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The last stop on our Kentucky dinner-table circuit is at Colonel Hawk's, the Bardstown restaurant of Louis "Hawk" Rogers. When he was commissioned a Kentucky Colonel by Governor "Happy" Chandler fifty years ago, Louis Rogers had not yet opened the restaurant for which he is now famed in the Bluegrass. That phase of his interesting career began in 1941 when Rogers returning from a stint in Washington as a cook, butler, chauffeur, caterer, and manager of residences for politicians, built a small concrete-block dinner club on a narrow back street in his native Bardstown. For almost twenty-five years, the restaurant was prohibited by law from serving both white and black customers, and during that time it stood as a classic example of the nonsensical contradictions of segregation. It was a black-owned public accommodation with an all-white clientele, and the ultimate irony was that America Rogers, Hawk's wife, could cook on the wood stove in the kitchen and Hawk could wait tables, but they could not legally sit down in their own dining room and eat.

"I never said we didn't want blacks and whites in here together," Hawk explained. "The law said that. Segregation was foolish." For more than twenty years now, the artificial barriers have been removed, and Colonel Hawk's has continued to gain stature as a Kentucky institution. Hawk is in his eighties now, and America has passed on, and their son and daughter-in-law, Newman and May Rogers, own and operate the restaurant. But the colonel is there every evening to greet the customers, most of whom have been coming in regularly for years, and the menu is practically the same as it was back in the early 1940s.

John Egerton



**Colonel Hawk, Thomas Merton and Donald Allchin at Hawk's Diner.**

The photograph was taken by Jerry Anderson, a student from The General Theological Seminary who was accompanying Allchin. Photograph used by permission of The Thomas Merton Centre.