

A Good Place to Eat

by Frederick Wickert



“Where’s a good place to eat around here?” A question I often heard when Chief of Police in Middleburgh, NY in the mid 1970’s. Not wanting to be accused of playing favoritism, I always replied with a list of several places in or near town.

As for myself, there was one place I frequented far more than the others. That was the Middleburgh Diner, located on upper Main Street or state route 145 on the East end of town. The difference in spelling is not an error by the way. The Village name has an “H” on the end of it but the diner does not.

The Middleburgh Diner was a favorite place for a number of local law enforcement to meet over coffee and discuss business of mutual interest. Myself, state troopers, conservation officers and deputy sheriffs could be found there in mid-morning almost every day during the week. Occasionally we were even joined by FBI and ATF agents.

The diner did have old-fashioned donuts, the ones my folks called fried cakes when I was a young lad, but we seldom had any of them. It was coffee or breakfast for the most part. If one of the men wanted something in the way of pastry it was more than likely a slice of pie. There was very little donut eating.

It was a convenient place for us to meet, and I found that when the others left and I was still there, I gathered a lot of intelligence. People approached me to give information or to gripe about something I didn’t know was going on. The same people never considered calling me or coming to my office with these things. I suppose they felt they had more anonymity doing it that way. Whatever the reason, they talked there when they never did otherwise.

There were other reasons for going there. The food was good, the service was good and friendly, and the coffee was good. To a cop, good coffee is important.

Now, I am no longer a cop. That was many years ago in my life, but when in the neighborhood, I continue to go back to the Middleburgh Diner. It is a comfortable place to go. The service is still good and the food is just like going to a church supper if you know what I mean.

The place is not modern. It is old, but comfortable and some might even call it quaint. I still occasionally see one or two retired law officers who are also continuing to come back. The food is all like home cooking and the portions are plenty. The prices are reasonable. There is usually ample parking.

Families, business people, loggers, farmers, mechanics, truckers, telephone and electric linemen, sales persons and construction workers, and young and old all feel welcome and comfortable there. It is a place where friends and neighbors greet each other, and where strangers are comfortable enough to strike up conversations.

The Middleburgh Diner has many objects hanging on the walls of great interest. Many old signs from the 1930’s, 40’s and 50’s grace the walls. On shelves up high are rows and rows of old metal containers, great memory inducers. Many of the senior citizens enjoy the nostalgia those bring forth.

The ladies working at the diner change the decorations with the holidays and seasons. They decorate for Halloween, for Thanksgiving and for Christmas. Now in February it is decorated for Valentines Day.

There are dining rooms on both ends of the building with a long counter and stools in the center section with tables along the windows. The front and both ends of the building are lined with large windows giving plenty of light. The atmosphere is bright and cheery and it is a comfortable and pleasant place to be.

It has been thirty years since I went there on a regular basis as a police officer. The ownership has changed, but the homey atmosphere and the good food and good coffee has not. If you are ever passing through Middleburgh, New York, stop by and say hello. You won’t be sorry you did.