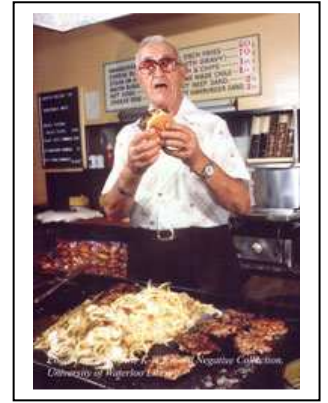


Harry Marks

The legendary Harmony Lunch restaurant started on the cusp of the Great Depression with a young Harry Marks selling 10¢ hamburgers out the sliding window of an old labour hall.

Harmony Lunch thrived during the Depression and went on to survive a fire in its upstairs' dance hall in 1932, the meat rations of the Second World War, and perhaps most remarkably - the advent of fast food restaurants.



“The more hamburger joints they build the busier I get,” he once said. “That’s the truth. I’m not lying.”

The success of Harmony Lunch is due as much to the secret recipe for his pork hamburgers as it is to the fact that in a modern world of chrome and glass, Harmony Lunch remains unchanged. Walking through its doors at 90 King Street N. is like time-traveling back seventy years.

And while people have suggested updates, Marks, who died in 1992, remained true to his regulars who told him “leave it the way it is or you’ll spoil the business.” His son Bruce now runs the restaurant and has continued the tradition of his father; rising early to mix 300 pounds of pork every morning and peel 250 pounds of onions.

The warm atmosphere has always been another drawing card for patrons. Many years ago Harry Marks said: “When you come in you’re welcome no matter how you dress, what you look like or what nationality you are.”

During the Second World War he delivered burgers in the middle of the night to local factory workers. The biggest order he ever received was 628 burgers for shift workers at the old Epton plant. During a bitter February night in 1970, the Harmony Lunch became a warm refuge for firefighters battling a large fire above the Orval Dorscht Sporting Goods Store on the other side of King Street.

Marks was born in 1902 on a 200-acre farm in Listowel. He had ten brothers and sisters so when he moved to Waterloo in 1916 to help an older married sister, it was a shock. “I was in a big bedroom all by myself. I was used to going to bed with four kids to a room. I used to cry myself to sleep every night.” He helped his sister, a dressmaker, with the chores and with her two young children, and it was during these years that he learned to cook.

Marks got his first job at the Roschman Button Factory on what is now Regina Street when he was 16-years-old. He went from polishing buttons at 10¢ an hour, to being trained as a tool grinder. He left, however, over a dispute when he discovered that men under him were making more money than he was. His demand for a salary of \$1,200 a year was not met.

When he left the family farm his father gave him a bit of advice that served him well. “If you can make money working for other people why not make it for yourself.”

Before opening the restaurant that became a Waterloo institution, Marks first opened the H. Marks Tire and Battery Hospital in 1922. In July 1930 he turned the Harmony Hall into Harmony Lunch by exchanging one word on the outdoor sign that still hangs from the restaurant.

Harry Marks continued to work at the restaurant through his early eighties saying, “You’ve got to live happy to live long. You have to enjoy what you’re doing.”

Photo courtesy of the K-W Record Negative Collection, University of Waterloo Library