

The Bergen Newsletter

Schneiders

The year was 1886. John Metz Schneider, employed at the Dominion Button Factory in Berlin (now Kitchener), had sustained a serious injury to his hand and was not able to do his usual work and so was not able to earn a living. He had a young family that needed to be provided for, so he headed off in a new direction. Using his mother's sausage recipe brought over from Germany, he created lengths of pork sausage and sold them door-to-door. People liked his sausage very much and he sold more and more of it. He left the button factory behind and J M Schneider Meats, a Kitchener institution, was born. By 1913 there were 20 on the payroll (which totalled \$220 per week for all 20). In 1925 there were 131 employees and by 1965 that number had grown to 1400. Things were going very well indeed.

Schneiders had become a major employer and a source of pride for the community. Members of the Schneider family, now in the third and fourth generation, continued in the management of the company, but in the late 1990's sold their interest in the operation to an American meat packer. Thereafter Maple Leaf Foods, a subsidiary of McCain Foods, acquired control of Schneiders, and in October of last year, after 7 years of ownership, announced that they would be closing the Kitchener operation in 3 years and reopening in a new facility in Hamilton. For Kitchener, this will be the end of an era.

In 1938, in the final years of the depression, my father was 18. He had to help support his family in those difficult times, and so he left school and started work at Schneiders in the bacon-slicing department. Over the years he moved through a number of roles including truck driver, sales representative, credit manager and finally, for the last 15 years or so, advertising manager. He retired after 46 years in 1984, but was asked to stay on as a consultant to oversee the Schneider image and heritage in ongoing advertising campaigns. Dad had great admiration for the Schneider family and J M Schneider Inc. He extolled the quality of their products and was a company man in the very best sense of that expression.

Children of Schneiders employees were given preferential hiring for summer jobs replacing vacationing employees. In late June of 1967, I started working at Schneiders, and continued every summer until 1974. I was the first of three Bergen brothers to work there. Schneiders funded my university career, paid for a few adventures along the way, and provided me with a great education of a different sort. The following is a loose assortment of memories from my Schneiders years.

The house that I grew up in was located a couple of lots over from the original Schneiders factory and had been built for a member of the Schneider family. By 1925 business had outgrown the original operation and a new facility was constructed about four blocks further down Courtland Avenue, at the new edge of town. It occupied 100,000 square feet. By the time I started working there the original structure had been built over and added to numerous times, and the complex now occupied an area of a couple of city blocks. It had an almost Dickensian complexity: layers built on layers, with the very oldest part buried in the middle.

I started working for \$2.40 an hour, and this was big money in those days. A new Volkswagen Beetle sold for under \$1500, and nice houses were selling for ten or twenty thousand dollars. That first year I took the year off school and so worked through until December. I then spent the money that I saved wandering about the world for 6 months.¹ If one was careful, there were many areas where one could live on a dollar a day. This is something to think about. One hour of work at Schneiders as a student would buy 2.4 days of living in Greece or Portugal. A very good summer job these days (do these still exist?) paying \$20 per hour might pay for half a day's survival in these same countries. It was a great and privileged time to be young. We, of course, took it all for granted and knew that it would go on forever.

The Order-Fill Department

Not surprisingly, what an order-fill department does is fill orders, placing products in boxes and then sending them off to the shipping department for delivery to customers found across the province and beyond. One of my first jobs was in a sterile white room at the end of the department. A conveyor brought in filled boxes. I taped them shut and wrote their destination code on them with a marker. I had grown up with a great affection for the Bruce Peninsula, and I remember the strangeness of working at 4:00 in the morning, following the delivery route of the orders heading north up Highway 6. Names like Wiarton, Barrow Bay, Stokes Bay, Lions Head and finally Tobermory had great meaning for me. In my mind there were pictures of these places, blue sky, blue water, green trees and the sun high, a remarkable contrast to where I was.

In my first year, working the eleven to seven shift was not something that I had encountered before. And at around 4:00 in the morning my brain desperately needed to shut down, and it couldn't. I was there in body, standing and working, but large parts of my thinking process were missing in action. I was charged with writing the numerical destination codes on boxes being shipped out. My brain faded in and out. More than once that summer my foreman came over to ask how it was that boxes destined for Windsor ended up in Sioux Lookout. After a while I resorted to "super tea" which involved 4 teabags, lots of sugar and lemon juice, all steeped in a thermos for about 15 minutes. It tasted terrible, but when downed at the 2:00 AM break it sure lit up all my circuits. I was good until morning. After a while I upped the dose to 6 teabags but this gave me caffeine poisoning; that is another story.

The Best Job

My best job: one summer I was assigned to a tow motor. This is a sort of battery powered forklift that inserts itself under a pallet stacked with boxes of bologna or tins of lard and lifts it about 4 inches. Then, with the driver seated sidesaddle, it hauls the load off to its destination. The order-fill department collected products from all over the factory, brought them into one place, packed them, and then sent off to shipping and to waiting trucks. It was my job to drive off through the factory, find the products and bring them back. During the day things went slowly due to the general congestion and line-ups at the freight elevators, but nights were an entirely different matter. This was the best time. Everyone had gone home and I got to wander through this great empty factory sent on errands to its farthest corners. The lights were dimmed and some of the older parts of the plant became almost eerie. Occasionally one came

¹ A previous newsletter deals with this. Go to our website: lakesidedental.ca. From there go to About Lakeside Dental/Newsletters/1968: The Open Road.

across a fully lit area, a clean-up crew hard at work with steam hoses and brushes getting things ready for the next day, but mostly it was just a quiet and deserted place. And I had the great pleasure of being paid to traverse its corridors, coolers and back rooms.

The Worst Job

In my third summer things were a bit slow in order-fill and I got sent off for a couple of weeks to the ham room. Cooked ham is made by filling rectangular stainless steel containers with cured pork and then heating these in large boilers until the ham is no longer raw. After that the water is drained off and the hot, slippery tins, each weighing about 25 pounds, are lifted out and attached to a conveyor. This was my job. The cooker resembled an oversize chest freezer. The tins were very hot, just below the boiling point, steaming and, most significantly, covered in a protein coagulate left over from the boiling process. So when you lifted them out, you were exposed to unrelenting heat and humidity and your gloves became covered in this protein scum. After a few minutes, perspiration was streaming down your face, but if you rub it off with your gloved hand you now have a layer of coagulated protein stuck to your face along with the perspiration. There was no escape. It was a very, very long 2 weeks and when I got back, to order-fill it seemed like a return to paradise.

The Freezer

In the summer of 1972 I was given steady days, but my job was to tape and address boxes in the freezer order fill. Unlike the regular order fill, which maintains refrigerator temperatures, the freezer order fill maintains freezer temperatures, probably in the neighbourhood of -15 °C. And when you are standing there, not moving, it doesn't matter how much insulation you are wearing, the cold soaks in. "Chilled to the bone" barely begins to describe the level of cold achieved after 8 hours. I would get off work at 3:00 in the afternoon. My black Volkswagen Beetle had been sitting in the July sun on a black asphalt parking lot with its windows closed tight. I got in, turned the heater to full and drove home, windows still up. One wouldn't want any of that wonderful heat to escape.

I felt like I never did get really hot that summer, and on my return to dental school in September I hoped for one extreme late summer heat wave to cause me to feel overwhelmed. It never came. In fact it was a cool fall, and that winter, to me was the coldest that I can remember. This is what caused me to develop my theory of "psychic heat": if you absorb enough heat in summer, then winter becomes welcome, and if you get sufficient cold in winter, then a return to the heat of summer is welcome. As a result, we have never had air conditioning in the residential part of the house. My children, when still living here, were not impressed with my theories about "psychic heat". Me? I still like it when "The Great Air Conditioner" comes on in the fall, and also when it is turned off in the spring. We do have air conditioning in the office - my lunacy doesn't reach everywhere.

Shifts

Afternoons, 3:00–11:00, is the "shortest" shift. It's still eight hours, but you get to sleep in until early afternoon if you want. Things start at 3:00 and after that the hours seem to sail by and in what seems like no time the shift is over. On the other hand, you have no social life. By 11:45 PM, once you are home, showered and ready to go out, all of your confreres are heading off to bed. An exception to this was my second last summer. I was on straight afternoons, but so was

the young woman that I was spending time with. We would head out around midnight and get back when the first bit of light was coming into the sky about 5 hours later. It was a good summer for driving through sleeping small towns in Waterloo County. We were the night people.

Overtime

In my first year of dental school my summer savings were gone by early February. Tuition costs were high, I was now living in London instead of at home, and I was buying my own food. So by the time the school year ended, I was just flat busted broke. My bank account was at zero, I had borrowed from friends, roommates and parents, plundered any reserve funds and simply had nothing left. I started my fifth summer at Schneiders in early May. They had moved the order-fill department out of the depths of the old factory out to a brand-new purpose built structure: the Distribution Building. And even though it was spacious, with conveyor belts running everywhere connecting three levels, and designed to work brilliantly, in fact it didn't. All the little systems and make-do pathways of the apparently inefficient old order-fill were lost and things had completely bogged down. Our order-filling and shipping rates fell way behind. Everyone started working enormous overtime to keep things going. I would finish 8 hours and then, every day, get another 5 hours of overtime (paid at time and a half). On Saturdays I worked another 8 hours of overtime.

When you leave for work at 6:30 and come home that night at 8:30 you do little but work, eat and sleep. But if you are a really impoverished student, this is not even the beginning of a problem. In fact it is a brilliant solution. It was like an endless rain falling on a parched and desperate landscape. My reserve funds were replenished, my debts paid off and my main bank account began to burst with savings. At the end of eight weeks I had earned what I would usually earn in a whole summer. Then, suddenly, they got it all figured out. Overtime disappeared, and in fact I even got laid off for a couple of weeks. It was summer, I had economic reserves and I had time off. It was a great state of affairs, and my first brush with semi-retirement.

The Casings Department

Warning, graphic details of animal processing follow, gentle and suggestible readers, even if not vegetarian/vegan, might want to skip this section. Go directly to A Final Exit.

Since early times, very little of animals raised for food was wasted. Meat was eaten, both fresh and preserved, hides made into leather, hooves turned into glue and the intestines used for making sausage. Wieners, bologna and all sausages in between were first made using thoroughly cleaned out intestines as the casing. Intestines, to this day, are a valuable commodity. Plastic casings are now in wide use, but the best flavours still come from sausage made from natural casings that contribute significantly to the flavour of the final product.

So, in my last year at Schneiders, I was offered steady days if I wanted to work on the beef kill and specifically in the casings department. Like my cousin Paul before me (and earlier, when he had described his summer doing this same job, it was hard to imagine) I became the person charged with removing the intestinal contents of recently deceased cattle.

Now all of this has an interesting set of background notes: the most primitive multi-cell organisms are essentially a feeding tube. Things have evolved. It has been argued (by pesky biologists) that we are essentially the same thing, just with legs, arms and head attached to aid in getting food to put into that feeding tube. Gives one pause. Anyhow, my good friend John Howard is head of paediatric gastro-enterology at the medical school at the University of Western Ontario, and he looks after the lower 7/8ths of that feeding tube. As a Schneiders employee I seemed to be in charge of the middle and final portions and now, as a dentist, I look after the first stage: the grinding and smiley bits.

Anyhow, getting past this background, I should reflect on what I actually did in the casings department. Intestines from recently deceased cattle slid down a stainless steel table to my station. This happened every minute and 15 seconds. My job was to feed these intestines onto a spiral stainless pipe with lots of water holes all along its length. Once all was in place I would step on a foot control releasing water along the length of the pipe, which flushed out the intestinal contents. This is what usually happened and things were generally straightforward. Occasionally, however, the intestinal muscles were in spasm, and this would constrict the water flow. And then the water pressure would build, causing the intestine to bulge significantly, which then either forced the constriction open, or, if one wasn't careful, caused a "blowout", sometimes forceful: think water balloon. I won't dwell on all of the details or outcomes of all of that, but I can tell you that this job was far more compelling than the best computer game that I have been involved with. I focused with complete intensity. If you lost focus, there were significant consequences. Time flew. I would arrive at 7:00 and after what felt like 20 minutes it was our 10:00 coffee break. "15 minutes" after that it was 1:00 and time for lunch. It was, in an odd way, a very good job: steady days and the time simply evaporated. And, 4 years later, once I had children of my own, diapers were far less daunting.

A final exit

In the beef kill, of which casings were a section, everyone had hoses at their disposal. They hung down from the ceiling with a squeeze nozzle, like a garden hose. These were used to keep everything rinsed off and clean. Some hoses were fairly small, and others quite large, depending on the need. And the largest one hung right in front of the windows of the foreman's office—it was a serious hose, but used only occasionally for a few specific tasks.

Guys, being guys, and back then the beef kill was all guys, sometimes took to messing around with hoses, spraying neighbours and the like. Our foreman, a no-nonsense guy, took an extremely dim view of this sort of thing, and so it generally wasn't very much of an issue. However, there was a tradition, that on the last day of someone's employment, whether a student, or someone moving on, there was a baptism from all of these hoses. And after eight summers there, my last day at Schneiders had arrived. Eight more months of school and I would begin life's next chapter. At lunch the guys were razzing me about their tradition and how it was inevitable. I figured that there had to be a plan B. I talked to the foreman about leaving an hour early, and avoiding all of this. He realized that this was one situation that he couldn't control, he really disliked horseplay and so he agreed.

Our shift ended at 3:00, so at 2:00 I put things down and casually headed for the exit. I was just about out, and in front of the foreman's office when Frank, one of the guys, yelled: "Bergen is

leaving” and let fly with his hose. In seconds others joined in and soon it was mayhem. However, it’s important to note that once this started I was now standing in front of the foreman’s office, right alongside the biggest hose of all. And I had nothing to lose. I wasn’t coming back again, ever. I grabbed that biggest hose and returned fire, with probably 5 times the volume and double the pressure of what any of the other guys had available. They scrambled for cover. Frank, the one who started it hid behind a rack so I aimed at the ceiling above him. The water poured down on him in torrents. He broke for cover and I followed him with the hose. And then I saw others crouched down and nailed them: meek summer student turns Rambo. The foreman: he was in his office sitting behind his desk, taking this all in. He assessed the situation, did a quick calculation and stayed right where he was. In a bit things were quiet. Everyone had retreated well out of range. I looked around, put down the hose and then continued my walk out, and away. There have been very few moments in my life that were as fine as that one. You might say that I was walking out to my new life and all this might imply, but on reflection, the really important thing about that moment was that I got to do something that every guy in that place had thought about doing, and never would, and I was going to get away with it.

JM Schneiders is leaving Kitchener and I am sad for that. It was a good company with good people, and it was an excellent place to figure some stuff out.

Continued on next page.

The Rest of the Newsletter

An update from Lakeside Dental

The view from our window continues to be great. Today there is snow on the ground, the result of our first snow event of any consequence, the sun is shining and the lake is blue and green with whitecaps.

For the last three and a half years I have worked here in Port Dalhousie on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday. Thursdays and Friday mornings were spent in Welland working for my good friend, Tony Mancuso. He purchased a practice next door to his office for his daughter Sara, and he needed help looking after it until she graduated. At that time she was in first year dental school at the University of Western Ontario. This spring Sara graduated and started working on July 2. This made me surplus to Tony's needs and with great joy I was reduced to working just three days a week, all here at Lakeside Dental.

I am now officially fully semi-retired and it's even better than hoped for. We like the people that come to see us, we like solving problems for them and we particularly like seeing one person at a time. With some luck, this will continue for a long time to come.

Thanks for all the referrals

Our schedule is just about perfect – we are usually booked fairly solidly about a week ahead and thereafter things are more relaxed. It has been like this for the past couple of years and much of the credit goes to you, the people who recommend us to family and friends. We are always happy to see them. Thank you!

Same Day Emergency Treatment

In a similar way, if you, or a family member or a friend, have a dental emergency, it is our policy to see you (or them) on the same day if at all possible. The same applies to weekends: my home phone number is in the book (905-934-8598). If I am around, I am happy to see you and get you out of distress. We also have a backup emergency service that looks after things when I am away.

Parking at Lakeside Dental

We are regularly asked if it is OK to park in the driveway. It is, and in fact we recommend it. It's close and you aren't opening your door into potential traffic. However, if the driveway is full (occasionally), or if it's simpler for you, on street parking is not a problem.

Want to live longer? And live healthier?

We worry about your teeth, but we also worry about the rest of you.

Dr. Mike Evans runs the Health Design Lab and is focused on preventive medicine. In looking at all the factors involved in maintaining health he has found one area of health care that gives a bigger return than any other investment in your health.

If implemented this will:

-Decrease heart disease by 50%

- Provide a 47% reduction in knee arthritis symptoms
- Reduce anxiety by 48% and depression by 30–48%
- Decrease dementia and Alzheimer's disease by 50%
- Reduce hip fractures in older women by 48%
- Reduce the risk of death by 23% (Based on a study of 10,000 Harvard alumni over 12 years)

All of this and much more!

Curious? Open your computer, go to YouTube and enter Dr. Mike Evans and look for a posting labelled 23&1/2. Not only is it useful, it's short, fun to watch and compelling. It had 500,000 hits when I heard about it on CBC a month ago and is now up to 2 million hits. No computer? Call us and we will mail you a printed synopsis. Teeth are important, but the rest of you is even more important. Check this out.

Lakesidedental.ca - Our Website

Actually the above Mike Evans link is listed on our website (lakesidedental.ca - see Interesting Stuff). We have created a listing of interesting and thought provoking sites. None of them have much to do with dentistry, but there are some fascinating things that we have collected over the years. As good stuff comes along, we'll keep adding to it.

What is toothbrush abrasion?

Toothbrush abrasion refers to grooves worn into teeth, generally by the gum line. It is self-inflicted damage brought about by a combination of the abrasives in toothpaste and overly enthusiastic brushing (scrubbing). These can be shallow, or in some cases quite deep – halfway through the tooth into the nerve. Generally growing sensitivity brings the situation to our attention earlier than that.

Toothpaste contains abrasives designed to remove (scrape) stain from your teeth. Lots of toothpaste along with too much elbow grease can result in tooth structure, along with the stain, being scraped off your teeth. Once the grooves get deep enough, we fill them in. If we notice this starting we advise you about the cause and steps to prevent things from getting worse.

Avoiding toothbrush abrasion is fairly simple. Brush your teeth thoroughly, not aggressively; note: no vigorous back and forth scrubbing. An electric toothbrush generally won't lead to abrasion, but neither will a properly used traditional toothbrush. Use a soft brush. We generally recommend toothpaste once a day (to remove stain) and thereafter brush with water and then use mouthwash for that nice minty taste. If in doubt, ask us. We are happy to discuss all of this for as long as needed.

Food Catching Between Teeth (Food Impaction)

If teeth aren't in firm contact with their neighbours then food can get jammed between them when chewing. This "impacted" food feeds the bacteria that cause decay (see following article) Very serious decay can result in short order (months rather than years). If food is getting packed between your teeth in a particular spot don't delay in getting the

situation resolved. We mentioned this last year and had a fair number of people show up to have things looked at. Some of them were just fine, but others had alarmingly deep decay already underway. We thought that this advice was worth repeating again this year.

Tooth Decay: why we get tooth decay and what to do about it.

This is a fairly detailed article, good reading if you wonder why your teeth develop decay, and what to do about it. We've had this discussion with many of you, but if you are interested, keep reading. A little knowledge can be a useful thing. On the other hand, it's near the end of the newsletter and you can also fast forward past it.

Why do teeth decay?

Decay is primarily caused by bacteria called *Streptococcus mutans* (*S. mutans*) and their ability to ferment simple carbohydrates (sugars and starches) to form lactic acid. Almost all of us have these bacteria in our mouth, but some varieties produce more acid than others. Your teeth are made up of a calcium compound called calcium hydroxyapatite and it dissolves when contacted by the lactic acid. You may remember high school chemistry when the teacher dropped a strong acid onto a piece limestone and it bubbled up, slowly dissolving. The same thing happens in your mouth, but very slowly. The dissolved area on your tooth is what we refer to as decay, or technically: dental caries.

S. mutans is part of a bacterial colony or bio-film called plaque. Most of us are familiar with plaque. It's the soft white stuff that builds up on your teeth when you go camping for a few days and forget your toothbrush. By about the third day your teeth feel like they have a fuzzy film on them (referred to as "sweaters on your teeth" when talking to kids).

Oxygen inhibits *S. mutans*' ability to ferment carbohydrates, but oxygen is blocked once the plaque gets thick enough (after about 48 hours). After this starches and sugars pulled into the plaque, they are turned into lactic acid (along with carbon dioxide and water) and decay can begin.

How can I prevent decay?

There are a number of approaches.

1. The most important is to remove plaque. Oxygen inhibits the fermentation process. Plaque blocks oxygen. So if there is thick plaque, there is too little oxygen and decay results. Remove the plaque and there is no decay. Plaque is very soft. Remember that camping trip: you got rid of that "fuzzy" feeling just by wiping your teeth with Kleenex, so with a brush and floss plaque doesn't stand a chance. It takes plaque about 2 days to rebuild after it is removed, so if you brush and floss your teeth thoroughly once a day, there will be few areas where decay can result.

2. Diet: After you “feed” your plaque with sweets or starches acid production continues for about 20 minutes. So if you have nooks and crannies in your teeth where your brushing and flossing haven’t removed all of the plaque, acid will be produced for twenty minutes after ingestion of carbohydrates. So if you have a glass of orange juice and drink it all at once, you get acid production for twenty minutes. If you sip at it all afternoon long, then you will have much longer period of acid production. Similarly, slowly consuming a package of Lifesavers will cause a much longer period of acid production than wolfing down a chocolate bar.
3. Fluoride: Fluoride ions react with calcium hydroxyapatite to replace the calcium and form fluorohydroxyapatite, a compound that is very acid resistant. This is the basis for fluoridated toothpaste, fluoride treatments for children and for fluoridation of water. With time, teeth absorb fluoride from various sources and become more resistant to decay. We are generally most prone to decay just after our teeth erupt and for another decade until they take in enough fluoride to toughen them up.

Tell me more about sugars and starches.

Refined sugars and starches (the white stuff) are particularly potent in terms of decay. Studies using tiny electrodes to measure acid production in teeth report that there is little difference in the effect of sugars and starches. Eating sweetened and unsweetened cereals result in the same levels of acid production. A similar outcome occurs comparing candy to apples – they both have fermentable sugars.

Our recommendations:

Brush and floss thoroughly at least once a day. Removing all the plaque from your teeth on a daily basis is enough to stop the decay process. Brushing cleans the outside of your teeth and flossing cleans between them. As we like to say: “You don’t have to floss all of your teeth, just the ones that you want to keep”.

Don’t consume sugar on a continual basis: sugar in coffee, juices, chewing gum or candies allows slow release of sugar and prolonged acid production.

Use fluoridated toothpaste, and if you are particularly prone to decay ask us about supplemental fluoride treatments or a home fluoride programme.

Have your teeth examined regularly. A small cavity is easily treated. With time it becomes a large cavity. After that it enters into the tooth’s pulp (nerve) and this becomes infected. Solving the problem becomes more and more complicated. Catch cavities and have them treated when they are small – it’s so much easier.

Scores of academic careers are based on researching tooth decay. This is a very abbreviated version of all of that research. We hope that it helps clarify your understanding of decay and its prevention.

And so it is time to get this newsletter into print.

Warm greetings to all of you from all of us here at Lakeside Dental.

David Bergen and staff.