

Stratford family business survives three generations

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Marge and Nick Quattone bought Marnick's Restaurant and Motel in Stratford, Conn. in 1956. The business has grown from a lunch shop to the full scale restaurant and motel it is today. Nick, who is now 94, at left, celebrated his birthday at the restaurant with family and friends on Friday December 17, 2010. From left to right is Nick Quatonne Sr., grandson Nick Quattone III, son Nick Quattone Jr., and grandson Rich Chaffee. Photo: Christian Abraham / Connecticut Post

STRATFORD -- All the Quattones can recall a memory of working in the family motel and restaurant business at some point in the past.

Nicholas Quattone Jr. remembers as a third-grader being given a big bag of potatoes to peel as soon as he came home.

His daughter, Nicole, remembers slicing bread on Saturdays as a youngster, and years later, bartending. She still waitresses in the summers when she's not teaching.

Another Quattone has big plans for the future. [Nicholas Quattone](#) III wants to make the outdoor deck -- the one he decided to add three years ago that saved the family restaurant -- even bigger. And he hopes one of his daughters, or the son he and his wife are trying to conceive, will take over and keep the restaurant in the family for a fourth generation.

But Nicholas Quattone Sr. is enjoying the present. He visits the restaurant he and his wife bought when they barely had a cent to their name every morning for a cup of coffee. And then he comes back in the afternoon for a round of pool at the bar.

On Friday night, he came to the restaurant and ordered his usual, a lobster roll -- which was named in 1998 by [Connecticut Post](#) readers the best in the area -- and celebrated his 94th birthday surrounded by his big, Italian family.

"It's a great business," he said, sitting at the head of the table.

That Marnick's Restaurant and Motel in the Lordship neighborhood of Stratford has weathered three generations is an accomplishment. It has even weathered hurricanes.

Photos displayed at the entrance show part of the exterior that was destroyed by Hurricane Gloria in 1985. The relentless rain of 2009 also kept visitors away during the peak summer season. This summer, tornadoes and extreme humidity took its toll on business.

The business took a huge economic hit in 2001 when Textron Lycoming, a corporation a mile away, closed its doors. At its peak, the company employed three shifts of people a day, many of whom would come eat at Marnick's. As each small business around Stratford closes, Marnick's takes another hit.

But customers make their way back to Marnick's, even if it's decades later.

"We have couples who come in who used to come to Marnick's in the late '50s," Quattone Jr. said. "Back then, it was a teenage hangout."

It's the family touch that helps make a difference, Quattone Jr. said. For example, if his mother, Marga, saw a young couple trying to eat dinner with their baby, she would come pick it up and entertain it so they could eat in peace.

When asking why he followed his father into the family business, Quattone Jr. shrugged his shoulders and said, "it's my life."

It's the same for his son, who easily works 90 hours a week in the winter and 100 hours a week in the summer.

"I just grew up in it," Quattone III said. "I have to keep the tradition alive."



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Marge and Nick Quattone bought Marnick's Restaurant and Motel in Stratford, Conn. in 1956. The business has grown from a lunch shop to the full scale restaurant and motel it is today. Nick, who is now 94, seated, reaches up to his great grandson Jaxon Staples, 2, of Milford, during a birthday party for Nick at the restaurant with family and friends on Friday December 17, 2010. Holding Jaxon is his mom and Nick's grand daughter Nicole. In back is Nick's son Nick Jr.. The business is now run by Nick's grandson Nick Quattone III. Photo: Christian Abraham / Connecticut Post |



Marge and Nick Quattone bought Marnick's Restaurant and Motel in Stratford, Conn. in 1956. The business has grown from a lunch shop to the full scale restaurant and motel it is today. Nick, who is now 94, celebrated his birthday at the restaurant with family and friends on Friday December 17, 2010. During the party, Nick, in front left, got a chance to talk on the computer with his daughter Jo and her husband Keith, who were in Georgia and couldn't make it to the party. Nick's grandson Mike made the call possible with his laptop. Photo: Christian Abraham / Connecticut Post |