

# O'NEALS' NEWS

## WHAT'S HAPPENING AT YOUR RESTAURANT

FALL 2006

### HOSPITALITY SPOKEN HERE!

When I was in high school I took Latin I and II, in college I tried two semesters of French and in the Air Force (with the University of Maryland continuing education program), one semester of Spanish and even one of Chinese. Nothing. Sadly, I speak none of these languages, though I can stumble through a French menu; my kitchen Spanish is terrible.

That last is a real liability. Living and working in New York City and the restaurant business for over 40 years I've been exposed to many languages. Both the city and the industry are melting pots. As America's primary point of entry from Europe, the city and the food trades have always provided entry level jobs for many of the newly arrived. The restaurant business remains the largest employer of minorities in the United States.

When I grew up in Florida, I was always struck by the fact that every small town in Florida seemed to have one Greek family and cliché as it sounds, they always had a restaurant. In Ocala (where I was raised) there were the Stelogansis' and in Starke, a little north of me in central Florida were the Kopelousos'. I went to college with Johnny Kopelousos who's now a successful lawyer in Jacksonville. His family owned the restaurant in Starke. Their stories are repeated thousands of times all over the country. This was their foot in the door.

At O'Neals', (the several owner's aside), over 80% of our employees are bi-lingual, with many speaking more than two languages; some three

and four. You probably remember the marches and demonstrations last summer for immigration reform. That's never happened before but the truth is we are a land of immigrants. Some of our folks, like mine, came over a while ago (William O'Neal my great, great, great, grandfather came from Cork, Ireland in the middle 1700s and wound up in North Carolina), while Chris' grandparents on her mother's side came from Germany, passed through Ellis Island in the early 1900s and moved to Michigan. Cynthia's mother was born in Hungary and Jimmy's grandfather was born in Italy.

What's fascinating of course, is that virtually all of us are immigrants and most of us have some sense of our own history. I'd risk the guess that most people who live in this country, whether they were born or moved here, want to be here. Which doesn't mean we have to forget our origins. Ask anyone who walked into a sports bar here in New York or any other place in the country; you couldn't miss the fact that during the World Cup, in addition to the Stars & Stripes, there were Irish,

English, Argentinean, Italian, French, Brazilian flags, T-shirts and colors from every country that had a team in the World Cup games. You might have thought it was a mini United Nations ... probably because it was.

Between O'Neals' and the West 79th Street Boat Basin Café we have about 120 people working for us, some seasonally. These include many ethnic groups and about 17 languages. Here are some of the people and where they are from.



From the back, Zachariah, Georgia and the latest addition to the Lester and O'Neal families, Eóin.

(See Page 4)

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Our chef German Cazares is from Mexico and of course speaks Spanish. Our manager, Koren Jones, though New York born, speaks Spanish as well.

One of the carry-overs from The Ginger Man is Marina Borchert, who was born in what was, for so long, East Germany and made her way to Queens "a few years ago" and eventually to us. Marina has one daughter, now a nurse, whom she raised as a single parent. She of course speaks German and English.

Alberto Medina is from Argentina. Years ago, rumor has it, he drove his motorcycle all the way here from Argentina. Alberto started as a busman and is now one of the favorite waiters among our regular customers.

Bangladesh is well represented with Mohammad Rahman, a runner, and Faiz Ahmed a waiter; Ahmed's son is a policeman. Both have been with us for years and years. Eight years ago they were joined by Mallick-Shameen Hasan a favorite waiter in the bar area at night and then there's Kamal Uddin a busman. They all speak Bangla, otherwise known as Bengali.

For a while we seemed to have a middle European invasion with a very pretty young Albanian, Rajmonda Lunaj busily working the door at O'Neals'. A countryman of hers who quickly worked his way up to Manager is Alban Rushaj, whom I call Albey. He works at the Boat Basin as well as O'Neals'. They both speak Albanian but Albey speaks Italian and Spanish as well. Albey was born in Shkoder, Albania and has been in this country since 1999.

Mario Strangalos is a manager at both the Café and O'Neals' and of course is our Greek connection. He also speaks French. Kamil Votapka is our resident Czech. He's a waiter at the O'Neals' and speaks Polish, Slovak and Spanish.

At the Boat Basin Café we have Dumitru Baldean born in Targu-Mures, Romania, who's been here 8 years. Laris Mallinaric, a Boat Basin bartender hails from dear old Croatia. Mate

Horvath, is from Budapest, and speaks Hungarian and French as well as English. While we are at the Boat Basin, let's not forget Kayo Takahashi was born in Tokyo, Japan. She's a hostess and is on a student/work visa for the summer.

A waitress at the Boat Basin, Nur Fitriani Gebers, from Indonesia, speaks German, Spanish & English, has a working knowledge of French, Hawaiian & Italian and is studying linguistics at Queens College. Steve Galliard a waiter at both the Boat Basin and O'Neals' for many years is from Haiti and speaks French and Creole.

Isabela Fernandez, born in Brazil, is another South American who came to this country and has worked her way from hostess to manager. She of course speaks Portuguese, Spanish and English. Another splendid Brazilian on the door is Rosana Egan. Born in Brazil but really world-traveled, she speaks Italian, French, Spanish and English in addition to Portuguese, and says she is studying Swedish. Talk about wanting to communicate.

And while we're on the doors, at O'Neals on 65th Street we have our Lunch Manager/Host Mitria Di Giacomo who was born in Florence, Italy.

Michael Burri, the very tall, good looking manager at both the Boat Basin and O'Neals' was born in Switzerland and has lived in the Dominican Republic before moving to America. He's married to a beautiful woman from the Dominican Republic, has two great looking daughters and speaks German, Italian, Spanish and English.

Tevita Paplia (or Tao as he prefers to be called) is a one of a kind. He's about 6'6", an opera-singing-ex-football player from Tonga. How many of those are around, do you think? Because of his opera he's adept at German & Italian and most any other language in which opera is written. His native language is Tongan. He's on the door at O'Neals' and I promise, you can't miss him.

If you go to Bellevue Hospital, you can be sick and tended to in 87 languages. We don't quite measure up to that here but we do pretty well and particularly in the most important language of all, which we all speak very well indeed, and that's Hospitality.

And of course they're all "Typical New Yorkers", which is to say they're from somewhere else.

*Michael O'Neal*

**STARTING THE 2006  
LINCOLN CENTER SEASON**

For the 44<sup>th</sup> year (Philharmonic Hall opened in 1963) Lincoln Center again offers proof of the fact that it's the Performing Cultural Heart of America. You can always get Lincoln

Square Area information by going to our web site, [www.onealsny.com/1-local.htm](http://www.onealsny.com/1-local.htm) and clicking there on your place of interest, but we thought we'd give you the opening days and some upcoming highlights here.

Opening	Venue	Performance
Sept. 14th	NYS Theater	City Opera-Carmen
Sept. 14th	Jazz @ Lincoln Center	The Orchestra & Wynton Marsalis
Sept. 14th	Avery Fisher Hall	NYC Philharmonic
Sept. 16 <sup>th</sup>	Alice Tully Hall	Christian Concert Ministries
Sept. 16 <sup>th</sup>	Lincoln Center Plaza	American Crafts Festival
Sept. 17 <sup>th</sup>	Alice Tully Hall	Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center
Sept. 20 <sup>th</sup>	Alice Tully Hall	Metropolitan Opera Guild
Sept. 25 <sup>th</sup>	Metropolitan Opera	Madama Butterfly
Sept. 28 <sup>th</sup>	NY Public Library for the Performing Arts - Bruno Walter Auditorium	Treasures of Music Series (FREE)
Sept. 29 <sup>th</sup>	Avery Fisher Hall	NYC Film Festival
Oct. 3 <sup>rd</sup>	Juilliard - Paul Hall	Juilliard Jazz Ensembles
Oct. 15 <sup>th</sup>	Mitzi Newhouse Theater	"The Clean House"
Oct. 17 <sup>th</sup>	Vivian Beaumont Theater	"The Coast of Utopia"
Oct. 19th	Big Apple Circus	"Step Right Up"
Nov. 24 <sup>th</sup>	NYS Theater	NYC Ballet- Balanchine's "The Nutcracker"

**THE RIGHT GENERAL**

In 1982, I moved briefly to Weehawken, NJ. I called the NY Times for home delivery and was told "we don't deliver there". Eight blocks from a news stand, that was not happy news.

Some 6 weeks later, The Times, having taken over its home delivery, went on a major promotional campaign. Once again I was told "we don't deliver there". But only days after, the definition for 15 across in the crossword was "From whence best to see New York". Answer? Weehawken! I filled in the puzzle, underlined 15 across in red and enclosed it in a letter to the publisher, Arthur Ochs Sulzberger suggesting that "if indeed Weehawken was the best place from whence to see my favorite city, it also ought to be a place to which NY's best paper was delivered."

Two days later, as I was leaving the apartment at 6:30am to walk the 8 blocks to the news stand, I found a NY Times, wrapped in blue plastic with my name on it outside my front door. At 8am I got a call checking to make sure

I'd gotten delivery. After assuring I had, the voice asked, "Mr. Belth, who do you know?"

"I beg your pardon," I said.

"Mr. Belth, I got a call yesterday telling me to make damn sure you got the paper today and everyday. Mr. Belth, you're the only delivery we make in a 15 block radius in Weehawken. So, who do you know?"

"The right guy, my friend", I said, "Quite clearly, the right guy."

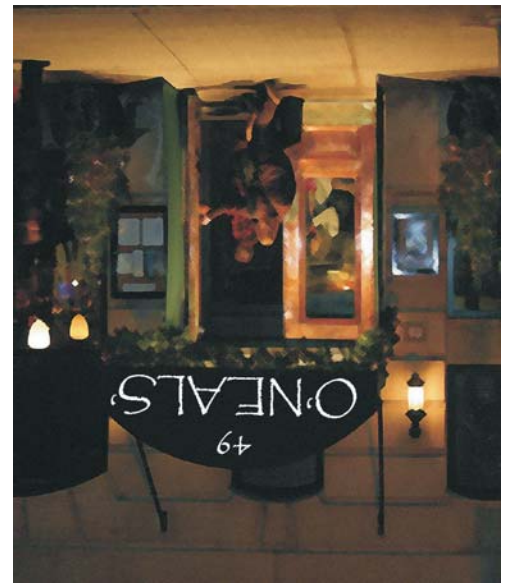
*Tom Belth*

FOR THE VERY BEST PLACE  
TO WINE AND DINE YOUR  
FRIENDS  
AND, TO HAVE A PARTY  
**IS RIGHT HERE!**

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O'NEALS

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## O'NEALS' NEWS

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FALL 2006

### CREATORS AMONG US



Eóin Wisdom Lester

And so it came to pass, after waiting a week longer than had been expected and enduring a 20 hour labor, which is never any fun and surely not in

early August, and with the active help and encouragement of her husband Zach, Chris' and my daughter Georgia delivered herself of a baby boy, 20" long and 7lbs 13oz heavy by the name of Eóin Wisdom Lester. (For those of you not tuned in to the Irish way of names, the first name is pronounced "Owen".) As you can see

from the picture, he's a pretty good lookin' fella and we all, the grandparents and extended families, are just about as tickled as you'd think we'd be. An all-to-brief visit to them a week after Eóin's somewhat tardy arrival, was most reassuring. This business of being a Grandpa is pretty nice and I don't mind admitting it.

And by the way, if anyone is looking for a place to hang their hat close to Lincoln Center, The Time Warner Center and of course O'Neals' there's a Lovely Studio available at 30 W. 60th, in move-in condition with great light, and a nice view. Built in the 50s the walls are plaster and sound proof, trees surround the building and robins nest outside your window. The asking price is \$399,000 with a \$600 maintenance. Pied a Terres are welcome.

Call Chris O'Neal to hear more... 212.381-2220