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An edition of TIMES LEADER

SUNDAY, MARCH 25, 2018



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# Third generation now runs Interstate Building Materials

By Tony Callaio  
For Sunday Dispatch

**PITTSTON** — Three generations of the Pupa family have been leading the way in home improvement for decades – eight decades to be exact.

Since 1938, when Joseph Pupa Sr. founded Interstate Home Improvement Co. in Wilkes-Barre, the company hasn't looked back.

Pupa Sr. believed valuing his employees would only build his company's reputation and that formula has kept the family business growing for 80 years. Joseph Pupa III now heads



Submitted photo

**Don Montini, left, operations manager, and Interstate owner Joe Pupa III look over a seemed corner of a new window produced in-house.**

the company, acting as the third-generation owner preceded by his father Joseph Pupa Jr.

Currently, there are two companies under the Interstate umbrella — Interstate Building Materials and Interstate Window & Door Co. Both businesses have grown at a steady pace, employing approximately 130 employees today.

"We are in a very competitive industry," Pupa said. "If you don't remain competitive, someone will knock you out. You have to make sure you're innovative; you have to make sure your services are right. If you're not efficient, you're going to get destroyed and, without good quality, you're going to lose."

With that philosophy, Interstate has had a meteoric climb. In 1986, Interstate broke ground for a 36,000 sq. ft. manufacturing plant located off the Pittston Bypass. Interstate products reach as far as New England, Ohio and Georgia.

Interstate Window & Door Co. is the larger of the two companies, producing windows,

sashes and doors for over 25 years.

In the mid-80s, Interstate became the first company in the nation to manufacture vinyl single hung windows for new construction, eventually developing a fully integrated double hung vinyl window system.

One project Interstate is particularly proud of is donating its vinyl window products to the Statue of Liberty Restoration Project in 1986 where the windows still stand today, providing a true testament of the quality products Interstate provides.

In 1991, the Vinyl Window & Door Institute recognized Interstate Window & Door Co. for its outstanding performance in manufacturing.

Interstate Building Materials on Laurel Street offers roofing, composite railing and decking materials that can be purchased by contractors or the general public right out of its



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

**Employees at Interstate Door & Window Co. are busy producing vinyl doors, windows and sashes in the company's 36,000 sq. ft. building on the Pittston Bypass.**

showroom.

The showroom is vast with a complete lineup of kitchens, kitchen hardware, roofing products and, of course, doors and windows. Interstate will accommodate projects of any size.

"Our showroom is open to the public at Interstate Building Materials and we are extremely competitive with pricing and personalized service," added Pupa.

Interstate is affiliated with the National Fenestration Rating Council (NFRC), an organization that establishes objective window, door and skylight energy performance ratings, as well as ENERGY STAR insuring its products are highly efficient, according to ENERGY STAR standards.

Interstate is also a contributor to the Habitat for Humanity ReStore Program.

Interstate was awarded the MEAE (Manufacturers & Employers Award for Excellence) for Product Innovation in 2013 and 2017.

The business has also received a Certificate of Special Recognition for Product Innovation – United States Senate, a Citation from Pennsylvania House of Representatives for Product Innovation and a Certificate of Special Recognition for Product Innovation – Congress of the United States.



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

**Interstate Building Materials, located at 155 Laurel St., Pittston, has a vast showroom featuring kitchen cabinets, doors and windows and building supplies selling to the general public and contractors.**

Reach the Sunday Dispatch newsroom at 570-655-1418 or by email at [sd@psdispatch.com](mailto:sd@psdispatch.com).

# Third-generation owner is privileged to run Sabatini's

By Geri Gibbons  
For Sunday Dispatch



Sunday Dispatch file photo

Lindo Sabatini is a third-general owner of Sabatini's.

EXETER — To many area residents, Sabatini's Pizza goes far beyond a quality restaurant at a central location, even beyond a place to gather for a night out — to many it has become a family tradition.

Owner Lindo Sabatini said the restaurant, in its 60th year, often serves families for generations.

"Often, someone will have their first date here and then celebrate their 20th anniversary here and beyond," he said. "Every kind of family event from birthday parties, to rehearsal dinners, to post-graduation dinners are celebrated here."

On a recent afternoon, Sabatini took time to look back on his family's history, intertwined with the restaurant that bears its name.

His grandparents, John and Catherine Sabatini, opened the restaurant in 1958, serving only pizza.

"They knew people liked pizza and my grandmother had a secret recipe," he said. "We still use that recipe today."

The next generation, Joe and Carol Sabatini, stepped up in 1973 to run the restaurant through the 70s, 80s and 90s.

During that period, the restaurant added to its menu, serving not just pizza, but other items which now includes wings, salads, sandwiches and pasta.

Lindo Sabatini and his wife Maria bought the restaurant in 2005 and couldn't be happier.

"Someone asked me how long do I have to run the restaurant," he said. "I said, 'You mean how long do I have the privilege of running the restaurant?'"

Sabatini loves his job because he never knows what a day will



Sunday Dispatch file photo

Lindo Sabatini talks about the import beers offers on tap.

hold.

"I come into work and one day, I am making pizza, the next I am fixing the air conditioning," he said.

In the last two years, the restaurant also has expanded its footprint on Wyoming Avenue with a "Bar & Bottle" area operating next to the original restaurant.

Other growth of the restaurant is unrelated to sales or business, having to do with matters of the heart and of the area.

"We recently had a couple get married here," he said. "Their first memories as a married couple will be made here."



Sunday Dispatch file photo

Lindo Sabatini with international beers at Sabatini's brew house restaurant in Exeter.

In one sense, Sabatini's provides quality Italian food for residents of the Greater Pittston area and beyond; in another sense, it provides a cherished backdrop as life unfolds for its customers.

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# Gerri Bridal Shop owners offer expertise and personal attention

By Geri Gibbons

For Sunday Dispatch

PITTSSTON - Gerri Bridal Shoppe on South Main Street is the “go to” place for many area brides-to-be — not simply because of nearly 500 wedding gowns in everything from silk to taffeta to tulle, but because of the expertise and personal attention of its owners.

The shop was started by Regina Jerrytone in 1965.

Jerrytone had originally worked at Zimmerman’s Bridal Shop in Wilkes-Barre where there was one too many “Reginas.” It was there she was first called Gerri, a name that would define her legacy in the bridal business.

Now located on Pittston’s Main Street and owned by Jerrytone’s daughter Judy Monko and granddaughter Michelle DeBiasi, the shop offers wedding gowns, mother-of-the-bride gowns, prom gowns and other dresses for various special occasions.

“We dress women for formal events,” said Monko. “And we love doing it.”

Monko, who has worked at the shop originally located on North Main Street throughout its history, looks back at wedding day memo-



Aimee Dilger | Sunday Dispatch

Gerri Bridal Shop has been in Pittston City for over 50 years.

ries not only of her customers, but of her own family.

“When I got married, we forgot to have a fitting for my wedding gown and it was too long,” she said. “So I said, don’t worry about it; I’ll just wear high heels.”

Both DeBiasi and Monko said that, in the wedding world, some things change, but some things forever stay the same.

“We enjoy doing theme weddings and destination weddings,” said DeBiasi, “but a lot of brides still love everything traditional.”

Wedding dresses are now more likely to be off-white, champagne or ivory, rather than the traditional white.

“Every couple of years, pink or blush trends,” said Monko. “It’s now much more about what the bride looks best in.”

One of DeBiasi’s favorite memories is that of her oldest customer.



Aimee Dilger | Sunday Dispatch

Michelle DeBiasi hangs a dress on a mannequin at Gerri Bridal Shop in Pittston.



Aimee Dilger | Sunday Dispatch

Judy Monko unwraps a prom gown at Gerri Bridal Shop in Pittston.

“She came in at 72 and she wanted to wear white,” she said. “And, we also dressed her bridesmaids.”

The shop also does alterations, an added benefit for customers who want to look their best at their special event.

The key to success, Monko said, is knowing the customers you serve.



Aimee Dilger | Sunday Dispatch

Gerri Bridal Shop carries jewelry and shoes, as well as gowns.



Aimee Dilger | Sunday Dispatch

Gerri Bridal Shop sells various headpieces to match wedding dresses.

“No bride, no customer is the same,” she said. “They range from those getting married at the Stegmaier mansion to those who are having a barn wedding to those who are having a beach wedding.”

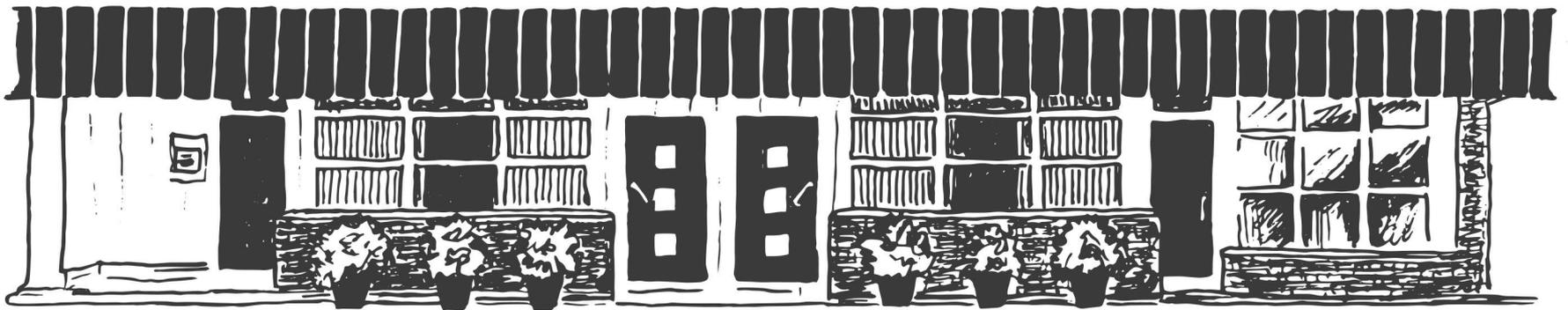
With DeBiasi ready to take the reigns when her mother retires, the bridal shop, nestled on South Main Street amid plenty of foot traffic and a revitalized city, seems to have a bright future.

Reach the Sunday Dispatch newsroom at 570-655-1418 or by email at [sd@psdispatch.com](mailto:sd@psdispatch.com).

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# Gramercy Ballroom & Restaurant has served meals at same location since 1938

By Tony Callaio  
For Sunday Dispatch

PITTSTON — One Main Street business that has been in the same location since it opened is the Gramercy Ballroom & Restaurant, owned and operated by the Augello family and steeped in tradition.

Located at 155 S. Main St., the Gramercy was founded in 1938 by Giuseppi and Giustina Augello, who ran the business until passing it down to sons, Michael Sr. and his wife Susan, and Sam and his wife Marcella, who ran it for nearly 40 years. Eventually, the founders' grandson, Michael Augello Jr. and his wife Mary Pat took over the reins.

The family business is the lifeblood of the family, something evident in that 99-year old Michael Augello Sr. goes to the restaurant twice a day. Senior wasn't just sitting around the morning the Sunday Dispatch visited the Gramercy; he was making cabbage soup for patrons.

Mike Jr. has been involved with the restaurant since 1977. At 63, he doesn't have plans to step down any time soon, but hopes one of his children will take an interest in running the business. "I won't be making soup if I reach my dad's age," he quipped. "But who knows what the future will bring."



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

The Gramercy Ballroom & Restaurant, established in 1938 and located on Main Street in Pittston, celebrates 80 years in business by the Augello family.



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch  
Michael Augello Jr. stands in the dining room of The Gramercy Ballroom & Restaurant where the family business has operated since 1938. Mike is a third-generation proprietor. Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

The Gramercy boasts a full bar, restaurant, private dining rooms, as well as a ballroom that can seat up to 350 people.

The restaurant features an Italian-American menu, offering unique Sicilian items like stuffed tripe, pasta putanesca and pasta con sarde as well as stuffed artichokes when in season. All food is prepared fresh on-site daily.

The Gramercy is known for its award-winning sauce.

On the American side, patrons can order a steak, pork chops or seafood cooked to perfection. Not hungry for a full meal? The Augellos are known for their pan pizza, which originated at the

Gramercy.

You can grab lunch and dinner Tuesdays through Fridays and dinner only on Saturdays at the restaurant.

If you grew up in Greater Pittston, you most likely have attended an event at the Gramercy. The ballroom has hosted thousands of weddings, holiday parties, baby and bridal showers, reunions, birthday and graduation parties and bereavements gatherings, as well as Chamber of Commerce events.

"We don't see too many Holy Communion parties much these days," Mike Jr. joked. He admitted to enjoying the weddings they host. "I get to sit down and enjoy the people when they are in a good mood and happy."

Over eight decades, the Gramercy Ballroom has provided a convenient location, blending great food with an intimate atmosphere, pleasing everyone's palette. It offers plated, buffet and family-style menus for any occasion.



Tony Callaio | For Sunday Dispatch

At 99 years young, Michael Augello Sr. still has his hands in the family business which his parents Giuseppi and Giustina opened in 1938. Mike Sr. begins and ends his day at the restaurant.

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A Part Of Our Community For  
**More Than Half A Century!**

# Piontek Funeral Home has served Greater Pittston since 1952

By Gene Axton  
For Sunday Dispatch

DURYEA—Piontek Funeral Home's business is family.

Frank and Mary Piontek opened the funeral home at its current 204 Main St. location in 1952. Frank passed away in 1982, but Frank's nephew Bernard continued the business and today acts as funeral director. Bernard's daughter Michelle Piontek, 41, fell in love with the industry, earned her funeral service education degree in 1997 and became supervisor at Piontek Funeral Home in 2012.

"It's my way of being able to give back to the community," Michelle said. "I

honestly love what I do as a professional. I don't know what I'd be doing if I wasn't a funeral director. This is all I wanted to do since I was in high school."

What Michelle does is a 24-hour profession. She said most work is done during the day because that's when churches, flower shops, cemeteries and other entities involved in the funeral process operate. However, normal business hours don't dictate death.

"If the person passes away in the middle of the night, we're out in the middle of the night," she said.

After retrieval of the body, Michelle

meets with families when they're ready to make arrangements. She said emotional awareness is as important as any other trait in the funeral home business.

"Most families are at peace because they see their family member suffering and they are at peace now, so that does make it a little easier," Michelle said. "But if it's a young child or a young adult or a tragic death, that's never easy to make arrangements for so, at that time, we have to take everything a lot slower. But, for most families that come in, unfortunately, it's a part of life and arrangements have to be made."

Michelle said she's happy to provide services that help make that part of life easier for families to experience, and she's proud to provide those services in Greater Pittston.

"It's a close-knit community," she said. "A lot of the families we serve we have served since the funeral home opened, so I like the fact that people put their trust in us and allow us to serve them for years and years."

Michelle also serves her professional community as president of the Luzerne County Funeral Directors Association, and her community at-large as one of Luzerne County's deputy coroners — a position previously held by both Frank and Bernard.

Michelle said the business is unpredictable — the funeral home could be fully booked or go without events for days, at which point paperwork and maintenance are prioritized. Either way, she's proud to do business in Duryea.

"I wouldn't go anywhere else," she said.



Submitted photo

Bernard Piontek and his daughter Michelle operate Piontek Funeral Home in Duryea, which has been in business since 1952.

Reach the Sunday Dispatch newsroom at 570-655-1418 or by email at [sd@psdispatch.com](mailto:sd@psdispatch.com).

# Dupont Monument Shop owner helps families in time of need

By Gene Axton  
For Sunday Dispatch

DUPONT—If monuments are built to last, Dupont Monument Shop reflects its namesake.

Marcelino Malo, a stonecutter who moved to Pennsylvania from Vermont, founded the 273 Main St. business in the mid-1950s. Malo passed the business down to his nephew, John Marino, who retired in 2011. Current proprietor Gregory Timonte, 50, has worked at the shop since 1986.

“Being that I am third generation, you get to know the families,” Timonte said. “People come in, they say, ‘Oh, we bought our first memorial here for our great-grandmother,’ which was probably 40 years ago, 50 years ago.”

Back then, all required measurements were done by hand. Today, Timonte designs 99 percent of his headstones, monuments, mausoleums and memorials with a computer program. When families visit the shop, he creates a digital mock-up of their memorial before they leave. Today’s customers favor personalized pieces, he said.

“Monuments nowadays are not as traditional as they were years ago,” Timonte said. “A lot of people tend to gravitate



Gene Axton | For Sunday Dispatch

**Gregory Timonte, owner of Dupont Monument Shop, says memorials today are not as traditional as they once were.**

towards things that say more about the person. Whether they pray to the rosary, play guitar or ride motorcycles, we can incorporate different things like that into the designs.”

Timonte’s favorite part of the process is a finished product — and a satisfied customer.

“Personally, I like to walk through the cemeteries and see what it is that I’ve accomplished, what I’ve produced,” Timonte said. “But the best part of it is when a member of the family comes up to you and says that it’s beautiful, it’s exactly what I wanted; it says the story of mom or dad.”

Cemeteries aren’t the only places that host examples of Dupont Monument Shop’s work. A num-

ber of pieces designed by the shop stand across Greater Pittston.

In Duryea, the shop added two black pillars on either side of the VFW’s monument to fallen service members from the borough. In Pittston City, the shop’s public projects include the Firemens Statue and the Hometown Heroes Memorial.

Timonte likes to do projects that help the community, but he enjoys what he does because it also helps individual members of the community during vulnerable moments.

“I get to offer families some closure at a very trying time in their life,” Timonte said.

Reach the Sunday Dispatch newsroom at 570-655-1418 or by email at [sd@psdispatch.com](mailto:sd@psdispatch.com).



Gene Axton | For Sunday Dispatch  
Dupont Monument Shop owner Gregory Timonte has worked at the shop since 1986.

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