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News

After Over 100 Years, Trunz Closes Its Doors

By Dolores Kazanjian O'Brien

After more than 100 years in business, over 20 of them in Port Washington, Trunz Food Stores is closing the last of its food stores. August 11, 2005 is the last day for the supermarket on Port Washington Boulevard. "It's like a wake around here," said Ed Wallace, store supervisor and operations manager, who has been with the company for almost 25 years. "Customers and staff were crying and hugging. One woman with two children came up to me and said, 'I've known you since I was 5 years old.' Other customers have called from the Hamptons where they are summering." He added, "The Altar Guild from St. Stephen's even brought two beautiful vases of flowers."



(L. to r.) Rich Yodice, meat manager, Joe Ronzo, store manager, Pia Bellofatto, plants and chef, Ed Wallace and his son Ed Wallace Jr.

Many customers with whom we spoke expressed disappointment at the store's closing. Typical comments: "It's so sad. I've been shopping here since it opened. Now there's no supermarket near me." "Wherever am I going to get my meat now?" "It's a shame. I'm going to miss the store." One shopper who has lived in Port Washington all her life remembered shopping in the Trunz pork store on Hillside Avenue with her father in the '30s. Another nostalgically remembered one of the stores in Brooklyn.

Greg Trunz, treasurer of the company and son of Bob Trunz, company president, echoed Wallace's sentiments. "People have tears in their eyes," he said. Wallace and Trunz each commented that the Trunz employees were like family and tended to stay with the company a long time. "The average employee has been with us over 10 years," he said. "They are having a difficult time." Wallace added that most of the store's cashiers have been there for over 15 years, and the lowest seniority among the butchers was 30 years. "Some of our employees started when they were 19 years old, and have been with us ever since," he said. "It was a big part of everybody's life." Pia, the store's talented chef, told us tearfully, "You couldn't find anyone who could be nicer to work for. We are like a family."

According to Greg Trunz, the reason for the closing was simply "higher expenses and lower sales." Both Trunz and Wallace pointed out that two large new supermarkets have opened in the area - Stop & Shop in the Soundview shopping center and King Kullen in Manhasset in the Filene's shopping center. In addition, North Shore Farms on Port Boulevard was renovated and expanded. "There are only so many ways that you can cut the pie," Wallace commented. In addition, there was what Trunz described as "several issues with the union." Trunz employees were represented by Local 342 of the United Food and Commercial Worker's Union (better known as the Meat Cutters Union). A representative of Local 342, Lisa O'Leary, commented, "The union and the employees are sad about the store's closing. We are helping to get them placed in other jobs. Trunz employed a lot of senior people-a lot of them with 20 or 30 years experience, so we will most likely be successful."

Trunz Food Stores, Inc. was founded in 1904 in Greenpoint, Brooklyn, by Max Trunz, grandfather of the current President, Bob Trunz and great-grandfather of Treasurer Greg Trunz. Max Trunz immigrated to the United States from Germany in 1895. "He was on the boat with Schaeffer, Bohack, and all those guys," said Bob Trunz in a previous interview. Max took over a lard company, which he expanded into a pork store. Other stores followed, until there were 85 Trunz pork stores all over Brooklyn, Queens, Long Island and Staten Island, as well as a 320,000-square-foot plant by the Kosciusko Bridge. The Port Washington market was opened about 20 years ago; it was previously a Gristedes.

Greg Trunz said, "I want to thank our customers and employees for 21 great years in Port Washington." Judging from the comments of the many Port Washington residents with whom the Port News spoke, the gratitude is definitely mutual.