

Truck driver helps conquer hunger pains

By CINDY HOOGASIAN

If you think the milk man has a rough job, take pity on the poor caterer. The reliable people driving catering trucks to industrial complexes and shops leave the elements, mechanical problems and early morning hours to make sure workers fully enjoy their breaks.

One industrial caterer serving the Rochester area is Down Home Industrial Catering in Troy. Drivers get to work each morning by 5 a.m. For many drivers, this means awakening by 4:15 a.m. to get to work on time.

Once at the headquarters, the drivers order and pick up their food supply, stock their truck and get ready for their 30-odd daily stops.

Keith Donnellon of Lake Orion drives the catering truck that services the Rochester area stops. He is enthusiastic about his work and anticipates owning

his own service one day.

At 10:45 a.m. Monday through Friday, Donnellon can be found at C.P. Plastics in Auburn Heights. Raising the sides and back panels of his truck, he greets the familiar faces welcoming his arrival.

"This is a great job. People are always up, in a good mood when you get there. It means break-time for them, and a chance to get a doughnut, sandwich or cup of coffee and relax."

"People say we have the best food they've eaten from any truck service, and some folks get very upset if you run out of their favorite item before you get to their stop. You really have to know what sells, and be sure you keep the stock up for the popular items," Donnellon said.

DOWN HOME Industrial Catering offers a large variety of food and beverages to its customers. The fare in-

cludes soups, stews, sandwiches, chili, turkey and gravy, roast beef and gravy, fried chicken, sausage and egg on toast, bacon, egg and cheese sandwiches, homemade pies, fruit juices, soda pop, pickles, yogurt and much more.

Trucks even carry a large assortment of cigarettes, cigars, tobacco, candy, gum and snack foods.

Hot foods are kept at 140-160 degrees Fahrenheit. The heat source is a propane gas tank. Hot sandwiches, soups, stews and the like are kept in the rear compartment of the catering truck.

Cold foods are stored in the right side of the truck. During the warmer months, the compartment is cooled by blowers. Keeping foods cold in the winter is seldom a problem.

Food storage is found on the left side. Each truck is equipped with two urns for coffee and hot water, and supplied with plenty of food.

It is important to estimate accurately how much of what items will be needed for a daily run. Any sandwiches left over are disposed of at the day's end. This insures patrons only the freshest foods.

Purveyors deliver to the catering service in the early morning hours, usually between 2-4 a.m.

"The food business we operate has a profit margin of about 33 percent," said Jim Koppal, co-owner of the catering service. "Our profits are offset by truck insurance costs, maintenance of vehicles, food cost, and many other things."

"WE WOULD be hurting if we didn't make \$100 a day on a truck. A brand new unit costs \$10,000. Then, of course, you have to have somewhere to run the truck."

"The next step is to buy or lease a route. The usual cost of a catering

route is \$15,000. If the customers like your food and service, you can put other companies out of business fairly easily," Koppal said.

Down Home Industrial Catering, owned by Koppal and his brother, Rick, employs nine people. There are five female drivers and four males.

"This is a fun job, really. In the summertime, you're outside in the sun, you can wear whatever you choose to work, and you're always greeted warmly — at any time of year," Donnellon said.

CERTAIN QUALITIES make or break a mobile catering service, Koppal said.

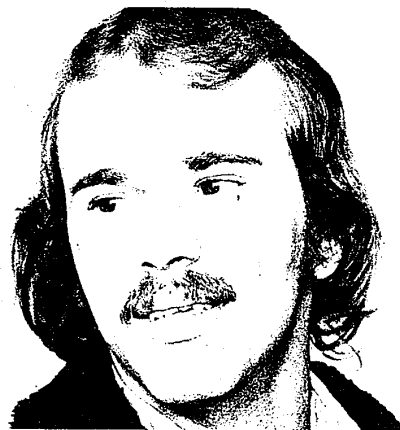
"Reliability is very important in this business. We have to be as close to schedule as possible, barring unforeseen problems. There are things called time stops. These must be met at exactly the same time every day."

"What a time stop involves is making it to a certain place at the appointed time every day, because the workers get their break weather you're there or not. If the catering truck arrives five minutes late at a time stop, they probably missed half their break time waiting for him to show up. That's a good way to loose accounts," Koppal explained.

Another important aspect of catering is quality consistency, assured by continued buying from quality purveyors. Cleanliness of the food service trucks is also very important, Donnellon maintains.

"People wash the trucks daily, in the morning. We keep the interior and shelves as clean as we can throughout the day."

"No one likes to see a lot of mess when they are picking out the food they are going to be eating."



"This is a great job. People are always up, in a good mood when you get there. It means break-time for them and a chance to get a doughnut, sandwich or cup of coffee and relax," says catering truck driver Keith Donnellon.

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CITY OF FARMINGTON NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

A Public Hearing will be held at 7:45 P.M. Monday, March 19, 1979 in the Council Chambers, 25600 Liberty Street, Farmington, Michigan, regarding the Proposed Use of Federal Reserve Sharing Funds expected to be received during the 1979-80 Fiscal Year in the amount of \$1,000,000.

All interested persons will be given an opportunity to provide written or oral comments on the proposed uses for entertainment funds to the City of Farmington.

NEDRA VIANE
City Clerk