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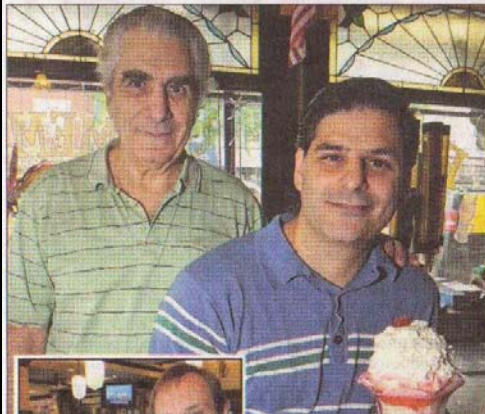
METRO NEWS

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Thriving son-and-pop operations

BY NICHOLAS HIRSHON
DAILY NEWS WRITER



VITO CITRANO learned to whip cream at age 5, Leslie Barnes to scale fish at 6 and Lance and Mike Wagner to drive forklifts at 12 — all taught by their dads.

A generation later on Father's Day, the savvy sons helm three of Queens' best-known businesses — Eddie's Sweet Shop in Forest Hills, London Lennie's Restaurant in Rego Park and Glendale Lumber.

But their papas passed down more than just industry tips.

"My workers actually have a list of things he used to say," said Citrano, 42, who still scoops ice cream alongside his 72-year-old dad, Joe, at the old-fashioned parlor at 72nd Road and Metropolitan Ave.

Eddie's soda jerks tease the Citranos about sounding alike, but the charm of the father-and-son team — plus the shop's classic aura and wide range of homemade flavors — attracts dessert devotees citywide.

The family tradition began when Joe Citrano and his dad, Vito Sr., bought the corner icon in 1968, a year after Vito Jr. was born. Vito Sr.

died in 1996, but Joe and Vito Jr. have held onto many regular customers.

"We actually see the kids growing up, which is so scary now," Vito Citrano admitted. "I'm seeing the kids when I was working, and now they're coming in and they have kids. It means we're getting old, but it's great to see."

About a mile and a half away, one of the oldest seafood eateries in the borough also runs in the family.

"London Lennie" Barnes began taking his son Leslie to the old Fulton Fish Market in lower Manhattan when he was just 5. They arrived at 3:30 most mornings to claim only high-quality catches.

After picking out the best barrels of flounder fillet and scrod, the elder Barnes plopped young Leslie atop the wet, 5-foot-high stacks and told him to stay — preventing someone from switching cases.

"Nobody even asked me to get off," Leslie Barnes recalled with a laugh. "My father always had one motto. You only bought the best fish available."

By age 9, Leslie was already breadring shrimp in egg wash and cracker meal. At 16, he knew how to broil and fry, and even bal-

ance the company checkbook.

When Lennie Barnes had a stroke in 1970, his wife, Joan, was pressed into service as manager of the Woodhaven Blvd. hot spot — until Leslie graduated college and took the reins in 1977.

The family matriarch noticed a marked change in managing style between father and son.

"Leslie's a little bit more easy-going," Joan Barnes said with a smile. "Len could be a little difficult at times."

But Glendale Lumber trumps those one-son operations — with a pair of brothers, Lance and Mike Wagner, marking the fifth generation to run the building-supply venture.

Lance Wagner Sr., 59, handed the operation to his sons, Mike, 26, and Lance Jr., 35, in 2004. "I couldn't hire anyone better," the proud papa gushed.

Both brothers hope to someday pass along the family legacy, though Lance Jr.'s 7-year-old daughter, Taylor, has yet to warm up to the task.

"She's showing absolutely no interest in it because she's all about dance and girlie stuff," Lance Jr. said with a laugh.

"I've offered to take her in on a day to hang out with dad at work and she's like, 'Yeah, right.'"



Clockwise from top: Joe and Vito Citrano; Lance Jr., Lance Sr. and Mike Wagner; Leslie Barnes.

Above photos by Christie M. Farriella



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