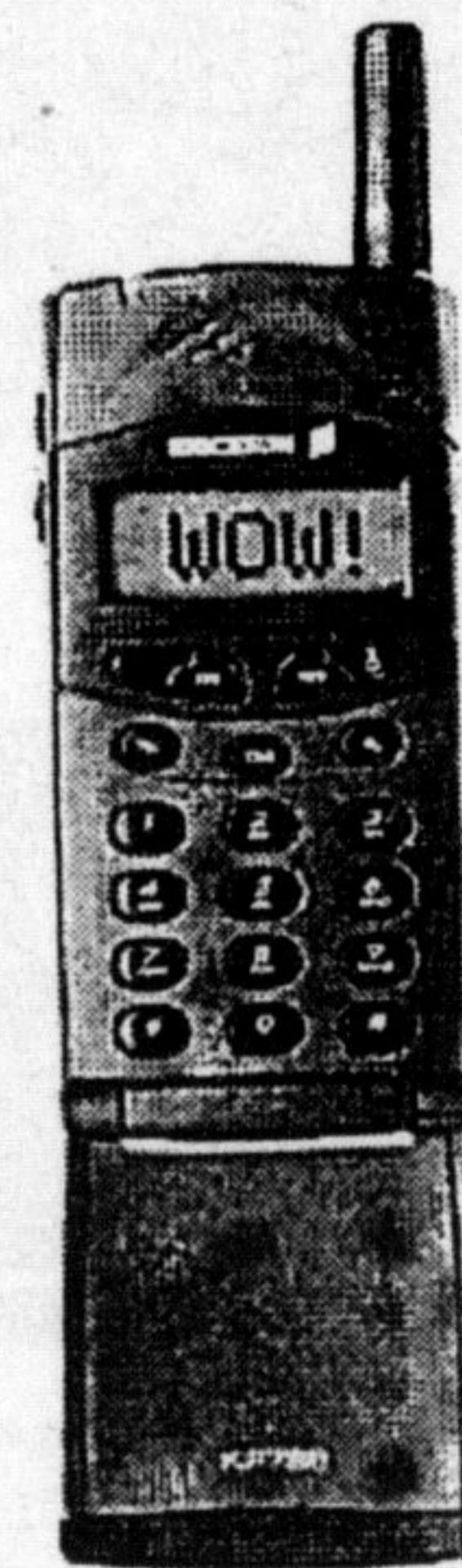
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