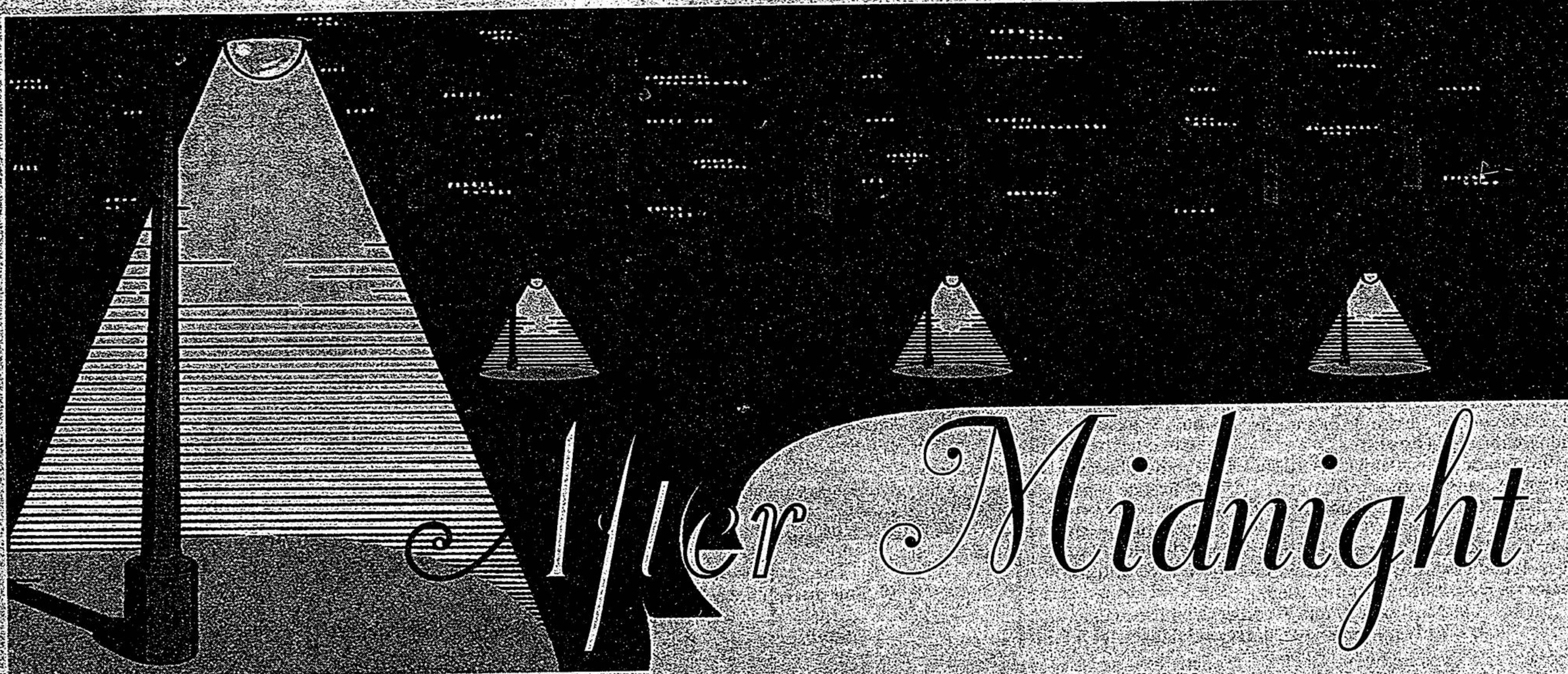


ETCETERA

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After Midnight

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Staff Writer

The clock in the doughnut shop showed 4:15 a.m. Exhaustion and desperation were setting in. Hours after a manager said they would be willing to talk about what it's like to work in the wee hours of the morning, a baker and cashier made it clear they wanted nothing to do with this reporter.

It looked as though it would be impossible to get the salient interview that would capture life in York Region after midnight.

After four hours of interviews at other places and driving around the region, the prospect of continuing the assignment the next night was not exactly enticing.

Then, shortly afterward, two men agreed to talk about the many early morning hours they've spent discussing life, the future and the past while at Country Style Donuts at Hwy. 7 and Kennedy Road in Markham.

We would come here at 12 and leave at 5. We were usually at this table. 21-year-old Markham resident Carb Evian said with a smile, smacking his palm on the smooth surface beside the shop's entrance. "Those were the days."

He was looking at friend and 22-year-old Richmond Hill resident

Marco Rocca, who did not hesitate to extoll the virtues of doughnut shops as the early morning destination of choice. "Where else can you go to have a smoke and talk with friends?"

Drive along Yonge Street or Hwy. 7, between midnight and 6 a.m. and it becomes apparent doughnut shops, indeed, are a big part of the region's night life. In the blackness of night, the lights inside those businesses — and the people illuminated by them — were often all the eye could clearly see.

By any measure, Evian and Rocca could be considered addicts of that most quintessential of Canadian businesses.

Two years ago, they congregated in the Markham shop with three other men five days a week. Evian, a jeweller now, still manages three weekly visits of two or three hours. Rocca's job as a sales consultant has cut his two-hour pilgrimages to the coffee-and-cruiser shrine to twice a week.

It is easy to see why the attachment to the place persists. The cigarette smoke is unbearable, at times, but the conversation is always engaging.

Wearing slacks and a dress shirt, Evian looked as though he belonged inside a glitzy nightclub, but the absence of booming techno-music made it easy to hear him

reminisce about life in Turkey, the country he left eight years ago.

Evian asserted people are more respectful in the republic, where Eastern and Western culture blend into one colourful mosaic.

"Over here, nobody talks with their neighbours," he said. "I say 'hi' to my neighbours and they don't even say 'hi' back."

I'm not saying I'm digging trenches by hand or nothing, but there's always something to do.

Pouncing on the theme, Rocca pointed out what he feels is the main difference between residents of Richmond Hill and Vaughan. Once west of Weston Road, he claimed, outsiders are immediately looked down upon if they do not drive a BMW or own a house worth at least \$250,000.

While The Hill and City Above Toronto can't compete with a place like New York in the night-life category, they and other York Region locales do offer some excitement while most people are in bed.

York Regional Police Staff Sgt. Norm Miles, who has worked nights for 20 years, said a few local residents stay up past midnight.

"Once it was an anomaly to see people driving around or walking

around at night," he recalled. "Now there is a whole group of people who are nocturnal."

Miles, who now sees automotive garages and restaurants serving customers as late as 4 a.m., said people are keeping more irregular hours because companies place bigger demands on workers.

John Marston, acting night crew manager at the 24-hour Sobeys supermarket in Aurora, doesn't seem to mind.

"I'm not saying I'm digging trenches by hand or nothing, but there's always something to do," he joked while discussing the amount of work he takes on from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. or midnight to 8 a.m. five times a week.

Though only a handful of shoppers entered the store during a 30-minute portion of one of his recent night shifts, the 38-year-old Aurora resident said employees keep busy with tasks such as stocking shelves.

Marston admitted it took time to adjust to the irregular hours. But he said steady work and perks such as a shift premium helped lure him to the job.

And the lack of crowds has enticed shift workers, cops and other night creatures to the store after midnight.

John Tocher, a 52-year-old resident of Newmarket, visits the store

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LATE-NIGHT HAUNTS

While no Rio de Janeiro or Las Vegas, York Region does boast a cross-section of places you can visit after most people have gone to sleep.

Anyone needing diapers or medicine well past their children's bedtime can visit the Shoppers Drug Mart at Keele Street and Major Mackenzie Drive in Maple, open until midnight seven days a week.

If you need to satisfy a nighttime hunger, there are plenty of options, open 24/7, including:

- Famous Seafood Restaurant near Kennedy Road and Denison Street in Markham;

- McDonald's at Hwy. 7 and McCowan Road in Markham;

- Burger King at Kennedy Road and Steeles Avenue in Markham;

While it does not have the variety of laundromat, photocopying or other nighttime services found in Toronto, York Region has its fair share of services available 24 hours a day.

A small sampling includes the drive-through bank machine at the CIBC near Langstaff Road and Hwy. 27 in Woodbridge and the Aurora Taxi near Woodbine Avenue and Aurora Sideroad.

For a taste of the fun to be had across the region in the wee hours of the mom, one can visit Challenger Billiards and Business Club near East Beaver Creek Road and Hwy. 7 in Richmond Hill, open until 2:30 a.m. Fridays and Saturdays.

For those who enjoy the odd hot dance, the Latin Fever Restaurant and Night Club at Keele Street and Hwy. 7 in Concord is open until 4 a.m. Fridays and Saturdays.



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