



depuis/since
1959

Aucoin's Bakery

Celebrates their 50th anniversary

By Rosie Aucoin-Grace

It's hard to imagine baking for half a century but that's exactly what a family has been doing at Aucoin's Bakery in Petit-Étang. This all started in June, 1959, when Alex (à Charlie) Aucoin and his wife Annie-Blanche (à Placide Poirier) decided to build and operate their very own bakery. While reminiscing with Mrs. Aucoin, she said, "We got married in 1952. My husband's background was as an employee in a work camp as a cookie and as dredge deck hand for Public Works, so when Alex started talking about opening a bakery, it was certainly a new but exciting venture for us. Money in those days was scarce and difficult to borrow. Père Comeau, who was the parish priest at the time, was quite familiar with the community and parishioners who had the means to help others. It was thanks to a generous investor, Mr. Joseph (à Amédée) Camus, who lent us \$2500 (5 percent interest) that we were able to start our own business and receive another loan of \$1000 in 1960 to make an extension of 24 feet by 24 feet and to add an oven. Needless to say, the very first bread baked in the new bakery went to Mr. Camus."

She continued, "The original bakery was 24 feet by 24 feet, was solely managed and operated by us. We had a stove and some wooden bins that used to belong to the Sacred Heart hospital. Incredibly, the wooden bins are still part of the business, used daily." She added, "It wasn't always easy but we persevered. By the time, we opened the bakery; we had our own family, Leonard, Stella and Yvette. We had our hands full, but Alex and I really enjoyed working side by side." She paused. "Sadly, Alex passed away in 2002, and I know he would share my sentiments in being so very proud that the bakery is still thriving after 50 years. I so appreciate seeing that our descendants have kept the business going. It's not an easy task. It takes lots of hard work, dedication and courage!"

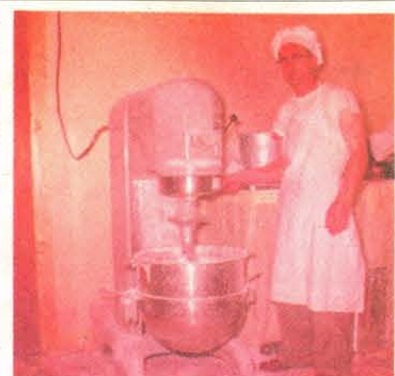
Speaking with the present owner of the bakery, Leonard Aucoin, he explained, "Growing up in the family business environment has its advantages and disadvantages. Since the early age of thirteen, I was involved in the business,



Alex and Annie-Blanche working side by side in the early years of Aucoin's Bakery



Aucoin's Bakery in 1964



Alex (à Charlie) Aucoin making bread at Aucoin's Bakery

either in the bakery or on the delivery truck. At the time, Edmond (à Tom) Deveau was our driver. As this was a family-owned business, we all pitched in and started working part-time during the school semester and of course during the summer vacation. As kids, we looked forward to playing tag, baseball, hide and seek, etc. with the other neighborhood children, but work came first. It wasn't so bad because our chores were usually done early in the evening so we'd still be able to participate in the activities." Leonard smiled and added, "I remember when we got a bit older, if there was a dance at the *Centre Acadien*, Stella and I would race to see who could pack the fastest in hopes of being done early. The packing was always done in the evening."

I asked Leonard if he always planned to take over the business, and he said, "No, not really. I graduated from *L'École NDA* in 1972 and then went to Toronto, Ontario, and I took my carpentry trade. After three years in the big city, we decided to come back home. I worked for many years doing various jobs. He continued, "When my father was about sixty years old, he started talking about us taking over the business. We agreed, and in no time, we sold our house in *Le Plé* and bought my parents' house, while they moved to *Le Manoir* senior complex. In 1987, upon my father's retirement, Pauline and I took part ownership of Aucoin's Bakery. My mother and my

sister Yvette also had shares in the business. It was only years later that I became the official owner of the bakery."

Speaking with Mrs. Yvette LeLièvre who now works as a guide at Les Trois Pignons, "I started working in the bakery. I was knee-high to a grasshopper, so to speak. I had to stand on boxes to reach the shelves and the large bins. I worked part-time throughout my school years and then close to twenty years off and on as a full-time employee. I'm very happy to see that it's remained in the family!"

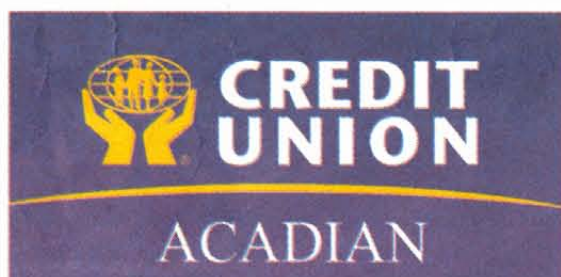
Mr. Aucoin and I talked about his learning the ropes from his parents. "Although I had been involved with the business as a child, there was still so much to learn. Later on, I took correspondence courses with the Bakery Council of Canada and received my diploma - Certified Bakery Specialist, CBS and certificate in Technology of Bread Baking. I also participated in a Food Safety Training Program Level 1 through N.S. Agriculture at Le Collège de l'Acadie. Every little bit helps."

I asked Mr. Aucoin to talk in comparison to the then and now, and he explained, "For an example, in 1967-68, the bakery carried eight products consisting of various breads, rolls and donuts. They would make 144 dozen of donuts during the day and packaged in the evening. Back then, in the prime months of July and August, they could use up to 40-50 (40 kg or 88 lbs) bags of flour weekly to make bread, and today, we use about 30-40 (20 kg) bags. That's about half, the decrease, but we make up for this with other products to balance it out." He continued, "In the early days of the bakery, my parents could survive on eight products. When more competition set in, stores selling products from the outside, it really affected the business. Even though my parents weren't too keen on

Congratulations!

On your 50th year
in business

Wishing you
continued success



CHETICAMP 902-224-2055
15089 Cabot Trail,
Cheticamp, NS B0E 1H0
TOLL FREE 1-877-477-7724

LeMOYNE 902-224-2015
13101 Cabot Trail
Grand Etang, NS B0E 1L0
TOLL FREE 1-866-364-2136

Happy 50th Anniversary



Alfred Poirier
Commercial
Insurance Broker
224-2390

Happy 50th Anniversary



Pharmacie Acadienne 224-2841



Congratulations
from all of your
friends
at

FARNELL
PACKAGING LIMITED

changes, they realized that in order to survive, you have to make adjustments along the way. There have been huge changes due to competition. It's meant less bread and rolls, so we found other products to keep above water so to speak. Times change, if the volume isn't there, we need to make the proper adjustments. Personally, I love this end of the job, trying out new products, seeing that our clients are happy and we're able to survive year after year."

I asked about the variation in prices, and he answered, "Les p'tit pains sold for 25 cents, and today, it's priced at \$2.60. The larger bread was 35 cents and now sells for \$3.60. It's quite a difference." He added, "When we took part ownership in 1987, we had 5.5 employees, and now, we have a staff of eleven employees." He paused and then said, "One thing that hasn't changed is our original bread recipes such as the raison bread, 100% whole wheat bread, white bread, rolls and pan rolls; also our respect for the customers and wanting to offer them the best products and service possible."

I had the opportunity to have a chat with Mrs. Pauline Aucoin. I asked what is a typical day at the bakery. "We're at work by 5:00 a.m. where Leonard and Justin work on making the bread, and I work on the pastries such as cinnamon rolls and tea biscuits. Later on, the other employees arrive and do numerous tasks, especially the packing of our products. In the evening, there are two-three hours of preparation work for the following day." She added, "To give you a general idea, in the summertime on a daily basis, we make about 500 breads, 120 dozen rolls and approximately 90-120 meat pies, plus all the other products that we offer. In the wintertime, this decreases to about 250 breads, 60 dozen rolls and 30 meat pies daily. On huge days at the bakery, if we sell more than predicted, it means making a second batch of bread at the end of the normal work day bringing us into the late evening." She added, "We have a large selection

of products ranging from breads like pumpernickel, whole wheat, multi-grain, flaxseed, rye, oat bran, raisin, baguettes, white and whole wheat French, homemade style rolls; while split rolls, white Kaisers, plate rolls, sub rolls, breadcrumbs and pizza dough, we offer as well, approximately 40 sweet products, meat pies and more."

Mr. Aucoin and I also talked about the years with their illnesses. "We've had some challenging years, with myself and Pauline both battling cancer. It hasn't been easy, but with the tremendous support of family, friend, neighbours and employees who gave 150 per cent of themselves at work, we've been able to continue and be successful. It was all so amazing, the support of the community and the employees. Something, we'll never forget!" He added, "Now we live each day as if it was our last. Before the cancer, I would have been stricter, more stressed. I've learned to be more relaxed. I guess that also comes with age. I try to instill in our entourage to enjoy the day, take it one step at a time. After a serious illness, one often realizes the value of life and the people around you."

We chatted about the past and present employees, and Mr. Aucoin proudly expressed, "Over the years, we've been so blessed with incredible employees. Today, our staff consists of myself, my wife Pauline, our son Justin, Marie-Stella Gale and Sandra Muise; as well, students Kayla LeBlanc, Andrea LeBlanc, Josée LeBlanc, Kimberley Chiasson and Danielle Muise." He added, "We've had a delivery service of our products since 1961. The first driver was Roderick Chiasson. At present day, our driver, Brian Aucoin, makes deliveries to Chéticamp, Grand-Étang, Margaree, Margaree Valley, Baddeck, Inverness, Port Hood, Judique, Mabou, Cape North, Bay St. Lawrence, Neil's Harbour and Ingonish."

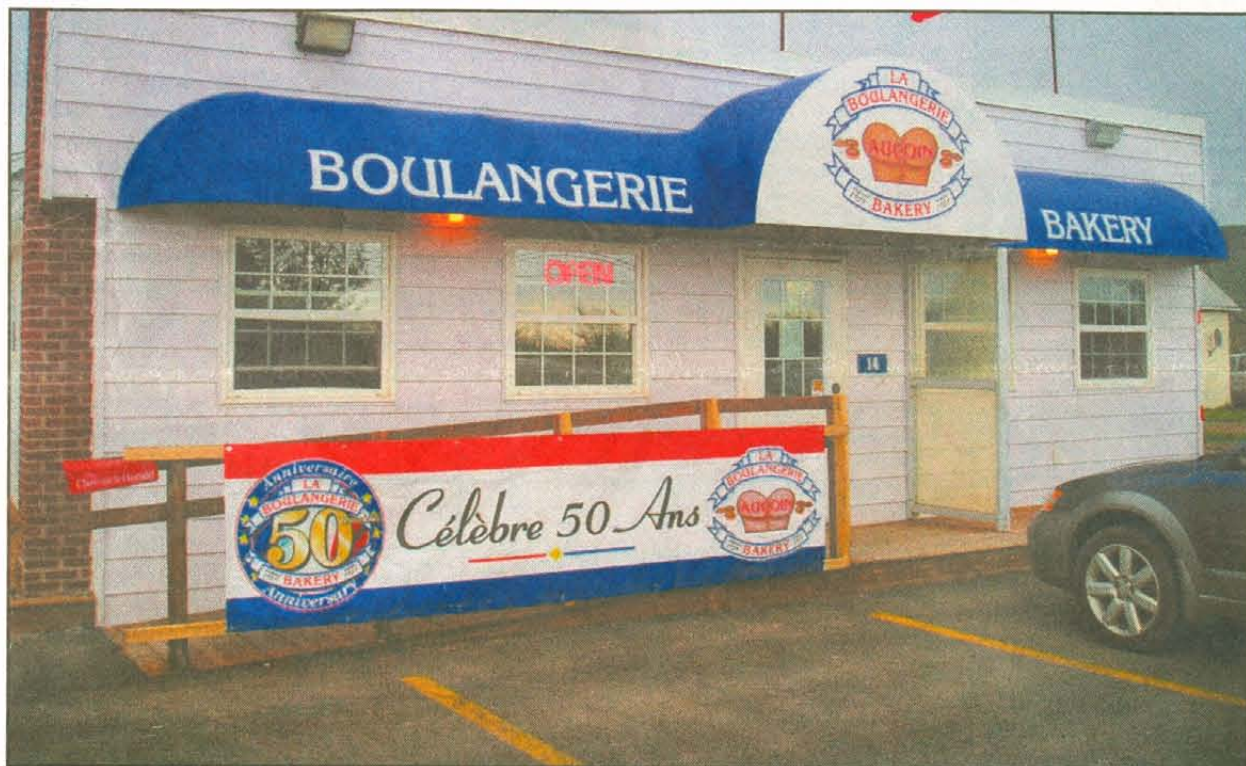
We chatted for a while about how they're celebrating 50 years of a family-owned business. "It's an incredible feeling. It's now three generations of employees, and it's



The present owners of Aucoin's Bakery - Leonard and Pauline Aucoin during their Pizza Drive - Cancer fund-raiser

wonderful that we can keep a business going that was started from scratch by my parents. We also raised a family of three children, Serge, Justin and Natalie. They grew up working part-time in the bakery and through the summer vacations." He continued, "What's really exciting is to see our son Justin learning the ropes and coming along very well. We hope to see him continue and that, some day, his children will also carry on this family business, our tradition. It's very important to us that the business stays in the family."

I asked Mr. Aucoin about the near future, "Well, there have been various extensions to the bakery over the years. If all goes as planned, we want to build another extension of 14.5 x 31 feet for storage and a holding unit when products are packed and ready for the delivery truck to pick up." We ended the visit with, "If it wasn't for the continuous support of the people in our community and our dedicated employees, we wouldn't be here. *Le gros de la force est la communauté!* We realize this and appreciate it day after day." He added, "All in all, we're very happy with our decision to take this direction in our lives many years ago." I asked Mr. Aucoin what it takes to run a family business, and he replied, "In order to succeed, you need endurance, patience and courage to improve each year. I can only hope that our future generations have as much enthusiasm and success as we've had in the past 50 years. On behalf of three generations, we want to thank everyone who's been a part of our journey." He finished with, "No matter what you face in life, work hard, have faith and keep smiling!"



Aucoin's Bakery after 50 years in business

Happy 50th Anniversary



Larades Tire Shop 224-2219



Happy 50th Anniversary



AuHavre Auto Services 224-1059

Happy 50th Anniversary



The Co-operators
Marcel Bourgeois 224-3204

Happy 50th Anniversary



Co-op Artisanale
Acadian Restaurant 224-2170

Happy 50th Anniversary



Bourgeois Diesel 224-1505

HORIZON MILLING™

A CARGILL FOODS AFFILIATE

Congratulations
on your
50th Anniversary
in business

We are proud to be
one of your suppliers

Horizon Milling GP
A Cargill Foods Affiliate

32 Saeking Drive
Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, B3A 4Y5