

The Family of Raymond Russo and Margaret (Loscalzo) Russo

by Doris Russo Wade



Raymond Russo was born in Foggia, Italy, and during his early years, after serving in the Italian Navy, emigrated to the United States. His brothers, Joseph and Samuel, were living in Stone Harbor, so his first few years were spent there, but he eventually settled in Wildwood in 1913. Margaret (Loscalzo) Russo was born in Italy and emigrated to this country at the tender age of nine. She attended Wildwood Schools. Margaret was the oldest child of the five children of Rocco and Rose Loscalzo, who had made their home here by the year 1907.

Margaret and Raymond Russo were married in 1916 in Philadelphia, but returned to Wildwood within a year to make their home here. Their first residence was on New Jersey Avenue, which they rented from Mr. Robert Dare, Sr. Raymond worked on the commercial fishing boats for the Taylor Brothers for several years. During this time, their first two sons, Anthony and Rocco were born. They later moved to Roberts Avenue, where their son, Armand, was born in 1922.

By this time, Raymond had started working for the Pennsylvania Railroad as a trackman. After 1922, they purchased some land on the corner of Roberts Avenue and Park Boulevard where they built a small grocery store, and later built their home. It was while living at this address, their only daughter, Doris, was born in 1926 at Margaret Mace Hospital.

Raymond continued working on the railroad, while Margaret cared for the children and tended the grocery store, making homemade bread and raising chickens to also sell in the store. Margaret's father and mother, during this time, had purchased land across the street and built a gas station on the corner and a home next door.

In 1933, when prohibition was repealed, Margaret and Raymond bought one of the first liquor licenses issued in the City of Wildwood. The grocery store became a bar, and during the summer months, the living and dining rooms of their home became an eating area.

In 1936, an addition was built to the building and so the Golden Dragon Café was started. An odd name, we must admit for an Italian bar and restaurant, but so it was. It was here the first musical bar in the City of Wildwood was born. A Philadelphia firm constructed a beautiful 50 foot mahogany bar... Mr. Catrabome, a local hand painting artist, did elaborate murals on the walls. And —another first for Wildwood—an all girls group performed in the center, alternating with a group playing in the orchestra pit, thereby giving the dancing patrons continuous music!!

Some years later, the nightclub became a restaurant and an addition to the building became a Pizzeria (another first for the City). A young man from Italy was the pizza maker, showing his skills by twisting and turning the hand made dough into the air before putting it into the brick oven to bake. After several years, when pizza places were in abundance in the city, the pizzeria became a laundromat.

In 1960, Margaret and Raymond, in partnership with their daughter and son-in-law,

Doris and Allan Wade, had Will Morey build the Starfire Motel at the corner of Leaming and Ocean Avenues. When the term location, location, locations used, there was no better adjective to describe the Starfire Motel. Only 20 units, family owned and operated, with a family clientele returning year after year to vacation with other families they had met there.

Raymond died in 1967, and after his death, his sons operated the Golden Dragon and Laundromat until it was sold in 1975. His widow moved to Toledo Avenue in Wildwood Crest, where she resided until her death in 1983.

Their oldest son, Anthony, (Butch) attended Wildwood Schools, and in his early years worked for the Baker Brothers in their store on Pacific Avenue. He was married to Josphine Aiello of Philadelphia. Jo and Butch, now deceased, have two sons, Anthony, Jr. and Richard. Butch served in the Navy Seabees at Pearl Harbor during World War II.

Rocco (Rocky) Russo graduated from Wildwood High School in 1939 and served in the Army as an instructor, stations in California. After retiring from Sealtest Milk Co in 1967, he operated the family businesses with his brothers, and now makes his home in Wildwood Crest.

Armand (Ott) Russo graduated from Wildwood High School in 1940, where he was an outstanding athlete, playing both football and basketball on State Championship Winning teams. He spent many summers as a lifeguard on the Wildwood beaches before serving overseas in the Army. After his discharge, he attended Miami University and played semi-pro football for a Philadelphia team. Ott married Lillian Howell and had two children, Steve and Gail and four grandchildren, Jason and Adam and Zachary and Jonathan. Before his death in 1989, Ott had retired from Marine National Bank (now PNC) as a loan officer.

Doris Russo Wade graduated from Wildwood High School in 1942 and attended Pierce Business School in Philadelphia. She married Allan Wade of Kenosha, Wisconsin, in 1946, following his discharge from the Navy. Allan was an electrical contractor for over 30 years, during the course of these years; he wired many landmark motels on the Five Mile Beach Island. Bucky Schaefer and Vic Anzelone began their careers with Allan.

In 1960, Doris and Allan built the Starfire Motel at Leaming and Ocean Avenues and sold it in 1980. In 1981, together with their son, Steve and his wife, Carol (Sandman) Wade purchased the old (Hi-Steps) at First and New Jersey Aves in North Wildwood. Painstaking work was undertaken to restore the 100 year old landmark to somewhat of its original old decor by restoring the bar and woodwork and beautiful stairs to a beautiful natural finish.

The Wades had three children, Donna, who died at the age of 14 in 1962 in a horseback riding accident, and Steven and Margaret. Steven graduated from Wildwood Catholic High School in 1967, Villanova University in 1971. Married to Carol Sandman, they have two children, Steve, Jr. and Jennifer, and one grandchild, Bella. Steven



Raymond & Margaret Russo with children, Butch, Rocco, Armand & Doris

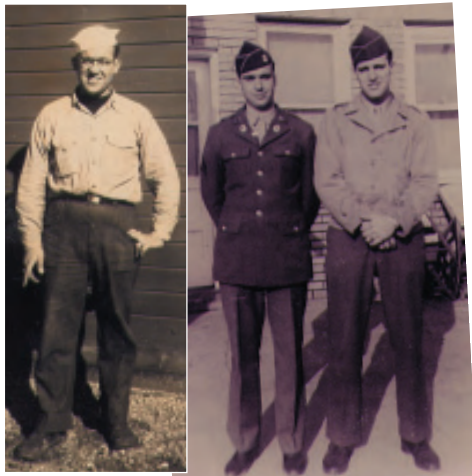


The Femmairs, a female instrumental and vocal group performed on the circular stage to the left while Harry Davis Band stood waiting in the Bandshell to perform at the Golden Dragon in the 1950s. Off to the right is a jukebox. Music was of high importance in the dining world back in the day. Note: Mr. Catrabome, a local artist at the time, painted the murals in the Golden Dragon

now owns Office Concepts in Cardiff, and Carol teaches at Carl Mitnick School.

Margaret graduated from Wildwood Catholic High School in 1975 and Brandywine College in 1977. After working as a legal secretary for local attorneys for 10 years, moved to Philadelphia in 1986, continuing with her career as a legal secretary there. In 1988, she married Thomas McAteer, of Philadelphia. They have two children, Ryan and Donna. In 2006, the family moved back to their favorite place in the world, Wildwood Crest. Tom is a salesman at Kindle Ford, and Margaret is a legal transcriber for the State of New Jersey.

AND SO IT GOES—three generations of the family of Margaret and Raymond Russo have been an integral part of the Five Mile Beach Island almost from its beginning.



Butch, left, Rocco & Armand (Ott) Russo



Armand (Ott) Russo, Rocco Loscalzo, Anthony (Butch) Russo on Artie Ave.



L-R: Unknown, Sam Leporace, Raymond Russo, and unknown in front of the old Marine Italian Bakery at Taylor & New Jersey Aves. Sam & Ray worked for the Pennsylvania Reading Railroad as trackmen