

Father

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Wildwood, my father would sell sweets, soda pop and popcorn to Jersey shore locals and tourists alike. Dad tells me of his paydays, "I would make 45 dollars a week and give 40 dollars to my parents and keep five for myself." He would usually spend the five dollars on movies – a means of escapism, I suppose.

As my father aged, he grew into an education zealot of sorts. After graduating from high school, he attended the University of Florida and received a bachelor's degree in landscape architecture. During a stint at University of Mexico, he took courses and got hooked on economics. He later received a master's degree in city and regional planning at University of Oklahoma. Later, a job landed him in Tallahassee, Florida where he took business courses at Florida State University.

Bitten by the business bug, he eventually scurried up north to New Jersey and managed a restaurant in our very Victorian seaside town of Cape May. At the age of 30, he caught wind that a beachside hotel was up for sale and he bought it with his modest savings. Now, let's be clear here – this was no Hilton or Hyatt. This was a fleabag hotel on

the Jersey shore where dogs were welcome as long as their owners forked over their hard-earned dough. The hotel was named La Mer, French for "The Sea" and on most days the hotel's rooms smelled like the sea and its fishy contents; but hey, with a little tender loving care, my dad was convinced he could metamorphose this ugly rock into a precious diamond. And with gusto, he ultimately did.

In 1969, my dad married fellow Greek, Fotini. Anyone who really knows "Fofu" will tell you she's extremely energetic, loyal, generous, diligent, an excellent cook and not one to hold her tongue. She'll kick your butt in tennis, too. Together they tirelessly worked at the hotel. And like most in the hospitality industry, they did it all – from soup to nuts – from attending the front desk, cleaning rooms, servicing broken televisions, fixing air conditioners to putting up with absurd calamities like irate guests flipping out over the rainy weather as if it were my parents' fault. Once my siblings Vasiliki, Vivian, Yioryos and I were old enough, we were put to work and I'm being modest when I tell you there was never a dull moment working summers at the La Mer.

Eventually, the hotel grew

from a dumpy motor inn into Cape May's most contemporary hotel. And yes, they kept the name. And no, the rooms

did his parents, leaving my father all alone in terms of his immediate family. I, like you, personally cannot grasp los-



Photo courtesy of Maria Andy-Tettamanti
Ava Tettamanti, this article's author Maria Andy-Tettamanti, Gus Andy and Yiani Tettamanti.

don't stink anymore. And no, we don't accept pets. And yes, we still have customers who've been visiting since dad bought the joint back in the groovy '70s.

In conjunction with the success of the hotel, my father's family life crumbled to pieces. His brother Yiannis and sister Katerina passed away at young ages, and so

ing a sibling or parent and find the notion of dealing with so much emotional pain unfathomable. But my father's can-do-it attitude always keeps him moving forward and simply said, it's a quality I hold in high regards.

Thankfully, with every ebb follows a flow, and my father was able to enjoy the new joy family can bring. My siblings

and I graduated from fine colleges and some went on to marry and have grandkids Dylan, Ava and Yiani. Dad gets a real kick out of spending time with our ever-expanding brood – that is, until one of them starts getting out of line, which is quite often.

At the age of 72, my father is spry as a fox. Oftentimes, I will find him tinkering with his tools at odd hours, hounding his dearly loved employees, cursing the invention of computers and waxing poetic on the great Greek philosophers and the benefits of fiber. And most are unaware he is an excellent painter. I, for one, feel he missed the boat on being an extraordinary fine artist as his works are breathtakingly beautiful. And yes, he still works every day from 9 to 6 (sometimes 10 p.m.) at his pride and joy – the La Mer Beachfront Inn. He loves this little town of Cape May with a huge hunk of his heart – anyone will tell you that.

In his free time, he is an advocate for freeing Cyprus from Turkish oppression and returning the Elgin marbles to Greece, which are causes near and dear to his Mediterranean heart. You will never find him gossiping. You will never see him brag

or boast about his many accomplishments or waste a meal – he's a modest mouse. But piss him off and he will let you know. It's a Greek thing. Trust me on this.

So why did I feel compelled to write this story? It's a culmination of things. As a journalist for The Miami Herald, I wanted to share his rough-and-tumble story with you. Every human has a unique story to tell. As for my father, in particular, I respect the fact that he continues to live a full and busy life after all he's been through such as surviving a war, moving thousands of miles away from his country, adjusting to the American way, losing loved ones, surviving those losses, parenting four children, supporting a vast family and working hard every day until this day.

You know, looking back on his life dad once told me, "Never in a million years did I ever expect my life to turn out this way." So if there's one thing my father has taught me it's this: life is what you make it. And you've got to admire the man for simply that.

Maria Tettamanti is the daughter of Gus and Fofu Andy. She writes for the Miami Herald.

Mayor

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The post in its entirety is as follows:

Thu, 03/11/2010 – 7:34pm – Posted by: wcm resident

"Thie (sic) presentation by public works was very good. It showed the problem has been going on for a number of years. I am sure public works has worked hard to identify the problem, however the governing body, for the last

three terms has not spent any money on the needed improvements to borough buildings or grounds. What is constant (sic) with those three terms? Mayor Kaithern! At last nights (sic) meeting the mayor was very focused on keeping the mike away from Ms. Gallagher. Why! Because Ms. Gallagher has done the research and

obtained the "public" documents to support the loss in volume and the \$ paid out by the users for the past 10 years.

The borough does not pay for the water it uses in the public buildings or the volume used to "flush" the water system or the volume used for fire Hydrant maintenance every year. Other municipali-

ties track their usage (sic) and suppliment (sic) the water utility for that volume used.

Perhaps, the governing body of WCM should take a lesson from a sourounding (sic) town like Lower township and pay their fair share of the water used by the municipality.

Perhaps the residents of

WCM should think twice at the next election and vote for a new mayor."

Geyer, who was out of town this week, responded to questions via telephone.

"There is obviously no secret. I've been in conversation with numerous people. The mayor and I do not agree on procedure and dealing with people," Geyer said. "I'm more interested in what the people have to say. I don't want to make my determination of what needs to be done without the involvement of the people."

Geyer said he believes

Kaithern involves the community far less in borough business.

"The mayor tends to keep things close to the chest and only shares things when she has to," he said.

Geyer said his anonymous comments were intended to get West Cape May residents to wake up and pay attention to what is happening in government. He said people actually starting to pay more attention with the water issue.

"People are just used to

Please see Mayor, page A3



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Clash Of The Titans 3D PG-13: 12:00, 3:15, 8:00, 10:15
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