

THE NEW MISSISSAUGANS

Coffee for the nighthawks

By
Arthur
Lowe

If you ever visit the Hi-way Coffee Bar in Clarkson around 8 o'clock in the morning you are pretty certain to see Jack Wright taking forty winks in the booth at the far back. Jack is a victim of boom times.

Used to be that at 8 a.m. Jack would just be tucking in his trousers and preparing for the day's work. That was before the boom. Then the boom came along and the trucking companies started running three shifts. This put it up to Jack, and give him credit — he knew where his duty lay.

As proprietor, along with wife Allie, of the Hi-way Coffee Bar, he wasn't going to see the tractor-trailer jockeys going without their cuppa when they hauled their rigs up to his place — no matter what time of night it was. So he started a night shift, too, and took it over himself.

for your father; it's good enough for you." And there are a lot of more familiar ones including the old chestnut: "The time you're wasting may be your own."

"I got them from all over," said Jack. "As far south as Texas and from coast to coast."

Edmund John Wright — to give you all of it — was born in the Mississauga country 60 years ago and has lived here all his life, excluding a year or so in Toronto. His first job was with the Schaefer Pen company, and he remained with them until the firm moved to Goderich. After that he worked for Orenda Engines. For the past 10 years he and his wife Allie have been operating a restaurant in Clarkson. They reside, however, at 2156 Hurontario street.

"I got into the restaurant business by accident," Jack told me. "When the children were growing up and married, Allie couldn't bear being in the house alone all day. So she took a job as a waitress. When the proprietor of the restaurant died, she bought the business in partnership with another woman. The partner was diabetic and the work was too much



for her, so 10 years ago we bought out her interest."

I didn't enquire whether or not the restaurant had been profitable, but I think one of the signs on the wall proclaiming it to be a no-profit enterprise was probably stretching it a bit. It is popular anyhow, and it has been profitable to Jack in at least one respect. He regards the friends he has made in the nature of a dividend — and where better to meet and make friends than in a hallway coffee bar?

"You'd be surprised how people open up in the early hours of the morning," he said. "A fellow driving most of the night likely spends his time mulling over something that's eating him. He gets in here and I guess it's natural for him to loosen up over a cup of coffee.

The people who come along talk to me about all sorts of problems and I get occasional cards from friends made during these night-time sessions as far apart as Alaska and Cape Cod . . ."

At one time, Jack told me, the Hi-way Coffee Bar was a hang-out for two local motor cycle gangs — the Black Diamond Riders and the Canadian Lancers.

"There was quite a rivalry between them," he said, "but they never bothered me at all. Funny, but although the two gangs used to come here, they never came together. Looked to me like they had an arrangement to treat this as neutral ground. Nearly every restaurant on the Lakeshore road between Oakville and Toronto had been smashed up at one time or another by clashes between motor cycle outfits, but they always let me alone."

He stopped meditative-

ly. "Mississauga has a wonderful chief of police in Garnet McGill and a wonderful police force," he went on. "The boys are always on their toes. I guess that's the real reason I haven't been bothered."

I could think of another. A fellow who measures his profit in the friends he makes has taken out some pretty sound insurance against troubles.

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