



Twiggie's Pie Cart — 'There was usually a stimulating conversation going on between customers who had never met before.'

'A place where brickies and judges were equal'

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ANY dissertation on Pietermaritzburg in the fifties would be incomplete without a mention of Twiggie's Pie Cart. The pie cart stood in Market Square, and opened daily at 6 pm. From its tiny kitchen Mr "Twiggie" Branch dispensed a seemingly never-ending supply of tasty, well-cooked food. Cutlery and crockery were clean and customers stood around the cart eating off a fold-down shelf. I am not sure what time Twiggie closed each day, but I believe it was well into the wee hours of the morning. The menu could be a minefield for the uninitiated, because every dish had a creative name.

For instance, a "Cowboy breakfast" was a fried egg, bacon and

baked beans on toast. Although occasionally drunk or disorderly people caused trouble, Twiggie was mostly patronised by businessmen in suits who were working late, students swotting late and such like. There was usually a stimulating conversation going on between customers who had never met before. Twiggie himself had a great sense of humour with which he laced the debates. I well remember a marvellous conversation I listened to between a bricklayer and a judge who were at opposite ends of the cart, so we could all hear what was said. Somehow they soon found they had a common interest, which was breeding racing pigeons. Before they had gone deeply into their conversation it was clear that the brickie knew far more about the

subject than the judge. Anyway it all ended well, with them exchanging phone numbers and saying they would keep in touch. Twiggie's Pie Cart was that sort of place. It was unique.