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## THE MITCHELL MILK BAR IN WOLLONGONG

By Harry Mitchell

Harry Mitchell grew up in a family of café shop owners. His grandfather, Haralambos Mihalakakis emigrated from the tiny Greek island of Kythera in 1903 and ran a milk bar in Warwick in Queensland. He returned to Greece.

Harry's father, Michael, also from Kythera, came to Australia in 1937 and worked in cafés in Wauchope and Queanbeyan, changing his name to Mitchell in 1939.

Harry's mother is from the Damianaki family also originally from Greece. This family includes many notable shooters including the Olympic gold medal winner, Michael Diamond.

In 1945, war ended, Michael left the army, married Miss Diamond and bought a milk bar in Keira Street, Wollongong. The Mitchell family ran this milk bar for 23 years while the City of Wollongong changed and grew around them, from the dirt footpath in front of the shop to the modern city of today. The family lived initially in Keira Street and then moved to Smith's Hill.

For Harry, the third generation of café Mitchells in Australia, the city CBD was his domain. He particularly and fondly remembers his father's 1941 Buick. He knew all the staff at the Crown Theatre who would let him attend shows for nothing. He did the family banking at the National near the site of today's Grace Brothers store. Eggs were bought from Buttles where the Medical Centre is now in Crown Street, and cheese from PDS in Keira Street.

In 1968 the shop closed. The Crown Theatre had closed a couple of years earlier and a Wollongong era had ended. Ever a people person, Michael, the café founder, went on to a new career as a taxi driver, retiring in 1987 at the age of 75.