

# Kaleidoscope

NOT SO MUCH A RESTAURANT MORE A SOCIAL INSTITUTION

## Serves meals, makes matches

**BY SHERI CRAIG**  
You're sitting there slowly sipping your coffee, thinking about a lot of things in general and nothing in particular, just staring at the markings on the yellow Formica counter top.

The lady beside you leans over. "Try the raspberry pie, dear. It's delicious."

The man across the aisle nods and licks his fork.

"Well I like the apple crumb pudding," another woman says. "But I didn't order it with milk and ice cream. Hey Norm, could you eat this with milk and ice cream?" She passes her dish down four people to the mailman.

The waitress busy flipping bacon on the griddle, turns around. "No more swapping food here. That's one of the rules."

What is this place anyway?

**CHATTERBOX**  
Welcome to the Chatterbox Restaurant, a Cooksville lunch counter going incognito behind a large red and yellow neon sign that blares out FOOD. The Chatterbox, originally the Chatterette, has been squatting at the south-east corner of Highway 5 and 10, beside a service station, for 22 years.

No so much a restaurant, more a social institution.

That fellow over there looks like a truck driver, big

and burly, shirt sleeves rolled up while he munches his hamburger.

"Now tell us about yourself," the waitress comes up, kidding. "And we'll know whether to put you on the List."

"Listen girls," she announces generally. "See if he's your type or not."

The fellow is grinning sheepishly.

"Don't build yourself up too much," she advises, "or all the girls will want you. Then what would we do with our surplus stock on the List?"

**LIST**  
The List is a Chatterbox tradition. Jean Steffler, the waitress in the pink uniform, likes to think of herself as a matchmaker, matching lonely people who come to the Chatterbox for tea and perhaps some sympathy.

There is no record yet of any successful matches although word is that the older couple sitting over in the corner met here about a year ago.

Leslie O'Neill winks. "Oh that's one of Jean's jokes," he says. "We used to live around here, we've been married for years. We moved to Thornhill and then when I retired we returned to Cooksville."

"We like the atmosphere around this place," his wife Cecilia smiles.

The Chatterbox has been

managed by Vera Livingstone for seven years. She comes in at 6 a.m. every morning and starts preparing the day's food.

**HOME BAKED**  
"We never buy anything except bread," she says. "All our cakes and pies and meat pies are home baked. All our food is fresh."

"I try to vary the menu so it's not the same each day. I usually serve five different specials as well as the regular dishes. And I try to vary the specials so different customers will get different selections."

"That works with everything except green pea soup. I've got to serve green pea soup every Thursday. I tried to change it but the customers wouldn't go for it at all."

Hilda Olive, a typist with the Mississauga Police Department, likes her green pea soup every Thursday. "I've been coming here off and on for the last 14 years," she says. "I'm here early every morning for coffee and then usually Thursday and Friday I come for lunch. I always have green pea soup on Thursday."

Charmaine McCarty, a mail clerk at Hydro, breaks her diet once a week, usually Thursday or Friday, to have a piece of pie. The selection is tempting.

**PIE**  
On this particular day the

menu offers apple, blueberry, strawberry, rhubarb, raspberry, lemon, coconut cream, chocolate cream, camel, apple crumble, rice pudding, strawberry shortcake and deep rhubarb.

Difficult to keep one's mind on a diet.

"Have a friend come with you," Jean London, switchboard operator and receptionist at Hydro, suggests. "I won't let Charmaine have pie more than once a week. And usually she has to eat it without any ice cream."

"I've been coming to this place, three or four times a week, for 14 years," Jean continues. "I like it here because the food is delicious and the atmosphere is as good as a floor show."

Vera Livingstone and Jean Steffler work the day shift, serving meals mainly to local office girls and business men. At 2 p.m. they close the restaurant.

At 10:30 p.m. it reopens again with Jean Rainey and Rose Bourque, in charge. Rose has been working there for over 20 years.

Night customers are mainly cab drivers or truckers. The Chatterbox is a friendly break from the road.

"Sylvia, we found a new man on the List for you. It's a sad case, he's lonely."

"He came here for lunch

yesterday and just sort of sat there. He's been in town four months and doesn't know anybody. We got to talking and he said he felt right at home here so he's going to come back this evening on the night shift."

"We've put him on the List. If you don't want him give him to somebody else."

"Where's my sandwich?" someone calls.

"Forgot," Jean heads towards the kitchen. "When I got this job no one asked me about my memory."

"Is this what you were looking for?" Vera comes out.

The crowd chuckles.

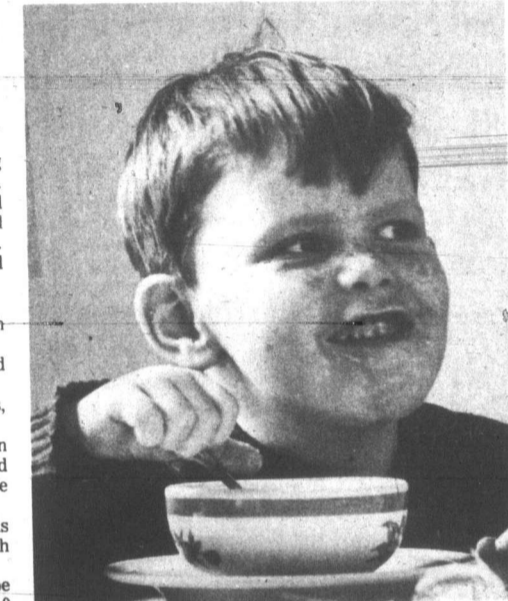


There's no formality at the Chatterbox Restaurant, a Cooksville lunch counter on the south-east corner of Highways 5 and 10, where waitresses and customers are old friends. Jean Steffler, left, and Vera Livingstone serve homecooked meals.

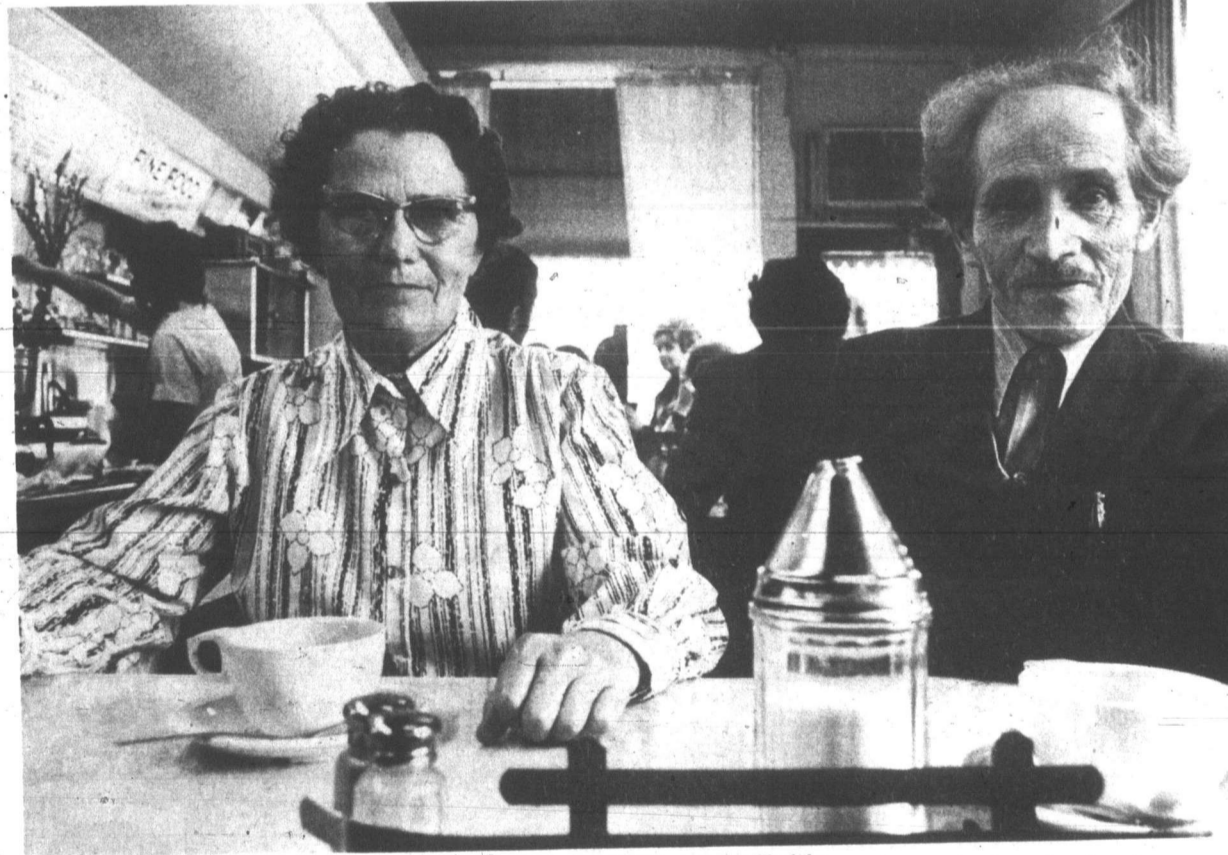
Times photos by Ray Saitz



School crossing guards, left to right, Margaret Wilson, Dorothy McChesney and Lucy Poirier, stop by for a cup of coffee and a piece of pie before going on duty.



Once a week Elaine Collins takes her two children, Michael, 5, and Lisa, 2, to the bank and then they visit the Chatterbox for lunch. The children always order a bowl of soup with ice cream on the side.



Leslie and Cecelia O'Neill returned to Cooksville from their home in Thornhill because they liked the local atmosphere, especially at the Chatterbox.



Oven is being built for bread-baking contest.

## Fun featured at Streetsville festival

Parade, beef barbecue, beer garden, Indian ceremonial dancing, a beauty-plus-talent contest and of course bread and honey galore — they'll all be part of the Streetsville Founders' Day Bread and Honey Festival planned for the weekend of June 1 and 2. Now under the co-ordination of the Streetsville Chamber of Commerce, the festival promises to be fun for the whole family.

The program gets under way Friday night with a Miss Streetsville contest open to all girls aged 16-21 in the areas bounded by Burnhamthorpe Road, Steeles Avenue, Winston Churchill Blv. and Highway 10. The contest will be held in the park where local entertainers will also present a program.

Saturday morning there will be a fish derby for children, from 8 a.m. to noon, with 300 trout being released in a specially designated slow-water area of the Credit River. The Kinsmen Club is arranging this with the Sea Cadets assisting and there will be prizes for almost everything but the one that gets away.

All day Saturday, the Six Nations Indians will demonstrate their life style and religion from a teepee village where they'll display artifacts and cook corn soup for visitors as well as performing dances in ceremonial garb. A group of the Upper Canada Rifles will don buckskin and coonskins to stage skirmishes with flintlock rifles as well as displays of knife and axe throwing, and the Royal Rifle Regiment of Fort

York will also field a unit in traditional period uniform.

Members of Streetsville's Portuguese community spent last weekend building a brick outdoor oven in the park which will be used to bake bread — hopefully at the rate of about 40 loaves every couple of hours. The oven will become a permanent structure and plans now are that a second oven will be added next year.

There will also be a bread baking contest, a display of crafts, painting, weaving and quilting which will continue all day. A hour-and-a-half long parade will occur Saturday morning, the Rotary club will barbecue a whole animal for beefburgers as well as operating a traditional beer garden, complete with German oompah band and the whole celebration will wind up with the gala Founders Day Ball to be run by the Kinsmen in the arena Saturday night.

Sam McCallion is chairman of the organizing committee with members including parade marshal, Frank Haddon; Sylvia Weylie, gallery of crafts; Kaye Killaby and Rose Huelin, Miss Streetsville contest; Al Betts, Chamber of Commerce president; Gary Clipperton, bread baking contest; deputy-reeve Jim Graham, pageantry; Gord Bentley, park layout; Harry Jones, Joe Simoes, Eric Ladner, Norm Harris and Richard Fortner — as well as workers from almost every organization in town, the Women's Institute, Streetsville Historical Society, Sea Cadets, and all.