

Stove Pipe Village



I have known Billy Chinkiwsky since I was a boy, and when I mentioned to him about writing a story of his parents, the years at the store and his family's life, he was more than cooperative. Billy did a tremendous job, along with his daughter in recollecting his past and experiences at his dad's store which was located on the corner of Preston and Pamilla. Thanks Bill. Job well done.

—The Bozz

We start, in 1918, with the arrival of my father, Michael, his brothers Bill and George Chinkiwsky at Montreal by boat from the Ukraine. On arrival, the three brothers looked for work, but didn't find any. So George went out west, Bill and Michael went to Ottawa to work for J.R. Booth Lumber. Mike went cutting trees while Bill was the cook in the lumber camp. After a few years, with money saved, they opened a grocery store on Kenny Street, off Rochester. After about a year and a half with no experience, they closed the store and went back to the bush. A couple of years and more money saved, they went back to Ottawa, bought a building on Preston Street, at the corner of Pamilla and made it into a grocery and butcher shop. That was in 1924. The building was formerly a Catholic school which Patsy Guzzo had attended.

My father, in the meantime, married Mary Andrussek. She was Peter Andrussek's sister. I was born upstairs above the butcher shop on May 17, 1925. My brother, Jack was born two years later, followed by my sister Mary, in 1930 and a year later, my sister Annie. Neither Mike or Bill could read or write English and they had a hard time running the business. However, as years went by, they were successful.

During the depression, my father and my Uncle Bill survived. They realized that many families needed help and they gave groceries on credit, no questions asked. During that time, my father Mike hired a butcher, Bill (Willy) Timpson. He was a terrific worker. Although he couldn't speak all of the languages, somehow he managed. He was a great help for my father.

He would serve an Italian lady by the name of Mrs. Barbaro, the mother of Lefty, Bill, Sam and the rest of the family. She would come to the meat department and hold her hand about six inches apart. That was the size of the roast she wanted. He got along with most customers and was well liked.

Later, as I grew up, our family situation changed. My father had to hire maids to look after us. We had a good woman in Mary Wernikowsky. She did the cooking, cleaned house and looked after the children. I was about 8 or 9 years old and helped Willy to make sausages in the kitchen. He would say, "Watch this." He would get a handful of sausage meat and throw it at Mary. She, in turn, picked up a broom and started to hit Willy chasing him out of the kitchen. It was not very long before Willy and Mary got married. In years to come, they had about 18 children. (I've forgotten the amount.) They had a terrific family.

We also had fun in the meat department. One day when my father was out, I was bugging Willy, when he got a long hook, which was used for hanging meat on the rail. He got me and hooked the hook on my braces and hung me on the meat rail. Just by chance, my father came in and saw me hanging on the rail. He asked Willy what was the problem and Willy said I was bothering him. Willy took me down and at the same time, my father took his belt and gave me about two or three whacks.

My father also hired Joe Delpalme to deliver groceries for us. Joe was a good worker. He used to come around the corner down Pamilla street and jump off the bicycle. The bicycle pedal would clamp onto the sidewalk. I asked Joe to show me how he did it. I came around the corner and instead of stopping, I went flying onto the sidewalk bruised, and never tried it again.

I remember when I was about 7 or 8 years old, my mother was a great cook. Every Saturday morning, she would bake about half a dozen apple pies. She would put them on a windowsill to cool. Later, there was a knock at the door. There was Louie Pantalone, Mike Sydor, Johnny Kozak, and a few other friends asking if I could come out to play. My mother would ask them if they would like a piece of pie. The boys never refused.

Another incident that happened during the 30's, we had about six boarders living with us. We had a large oak table. The boarders and myself, my brother and sisters would sit down to eat together. The boarders would always have a bottle of rye and gin on the table. One day as we were sitting at the table, I tried to be smart and asked the boarders for a shot of rye. They refused, saying that my father, working next door in the meat department, could walk in. Instead, I poured myself a glass and pretended that I was going to drink it. Then, who comes walking in, but my father. He said, "You wanted to drink it, drink it." I, in turn said, "I was only kidding." He said he wasn't and made me drink it. I tell you, after I had this drink, I was sick as hell. After that, I never drank beer or liquor for years and drink only to be sociable.

In those days, we didn't have any electric refrigerators. We had ice houses. We would get ice in the springtime and it would last through the winter. We had a lot of sawdust on the ice, to keep it from melting. We had ropes to lift the ice, when we needed it for the butcher shop. One day, Sam Palef and a few other guys were swinging on the ropes yelling, "I'm Tarzan of the Apes!" Well, Sam went flying on the rope and it broke. Down came Sam on the ice and he laid out cold. We called his mother

next door. She came running and screaming, but by the time she arrived, Sam was sitting up. She got a piece of stick and started hitting Sam all the way home.

One day, Andy Nezan, Pete Zebchuck, and another chap came into the store wanting to borrow my wooden handle golf clubs to hit some balls at Commissioner Park. My father was having lunch when the boys came. I told Peter not to practice swinging in the store because he might break something. It wasn't much longer when Peter swung the club and broke our big globe light. The boys ran out of the store right away and my father came out of the kitchen, asking what happened. I said I was sweeping with the broom and accidentally hit the globe. Out came the belt and a couple of whacks and he said clean it up and that was it.

My father used to make our homemade polish sausage down in the basement. He was proud of his polish sausage. When it was ready, he would put it on a tray and put it on top of the meat counter. It was not long before my friend, Phil Bianco would come walking in saying, "I smell polish sausage. Could I sample some?" I said, "I will cut it for you." He said, "I have my own knife." After eating nearly a pound, I told Phil, no more. He said thank you and out he went.

We had sponsored a softball team called the Ukrainians. We played at Commissioner Park. Willy Timpson was our coach and my father was the owner. When our team played, Willy and my father left the store at 6 p.m. and I had to stay until closing. I could hear the people cheering but I could not attend. I was disappointed. We played Galla's Bakery and a few other teams. We had John Sorrocan. He was our home run hitter. To keep him, we had to give him twelve quarts of beer. We never gave money.

When the war came, Uncle Bill took Willy Timpson to his store on Gladstone and Sherbrooke because his butcher went to war. My Uncle Bill had purchased his store years ago. My father said I would have to quit school to come and replace Willy. I was only 15 years old. I tried to join the army, but was blind in my left eye and was refused.

During the operation of the butcher shop, I met quite a few people. One day, Patsy Guzzo came into the store and introduced me to Bobby Bauer and Bill Cowley. The boys played for the RCAF hockey team. Bill Cowley, asked how much the pepperoni sticks were. I said 25 cents each. He pulled a tape measure out of his pocket and measured the sticks taking the largest and paying me a quarter. One day, in walked King Clancy with a friend, a French chap from Adeline Street. He told me to give King the two largest cigars, which were

only 5 cents each. We talked about sports for a while and then they left. King Clancy was a very nice person and surprisingly, very quiet.

Tony Ierullo and my brother Jack used to fool around in the store. One day Jack took a cream pie from the shelf. He called Tony and, as he came around the corner, Jack hit Tony in the face. A few days later, Tony came into the store and dropped a dollar on the counter. I said, "What's that for?" He said, "Wait." He waited until Jack came around the corner. Tony had a cream pie in his hand and hit Jack in the face. We had a great laugh. Gala's bakery had the best cream pie and cream puffs you have ever tasted.

The Village in those days had a lot of nationalities. When you walked down Preston Street from Carling, you would come to Sydney Street. The Irish people lived there. The next street was Lawrence. There lived, French and Italian families, along with a few Ukrainian families. Next you would come across the street into Adeline. Adeline had mostly English people, and a few Polish people. Next, running off of Adeline, you would come into Norfolk. That's where the streetcar would turn around from Preston, onto Norfolk and back on to Preston. The Loop. The people there were mostly English and a few French and Irish families. Coming down Preston street, you would find Pamilla Street West. Pamilla was mostly Ukrainians and a few Italian families. Going east of Pamilla, you would find mostly Italian families. You come next to Norman street. Most families there were Italian, and a few Ukrainians. You cross the street going east on Norman, and there were English, Italians and French. Preston Street itself, was the League of Nations - Jewish, French, English, Ukrainians, Italians and Scots.

In those days, Preston street had fourteen grocery stores, which included Zito's, Bisson's, Defalco's, Chiarelli's, Guzzo and Adamo, Pantalone's, and Chinkiwsky's. And a restaurant, Prescott Hotel, owned by Disipio's. Today the scene has changed. There's fourteen or more restaurants and one grocery store, Luciano's. However, The Prescott Hotel still remains and still has the best meatball sandwiches and pizza.

And that's what was called The Village.

