

Milkman's run turns into big dairy business

By Sylvie D. Nelson

WATERLOO — Laiterie Chagnon started small when Jacques Chagnon began picking up milk from farms and delivering it to homes in Waterloo, Knowlton and Valcourt back in 1954.

Today, his dairy has hundreds of clients in the Waterloo area and in municipalities up to 80 kilometres away.

Although times have changed since the humble beginning of the business, the Chagnon dairy still sends milkmen to make home deliveries in Waterloo, Knowlton and Valcourt. Chagnon doesn't deliver milk anymore, but he's still involved in the day to day running of the dairy.

The family business is now the only independant dairy in the region since the sale of Estrie Lait in 1989.

The milk is bought from local producers through the *Federation des producteurs de lait du Quebec*.

"But we go get the milk directly from a dozen milk producers around the region," said Laiterie Chagnon vice-president Denis Chagnon, Jacques' son.

Once brought in, the milk doesn't

stay more than 24 hours in the plant. **CLOSE TO CLIENTS**

"One of the advantages we have is that we're close to the client," he said.

Laiterie Chagnon offers an array of milk products including chocolate milk, cream, butter and ice cream. It also has a line of fruit juices including orange, grape and limonade. The company doesn't make yogurt but distributes it for another company.

According to Chagnon milk and dairy products with less fat are gaining in popularity.

"Our two and one per cent milk are most popular," he said.

The cream skimmed from the milk is used to make their ice cream. Chagnon says that the other ingredients used in the making of their ice cream are of the highest quality.

"We only use fresh cream in the making of our ice cream," Chagnon said. "And the recipe is our secret."

Laiterie Chagnon makes twelve flavors. Many of them can be found at local ice cream parlors during the summer. Unlike what most think, the sales of ice cream do not necessarily peak during the warm season.

"Ice cream consumption is regular all year around," said Chagnon. **MILK AND CREAM**

Cream and milk are two of the milk factory's basic products.

"When you skim milk, you've got cream to sell," said Chagnon.

Thirty-five employees process some 35,000 liters of milk a day into different products four days a week.

"On day five, we make juice," said Chagnon.

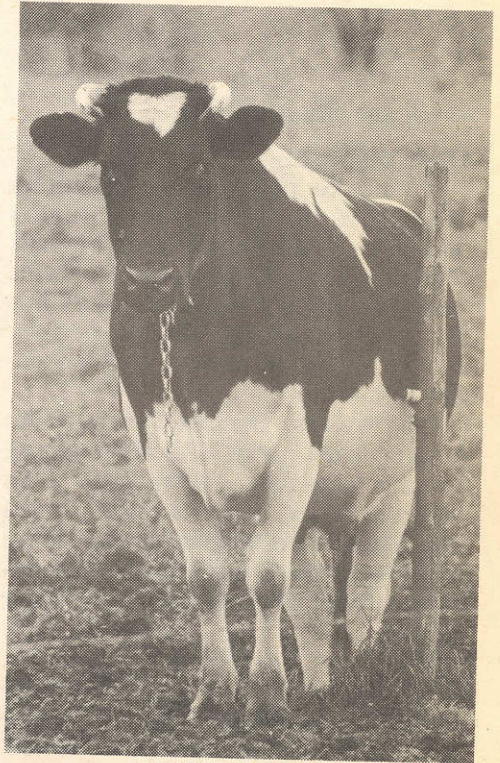
Modernisation of the dairy has been going on since it was built in 1969.

"In '69, we still had glass bottles," said Chagnon. "Since then, the pasteurisation process has been improved and in 1989, we tripled the size of our original plant."

The dairy also mechanized bottling machines to handle the increase in sales.

Chagnon says that bigger companies may be advantaged because they deal with a larger volume.

But, at Laiterie Chagnon, the administration departement isn't as big and everyone, including the president of the company, takes part in the daily running of the factory.



Bessie is one of many cows who contribute to the 35,000 liters of milk processed at Laiterie Chagnon every day.