

Costa's celebrates 50th anniversary

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is the owner of McKeivitt Trucking Ltd. in Thunder Bay.

As the original confectionery store gradually developed into a grocery store, expansions and renovations to the building took place in 1947, 1949 and 1954.

In 1960, the Terrace Bay store opened. It was then and remains today a partnership between Gina's brother Tony Costa and her husband Joe Commisso. Tony worked in Schreiber before the Terrace Bay store opened, as did Joe, from 1950 to 1960.

Tony's wife Luigina and daughter Nancy also work at the Terrace Bay store.

Tony Commisso, Gina's son, also works at Costa's in Terrace Bay. He's the stores' buyer and controls the pricing for both stores and runs the computerized pricing system.

Her son Patrick took a meat cutter's course at George Brown College in Toronto and works in the Terrace Bay meat department.

Back in Schreiber, by 1960 it was clear that the family business had outgrown the original store.

"It just became too crowded," says Gina. "I remember I used to stare out at the house across the street and dream about building a great big store there. And my wish came true."

In December of 1962, then Schreiber Reeve W. D'Arcy cut the ribbon to officially open the new store.

That same year, Carmella Costa successfully lobbied D'Arcy when she wrote him regarding a problem with the underpass leading to the store.

Because the underpass was so low, suppliers had to unload their trucks onto Costa's own delivery trucks on the north side of the underpass.

"With a view to serving our customers and retaining our business," she wrote, "we must insist that prompt action be taken to deepen the subway." D'Arcy agreed, and the underpass was deepened.

But even "the great big store" of Gina's dreams turned out to be too small for their business, and in 1973 and 1979 the store was expanded to the size it is today—double the size of the first building.

The Schreiber store remains a family endeavour. Carmella Costa is still very active in running the store, and is consulted on decisions. Gina's sister Teresa manages the bake shop, and Gina's daughter Sandra works as a grocery buyer.

Another daughter, Gerry, helps out when she can.

Marco Commisso manages the meat department, assisted by his father, Cosimo, the well-known "sausage king."

Gina's brother Albert worked at the store until he moved out west in 1971, but he's expected back in Schreiber for the store's 50th anniversary celebrations on Nov. 25. Marco's brother Mario also worked at the store until he moved to Toronto.

But family members aren't the only people Costa's employs. Gina says there have been employees who spent 25 years working at the store.

But one person who worked at Costa's for 17 years stands out in Gina's mind: Margaret Kragero.

"I was more like a daughter to her than anything," says Gina. "She was always a good teacher. I can remember her telling me things like 'make sure you get everything in writing,' and 'make a copy of everything.' I really learned a lot from her."

And after 50 years, why does Gina think Costa's has done so well?

"I really think the main thing is that we love working in the store, we love people, and we put a lot of time and effort into the store," she says. "People have been very, very good to us. Without our faithful customers and friends, we wouldn't have succeeded."



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THE TERRACE BAY SCHREIBER NEWS



Left: Marco Commisso with his father Cosimo in the meat department.

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