

'Cofather' knew value of hard work

ALEX WEBER The London Free Press
Tuesday, February 7, 2012 7:53:59 EST PM



John Arp of Kipp's Lane Fish and Chips has been serving Londoners for 38 years from their northeast London location. (MIKE HENSEN/THE LONDON FREE PRESS)

The first dollar John Arp made running Kipps Lane Fish and Chips still hangs proudly beneath the London restaurant's menu board.

For 38 years, Arp ran the tiny seafood joint where he not only remembered his customers' orders, but knew their stories as well.

"He had a heart of gold. ... He didn't just treat you as a customer, he got to know you," said his daughter Jacqueline Arp.

Born in the Netherlands in 1925, Arp learned the value of hard work and the importance of loyalty at a young age.

Jacqueline remembers her father telling her about his experiences in a German labour camp during the Second World War. When the Nazis came to take Arp's father, a high school principal, to a labour camp in Poland, Arp offered himself instead.

After the war, he joined the Dutch navy and enjoyed a long career as the captain of a minesweeper.

When his long sea journeys caused him to miss the birth of his oldest daughter, Nienke, he knew he needed to change careers.

He moved his family to Canada in 1966, a land of new beginnings for many Dutch people after the war, and took job as a London restaurant manager.

But it didn't take long for Arp to realize he wanted to strike out on his own.

"He wanted to be his own boss," Jacqueline said.

So, in 1972, at 47, Arp bought Kipps Lane Fish and Chips, a dive seafood restaurant and major fixer-upper.

On his first day he only had three customers, but his addictive fry batter - a secret recipe - and positive attitude kept them coming back, and, of course, they told their friends.

Six months later, business was booming.

The fish and chip joint became a London landmark, and Arp such a fixture in the business he was dubbed "the Godfather"

"He hardly ever advertised his whole life. ... He always said the best advertising I can have is people raving about my fish and chips," Jacqueline said.

Thirty-eight years later, people are still raving about Arp and Kipps Lane Fish and Chips.

So dedicated was he to his customers, he never missed a single day of work.

Jacqueline said her father closed the restaurant for a short time a few years ago when he had a quadruple bypass at 82. But it wasn't long before he was back behind the counter, where he worked almost until his death Dec. 16. He was 85.

"He worked up until the night before he was hospitalized," she said.

The phone at Kipps Lane Fish and Chips hasn't stopped ringing since, with people offering condolences and sharing their memories of Arp.

"I think he would be pleased to know how much he's missed," she said.

Jacqueline said she plans to continue running the business in her father's memory with the help of longtime staffers Lorrie Emery and Leah Masuch.

"This is our way of keeping his memory alive."

E-mail alex.weber@sunmedia.ca, or follow [AlexWatLFP](#) on Twitter.