

The Donut King: The Early Years of Ron Joyce

He grew up in rural Nova Scotia in a house without plumbing and a wood stove for heating. Today, he has eight cars, owns a \$60 million golf club resort, and has so much money he has even offered to fly people on trips anywhere in the world if they can help improve his golf swing. How did Ron Joyce get to where he is today? He did it by building a tiny coffee shop by the name of Tim Horton's into one of Canada's most beloved and successful brands.

Born in 1930, in the rural town of Tatamagouche, Nova Scotia, Ronald Vaughan Joyce came from a poor family. Together with his parents and two siblings, he lived in a small three bedroom house that had few conveniences. When he was three years old, his father died, leaving his mother to take care of the family on welfare. There was little heating during the frigid Nova Scotian winters and no plumbing, but they always seemed to make do.

When Joyce was 16-years old, he decided to drop out of high school and try his luck out in the real world. He moved to Hamilton, Ontario in search of greater opportunities. With just \$35 in his pocket, Joyce had set off on his own. He drifted around between factory jobs until he finally decided to enlist in the Royal Canadian Navy in 1951. With a specialization in Communications, Joyce was immediately sent overseas, where he served off the coast of Korea and Japan for his first tour of duty.

After one year in the Navy, Joyce decided to move back to Hamilton, where he started training to become a police officer. At the same time he was working for the Hamilton Police force, Joyce drifted into the food industry when he purchased a local Dairy Queen franchise. Both would prove to be career choices of much significance later on. While managing the Dairy Queen gave him crucial business experience, working as a cop also introduced him to someone that would forever change his life.

It was on his daily foot patrols as a police officer that Joyce became friends with Tim Horton. Horton was a Canadian hockey legend, who was admired for coming from extreme poverty to the heights of success that he did. Horton was so impacted by his childhood experience that even while he was a hockey legend, he worked on the side doing other jobs to supplement his income. One of those side jobs was a local coffee and donut shop that he had opened, called Tim Horton's.

Located on Ottawa Street in Hamilton, not even the hockey star's name could save the little shop. After all, Horton might have known his way around a rink better than anyone else, but when it came to running a business, he was skating on thin ice. Joyce, however, was interested in Horton's venture. The two had become good friends and Joyce wondered if his experience with Dairy Queen could be used to save Horton's shop.

Joyce did not waste much time wondering. Before long, Joyce and Horton were in business together.

Source: Evan Carmichael <http://www.evancarmichael.com/library/ron-joyce/The-Donut-King-The-Early-Years-of-Ron-Joyce.html>

