

CAMPBELLFORD CENTENNIAL MEMORIES

Slot Machines

By Francis W. Long

Everyone likes putting money in a slot. Up on a shelf in a store-room at our store there were three old gum ball machines, with a metal base, and glass globe. One was broken, and one still had a few pennies in it. I guess they were retired from many years back. They used to contain small coloured gum balls, dispensed for just 1 cent each. I think you can still buy similar gum-ball machines just for the novelty. In the 1930's we bought an Adams gum stick vending machine. It had four columns of Adams brand gum in little one inch packets, Beeman pepsin, Dentyne, Peppermint, and Spearmint. The price was just a penny which you put into a slot. The machine was mounted on the front door to the stairs leading to the upstairs in our store block. It did a very good business for many years, and brought in a lot of pennies.

Also in the 30's we bought a Toledo personal weighing machine. You stood on the platform, and inserted a penny, and the shield tipped over and revealed your weight on a revolving drum. We had this machine for many years. During the war, about 1944, someone complained that the scales would not work. When opened up it was discovered the whole four foot machines was blocked up with pennies. The Bank of Montreal manager, J.D. Mills, came for three nights and rolled pennies---\$300 worth. The bank was glad to get them as there was a shortage....Maybe we know the reason why.

Like my dad, I was fond of gadgets, so in the 60's I bought a pop vending machine, and put it in the front doorway where the gum machine had been years before. This was probably the first pop machine in town. Pop was sold in bottles only in those days. There were 8 chutes that allowed the bottles run down an incline with the lowest one appearing in a slot behind the little glass door. There were up to 8 flavours available. The price was a 25 cent coin. Everything worked fine until something jammed up the coin slot—a slug, a gum wrapper, or a bent coin. The next customer lost his money. The result was that this disgruntled customer would proceed to kick the stuffing out of the pop machine. After that a new trend was started. People would proceed to remove the tops off the bottles, and allow the contents to run out. This caused a terrible mess. A year or so later, I traded that machine for a can vendor, and things for me got a whole lot better.

The Wurlitzer juke box in our restaurant did a great business, and gobbled up a lot of nickels. It got so familiar to us that we really never heard it-except when someone turned up the volume button on the back of the machine. The Beatles were much in vogue in the 1960's. There was one fair-haired boy named Jimmy Andrews who was a real Elvis fan and played "Nothing But a Hound Dog" any time he was in the restaurant.

We also tried a paper-cup vending machine inside the store, but it proved to be too much trouble. To replace this we decided on an ice cube maker, since there was already a water line available. This machine made ½ inch ice cubes that were just great in our famous fountain cherry cokes. We also sold poly bags of ice for \$1.00. They were

extremely popular in the summer months. The ice business was so lucrative we later bought a larger machine and even wholesaled ice cubes to a summer camp at Crow Bay. Unfortunately, all this equipment required servicing. Mr. Matt Austin was our refrigeration man, and was called on a lot. For plumbing we had James Jacobs, and a man named Jim Scriver who worked for him. For electrical repairs, we could count on Denny McArthur and Jim Brethour who was an absolute genius. He put in electrical para-tenichs for our electric panel, and had wires hanging in all directions, with all our equipment still operating. He installed a peak-demand meter, where we could look and see the red pointer pushing the black one. If we could cut down on power useage during these peak times within 5 minutes, you could save on the electric bill.

We are all looking forward to Campbellford's Centennial in 2006.