

Andrew Wholecheese Starts Coffee Shop on Shoestring

We have heard of a lot of people who started business "on a shoestring" and we now believe we have a well qualified candidate for this exclusive group in the person of Andrew Wholecheese of village of Nulato located a few miles below the confluence of the Koyukuk and the Yukon River.

About two months ago, Wholecheese established a coffee shop in a tiny 12 by 12 foot building, boiled a pot of coffee and started selling it at 15 cents per cup.

One of the ironic things about the operation was that when Wholecheese was ready to open the shop, he found he didn't have enough money to buy a can of coffee with which to start the business.

He had used up some money installing a tiny counter as well as buying plywood for flooring for the little building. He also made home-built stools to seat his customers. The result — there was not enough money left to buy a can of coffee!

What did Andrew do? He borrowed a few dollars from a friend. Three days later, he paid his debt and had about \$30 left over!

Expands Business

Andrew Wholecheese has now expanded his business. He is now selling sandwiches and pies besides the coffee that has already gained the reputation as being "very good."

In starting his tiny new venture, Andrew has had some frustrating experiences. In the first place, his wife, Margaret Mary, is an excellent pastry cook but she couldn't

work for her husband. She cooks at the Mission School. Andrew had to hire another woman.

Another frustration forced Andrew Wholecheese to start the business on his own. Months ago, he heard about the Economic Opportunity Act. He made inquiries and decided to ask for a loan. Before the loans became available, however, they had to be processed and readied under such agencies as the Farmer's Home Administration.

This took quite some time and Andrew waited and waited.

"Andrew just got tired of waiting," said O. Dean Williamson, Realty Officer for the Bureau of Indian Affairs and who is subbing for Frank Anderson in helping to implement small business loans.

"He just up and started his own little business from nothing," Williamson continued. "He has shown a lot of initiative and you have to hand it to the guy."

The small business loan Andrew has applied for is coming through and it is now being processed by Dale Sanner of the FHA.

During the coming season, Andrew Wholecheese is planning to build a small building to house his new business. He is 43 years old.

In the meantime, the village of Nulato is quite proud of Andrew's little enterprise. It's a place where the local folks can come in and drink good coffee and pies and sandwiches are available at about Fairbanks prices.

"The Coffee Pot," as the business is called in Athabaskan language, is also getting to be known in places like the sister village, Galena, and they talk of it with pride.

There is no sign as yet on the little establishment. So far there is no need for a sign because everyone knows exactly where it is.