

1973

## History of Dairy Queen-----Sherb Noble

In 1938 I became acquainted with the McCulloughs (J.F. & R.A.) who were in the mix business in Green River, Illinois. Through their connections I opened some Ice Cream Stores in Kankakee and Chicago Heights and the following year I opened one in Blue Island, Illinois. These were known as Sherb's Ice Cream Stores selling hard ice cream.

J. F. McCullough (better known to us as "Grandpa McCullough") was an old time Dairy Man who always had the idea of selling soft ice cream to the public, not knowing too much about the soft cream business or where to start. After several discussions, we had to find out what reaction the public would have, we came up with the idea of having a sale on soft ice cream at my plant store at 255 S. West Ave., Kankakee, Illinois. We advertised all the ice cream you could eat for 10¢. We used a regular 40 quart commercial freezer filling 5 gallon cans then hand dipping the product into 16 oz. cups. The reaction was very good, we served over 1600 servings in two hours. We had ice cream all up and down the block even had them eating ice cream in the corner tavern down the street which was very unusual for this place. About two weeks later C.R. Medd & Sons had the same kind of sale in Moline, Illinois with very good results.

At this time the McCulloughs had looked at several counter freezers but none seemed to fit the occasion. Soon after this they met Harry Oltz, who had invented a custard type freezer that operated with ice and salt. The McCulloughs made a deal with Mr. Oltz in regards to the patent rights and use of the freezer. In the winter of 1938 and 1939 the McCulloughs had Stoelting Bros. build the experimental model with commercial refrigeration. They ran tests with this freezer in the basement of J.F. McCulloughs home in Green River. In the winter of 1939 and 1940 there were four freezers built by Stoelting Bros.

With the cooperation of the McCulloughs, I put the first Dairy Queen Store in the country at 501 North Chicago St., Joliet, Illinois using two of these freezers. This was in June 1940. We sold only cones, sundaes, pints and quarts as the opening ad shows. This was strictly a walk in type store located between two funeral parlors, and with very little parking. I hired Jim and Grace Elliot to operate the store for us.

The other two machines that were built that year went to Oltz in Florida where they used the trade name "Ar-Tik Systems". Before settling on a name, we discussed several, but we finally settled on the "Dairy Queen" name which was suggested by J.F. McCullough. In 1941 three new stores opened. McCulloughs built the one in Moline which they always called the first Drive in Dairy Queen Store. Jim & Grace Elliot operated the store for the McCulloughs. Later on they purchased it from the McCulloughs. About a week later I opened my second store at 10 South Ohio St., Aurora, Illinois, this is the oldest strictly Dairy Queen location in operation in the country today. Last year we had the biggest year we ever had in the history of, the store and so far this year is ahead of last year, this proves to me that the soft serve business is not dead yet. The McCulloughs put the third store in a building in downtown Davenport, Iowa using the experimental freezer that was built in 1939. I'm not too familiar with the outcome of that store or how it operated.

In June of 1942 I went into the service for Uncle Sam and did not return until the fall of 1945. From 1945 on you may know the history of Dairy Queen as well as I do.