



"Aspire to live a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands so that you may lack nothing..." ~1Thes. 4:11-12

WILDWOOD by-the-sea: Nostalgia

The Dolphin Restaurant to the Star Diner

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"Wildwood-By-The-Sea: Nostalgia and Recipes"



Entering or leaving North Wildwood onto route 147, you are on Spruce Avenue. At 325 West Spruce Avenue, you can't help noticing the Star Diner Café. It opened in June 2003, built on property that formerly was a parking lot for the famous Zaberer's Restaurant which had been across the street.

Before the Star Diner was built, the Halkias Family, who had moved to Wildwood from Greece, operated the Dolphin Restaurant which they opened in 1964 in North Wildwood at 10th and Ocean. The architecture was patterned after the Howard Johnson style restaurants of the day: a single story building with maroon covered chairs and wood lacquered tables.

After 37 years at the Dolphin, the family decided that they wanted a restaurant that could be open all year round. They sold the restaurant in 2002 which has since been demolished and replaced with condos.

The Halkias family built the Star Diner which is open all year round. In the warmer months or from Memorial Day to Labor Day, they are open every day. In the remaining months, the hours are shorter and change according to the month and the day of the week. They plan to be open 24 hours a day this summer of 2012.

Eleni and her second husband Bill Stamatacos are usually at the diner. According to daughter Maria DeSantis, "they are the head honchos". Maria or her brother Demetri Halkias are there if Eleni or Bill are not in house. Maria's duty is the front of the house, while Demetri and Bill are responsible for the kitchen or back of the house. But of course they often take each others job as the need arises. Demetri is there at night and Maria is there during the day, but always someone from the family is at the restaurant.

Uncle Tony does the baking, and so does Demetri. Mom Eleni

makes the delicious Greek pastry Baklava. There are many other baked cakes and pies that are prepared on site.

The Star Diner is a family restaurant, open for Breakfast, Lunch and Dinner with an extensive and varied menu. When it comes to changing an item on the menu, all the family members have input. Everything is cooked from scratch on site. Breakfast is served all day. There are Greek and Italian specialities.

Maria and Demetri grew up in Wildwood and graduated from Wildwood Catholic. Maria has three children, and the oldest, Michael, a student at the Atlantic Cape Community College, is a waiter at the Star Diner in the summer and works part time during the school year. Other family members from their extended family work full or part-time. They like to have family members working.

One employee who has been working for them for twenty years is Rie Caine. First at the Dolphin and now at the Star Diner she is a waitress and also helps out as a hostess. She started out working in the summers at the Dolphin. Rie is dependable which is most important at a restaurant.

One of the dependable employees at the Dolphin was Grover Bradshaw who worked there for 14 years. He has wonderful memories about his first job at the Dolphin. All his family ate there often because the food was so good and inexpensive. You could get a full course seafood dinner with a salad bar for \$5.99 in those days. "They served the best and freshest seafood" was heard by patrons of the Dolphin.

Another employee at the Dolphin was Cathy Smith who now operates the Pacific Avenue store called Junke and Treasures. Cathy was a waitress at the Dolphin and enjoyed her time there. She said all the employees felt like a family.



The Star Diner Family: (L-R) Demetri & Anya Halkias, Ed, Sr., Edward, Ed, Jr., Eleni and Maria DeSantis, and Eleni & Bill Stamatacos. Missing from the photo is Michael DeSantis.



The Dolphin Restaurant 1964-2002



The Dolphin Restaurant located at 10th & Ocean Aves. in North Wildwood, was a favorite among tourists and locals alike.



Eleni outside the Dolphin with her niece Natalia, c. 1960s



Eleni inside the Dolphin c. 1970s



Family members at the Dolphin for a Christening party, c. 1970s



Longtime Dolphin/Star waitress, Rie Caine, loves to ride to work on her vespa



Demolition of the Dolphin, 2002



Construction of Star Diner, 2003



Construction of Star Diner, 2003

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