

CASEY'S ON THIRD

~A Series of old Wildwood Bar Stories~

BY JOSH KINNEY



GARVIN'S IRISHMAN'S CAFE, CIRCA 1970

It's hard to imagine a property on the five mile island of Wildwood being sold for \$450 but that's exactly how much Robert A. Smith of Philadelphia paid for the lot on the corner of 3rd street and New York Avenue in November of 1906. Talk about a bar with a history! What is now Casey's on 3rd has a heritage that dates back to October 1881.

Fast forward to 2005 and Michele Casey and her husband Tom and her brother-in-law Kevin were sitting together in a Wildwood bar with a realtor friend of theirs who had helped them sell some condos during the condo boom. They had gone out to celebrate when their friend had mentioned that there was a bar for sale and asked if they would ever be interested in something like that. "No way," said Michele, "We go to bars but never thought of owning one." Though, after talking it out and a few more drinks they decided to entertain the idea. "We thought, wow you know, how cool would that be, to own a bar?" From there the ball began rolling. They called the bank who gave them the money when they never would have imagined they would even finance them. And there it was, a conversation in a bar led to owning one for the Caseys. Everything was in place at just the right time for just the right owners to inherit such a rich history.

The land on the corner of 3rd and New York was among hundreds of Angelsea lots which Rebecca Simpson, a "single woman" of Philadelphia purchased for a total of \$10,000 from The Five Mile Beach Improvement Co. in October of 1881. At that time our Wildwood looked much wilder than it does today. Simpson's deed contained covenants against "hog pens and slaughter houses." ...Interesting. It wasn't long until Simpson left the property in May of 1882 for a nominal amount to a man named James Patrick who subsequently passed away. Patrick's widow married John Rowbotham who would

then sell the property to Louis H. Wehmeyer in July 1905 for the grand total of one U.S. dollar! Only a year later in November of 1906, Wehmeyer sold to Robert Smith of Phila. for \$450. By August 1922, Smith sold to Giacomo Mattera for "\$100 and other lawful money" according to historical records.

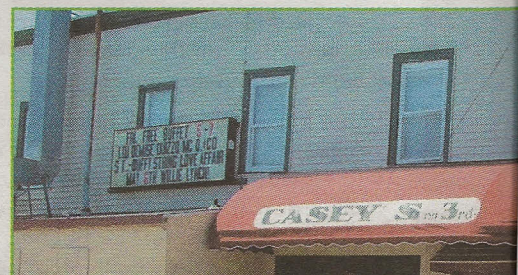
During the late 1930's the structure was built which is today Casey's, back then: 'Giacomo's Saloon' and by the early 1950's 'Spinner Wheel Café.' It wasn't until 1970 that Mattera sold the place to Albert and Elizabeth Turpin for \$30,000. The couple kept the place for five years and then sold to William and Elizabeth Kelly for \$47,500 who kept it for about five years before selling to Theresa Garvin for \$248,000 naming it Garvin's Irishman's Café. From 1970-2002, the corner property transferred hands almost every five or six years with sale prices fluctuating even more dramatically than its many owners. In May of 1986, Mark Rohlfing purchased the building from the Garvin's for \$250,000 and then sold in 1989 to Robert and Woodrow Hall for \$200,000. In 1997, the Hall brothers sold Ollie's to HuNan Realty Inc. for the exact price that they purchased the property. HuNan Realty sold to Thomas and Arlene Thornton for \$350,000 in May of 2002 and in June 2004 they sold to David Chiavoroli and Dina Cataldi for almost double, \$600,000. Only a year later to the month did Chiavaroli and Catadi sell to Striped Bass LLC for again, almost double, \$950,000. It was during these times that there were various name changes from The Bent Elbow to J.D. McGillicuddy's in 2005 when the bar ended up in the hands of the Casey's. As new owners they immediately impressed both new and old customers with their innovative management.

"It's pretty cool that it has such a history," said Michele Casey, "People come in here all the time and say 'my grandfather used to bring me here...' their stories are pretty cool!" Michele and her brother-in-law Kevin were always in the food service business and her husband Tom in construction which made owning the bar a great fit, being able to bring their specific skill sets to the table.

"We've met so many people and became friends with so many people, not just customers and acquaintances but real good friends," she said. The Casey's take great care and pride in their bar, hoping to get better and better every year. As the latest torch bearers of the corner's history, they're moving forward and keeping things fresh.



MULLINS BAR, CIRCA 1987



TOM, MICHELE & KEVIN CASEY CELEBRATED THEIR 5TH ANNIVERSARY ALL YEAR LONG!

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