

FROM THE ARCHIVES BY MARY WATSON

THE BEST MEAT PIES IN TOWN!

Remember the family bakery shops with the daily baked bread, buns, pies, cakes and everything else imaginable? Ah, the aroma when you walked through the door! There were several over the years: Betty Jane's Bakery on Main Street, the Oakview Bakery at 22nd and Mosley Streets and more recently Fiona's on Mosley Street. Let me take you back to The Little Bakery, which was located in the heart of 1960s downtown Wasaga, where Little Marina's Ristorante is today.



The Little Bakery

George and Charm McWilliam hailed from Scarborough. A baker by trade, in 1957 George worked at Ditson's Bakery in Collingwood. In 1959, he decided to move his young family to Wasaga Beach, where they lived in a cottage on the west side of 14th St (now 13th), the second property in from the corner. Charm, Sandi, Mike and Scoot (George Jr), settled into life at Wasaga when the population was only 250. Keep in mind that the original village boundaries were from Beck St westerly to 19th St (now 18th) at that time.

In 1960, George rented a building from Duggan and Nichols Electric at the corner of 19th and Mosley Streets. For the first year, he rented the baking equipment and brought baked goods in from Collingwood. He bought the building and proper equipment in 1961 and The Little Bakery was born. Being of Scottish heritage, the baked goods included buttermilk scones, fern tarts, many kinds of breads, rolls, biscuits, and spicy mince pies. Charm would make fruit pies and beautifully decorated cakes of all shapes and sizes. As the children got older, they worked at the bakery as well, with Scoot eventually becoming a baker himself.



Charm decorating a cake



George 1973

During the peak summer months, George and Charm would have a staff of up to 10. Here was another place of employment for local high school students. In the off season, George would wholesale his goods to Blue Mountain for the skiers to enjoy. George's workday would start at 10 p.m. the night before, when he would go into the bakery to begin his day. He would work until 4 p.m. the next day, then go home to sleep and Charm would take over. This was done seven days a week in the summer. They ran the bakery for 25 years.

Of course George and Charm were community-minded and he would often go to Wheeler's IGA dressed as Santa during the Christmas seasons. Charm passed away in 1976, but George and Scoot continued to run the bakery until about 1986 when he decided that it was time to retire.



Mike & Scoot 1964

Mike recalls a certain incident when he was 16 and working at the bakery. It was his job to end the day making a batch of bread. After mixing the dough, he put it into a steam cupboard to enhance the rising process. Well, being 16 and preoccupied with other matters, the dough was forgotten. When he finally realized that it was still in the steam cupboard, he rushed back to find that 50 loaves of rising dough had filled the cupboard to capacity. You can imagine the mess! Mike grabbed some empty flour sacks, pried the dough out of the steam cupboard, put the bags into the trunk of his '62 Pontiac Laurentian and headed to the dump. Of course the dough continued to rise and when he opened the trunk of the car at the dump, it was filled to the brim. He had to claw the dough out of the trunk and was pulling out bits of it for days. The smell of yeast in the car was obvious for some time. Although he never confessed to the disaster, Mike says his dad knew what had happened but never said a word. It became a tradition to remember the story at family gatherings.

Daughter Sandi decided early on that working in the family bakery just wasn't for her and moved to Calgary in 1965. She now lives in Creston BC with her husband Don. Mike worked at the bakery all through high school, then went on to other things, but remained a true Wasagan, as both a successful business owner and town councillor. Scoot eventually moved to Calgary, lives there with his wife Diane and continues in the baking trade.

Sadly, gone are the days of the family bakery. Now we have pre-made frozen dough baked at grocery stores and sold as fresh baked goods. Sometimes change isn't a good thing.

First printed in the Wasaga Sun on 01May 2014.

"SHARING MEMORIES: STORIES OF WASAGA'S PAST" IS NOW AVAILABLE! FOR \$20 (HST INCLUDED), YOU CAN ENJOY AN UPDATE OF THE MANY STORIES MARY HAS WRITTEN OVER THE PAST FEW YEARS. ALL PROCEEDS GO TO THE WASAGA BEACH ARCHIVES.

Mary Watson is Archivist for the Wasaga Beach Archives. If you would like to contact Mary with any historical information, pictures or questions, you can e-mail her at archive@wasagabeach.com.