

# Palmer's through the generations

*A story of business, family and the Darien community*



Founder, Rocco, overseeing the daily operations of his butcher shop (early 1900s)

## **ROCCO PALMIERIE** (1st Generation, 1867–1960)

Rocco Palmierie (who later changed his name to Palmer) was an enterprising meat butcher who immigrated from Italy in 1902. He opened a butcher shop in the Bronx, built it up, sold it and started again in Stamford, Connecticut. In 1921, he opened Palmer's Meat Market on the Noroton Green in the Heights.



Left: Joe Palmer / Right: Noroton Heights Shopping Center (mid 1950's)

## **JOSEPH R. PALMER** (2nd Generation, 1903–1994)

*"I took over the business from my father, Rocco Palmer, in 1937. Over the years we had developed it from a meat market into a full service food store making home deliveries throughout Darien.*

*During World War II, the grocery business really changed. I'll never forget those darned red and blue ration stamps. Some grocery items were rationed and others had price controls. Everything was bought in bulk and we had to weigh out all the sugar, coffee and butter in small size batches so everyone would get some."*

Joe inherited huge relocation problems when the turnpike came roaring through Darien, and the Noroton Green was buried under the center of I95 beneath the Noroton Avenue overpass. Banding together with his fellow businessmen, they formed the Noroton Heights Business Association. Palmer's Market was part of the first building block of the new NHSC in the mid 1950's (where Darien Fabricare and Barrett Bookstore are today). Eventually the Palmer's built a larger supermarket in its present location. Of the original businesses bulldozed by the thruway, only Palmer's survives.



Left to Right: Joe, Olga, Cheryl, Joe Jr., Rocco and Alphonse (early 1960's)

*"I was very fortunate that my boys decided to continue in business with me, making it much easier to keep up with changes in the community. I am proud that the next generation is taking hold and maybe Palmer's will make it to their one hundredth year, who knows?" –Joseph R. Palmer*



Rocky Palmer helping a customer in the Butcher Shop. (1970)

Rocco employed considerable energy to serve on many town boards supporting Darien's community, civic and business endeavors. As President of the Darien YMCA from 1974–1980 Rocco and the BOD took on the challenge of transforming an old school building into the new Darien YMCA. Raising a record breaking amount of money in private funds, they constructed the facility that serves the people of Darien to this day.



Megan and her Poppy, Rocky, working together in the bakery. (2007)

## **ROCCO J. PALMER**

(3rd Generation, 1927–2009)

*"My father worked with my grandfather, my brothers Joe Jr. and Alphonse worked with our father, and now our kids are working with us. Business and family are one. For me it's been that way since I was 10 and bagging groceries. We triumphed by creating a business that serves the people of Darien. What's good for Darien is good for Palmer's! We will go out of our way for the customer. We've been here for so long, they feel like family, and we were taught to support our family."*

## 96 YEARS, 5 GENERATIONS

Today, the 4th and 5th generation of Palmer's are running the business and their vision has transformed a simple market into a one stop shopping destination including groceries, restaurant-quality prepared foods, exquisite flowers, award-winning scratch bakery, gifts, catering and exclusive guided tours to Italy and Spain.



## **GREG PALMER** (4th Generation)

*"Thirty five years ago my grandfather, Joe Palmer Sr., welcomed me into the family business. I learned the business from bottom up by working in every department of the store. It makes me proud that we have continued to serve our community as we close in on a century of service in Darien."*

With strong town roots, Greg is passionate about volunteering within the community and was recognized as 'Volunteer Of The Year' by The Darien Chamber of Commerce. Presently, Greg is President of The Noroton Heights Shopping Center and sits on The Darien Old Timers Athletic Association and Spring Grove Cemetery boards.



## **CINDY PALMER DEAN** (4th Generation)

*"It was great working alongside my dad and grandfather. My dad was a real inspiration! He encouraged me to dream big, take chances, and be a creative thinker. Today I'm so lucky to work with my children, Megan and Travis. Every day I look around the store at the old pictures of my grandparents and my dad and feel like they're still here cheering us on!"*

*Overseeing all of the donation requests that Palmer's receives is very rewarding. I enjoy coming up with fun promotions and ads to promote the organization's efforts. More than a third of our advertising budget goes towards supporting Darien and the surrounding communities."*



## **RACHAEL & HER MOM, MEGAN PALMER RIVERA** (6th and 5th Generation)

*"I grew up working at the store with my mom and grandfather. I always knew I wanted to be a part of the business. Palmer's is not just a place I come to make money, it's a place I come to carry on the legacy of my ancestors. I am humbled knowing how many people we have touched over the years. Hundreds of thousands of customers have walked our aisles in search of quality food and conversation.*

*Thousands of employees, and their families, have relied on us for a steady paycheck, insurance and opportunity. Friendships have been built, spouses have met and memories have been made through many generations.*

*With each party we cater and birthday cake we make, I know more and more that it is my duty to ensure that Palmer's is here for the next 100 years; for my children and future grandchildren, for future employees, future darienites and future birthday cake eaters."*