

A Life at Nathan's: Bernard Nadrich Saw History in the Making at Coney

By Josh Simons
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BROOKLYN — Nathan's hot dog stand, on Stillwell and Surf avenues, is a world-renowned institution. Since opening in 1916, one of Coney Island's most well-known landmarks has expanded into a worldwide chain. It continues to stand tall among Brooklyn's most important symbols.

One of the most important aspects of Nathan's was the services of a man named Bernard Nadrich, who dedicated 33 years of his life to working for the Coney Island landmark. Bernie's long career ended earlier this month, when he announced his plans to retire and move down to Florida.

Bernard Nadrich began to work for Nathan's on December 15, 1965. Bernie knew that he wanted to work for Nathan's for a long time. His decision to stay was in large part due to the way Nathan Handwerker, the founder of the restaurant, "treated us like family," Bernie said.

He had no other future plans, so he decided not to leave. Instead, he began a long career that has tuned him a special part of Nathan's.

Bernie's responsibilities included serving hot dogs to customers and catering receptions. He has catered receptions for the Circle Line cruises, events at NBC Brooklyn Studios, and numerous times at Gracie Mansion.

However, what Bernie will be remembered for is his courteous manner with customers. Bernie commented that over the years, he has made many friends. He has worked through three generations. He says what he will miss most about Nathan's is "the hot dogs, and friendly people." He also commented that one of the most enjoyable parts of his job was when an old customer would return to the store years later with his or her kids or grandchildren.

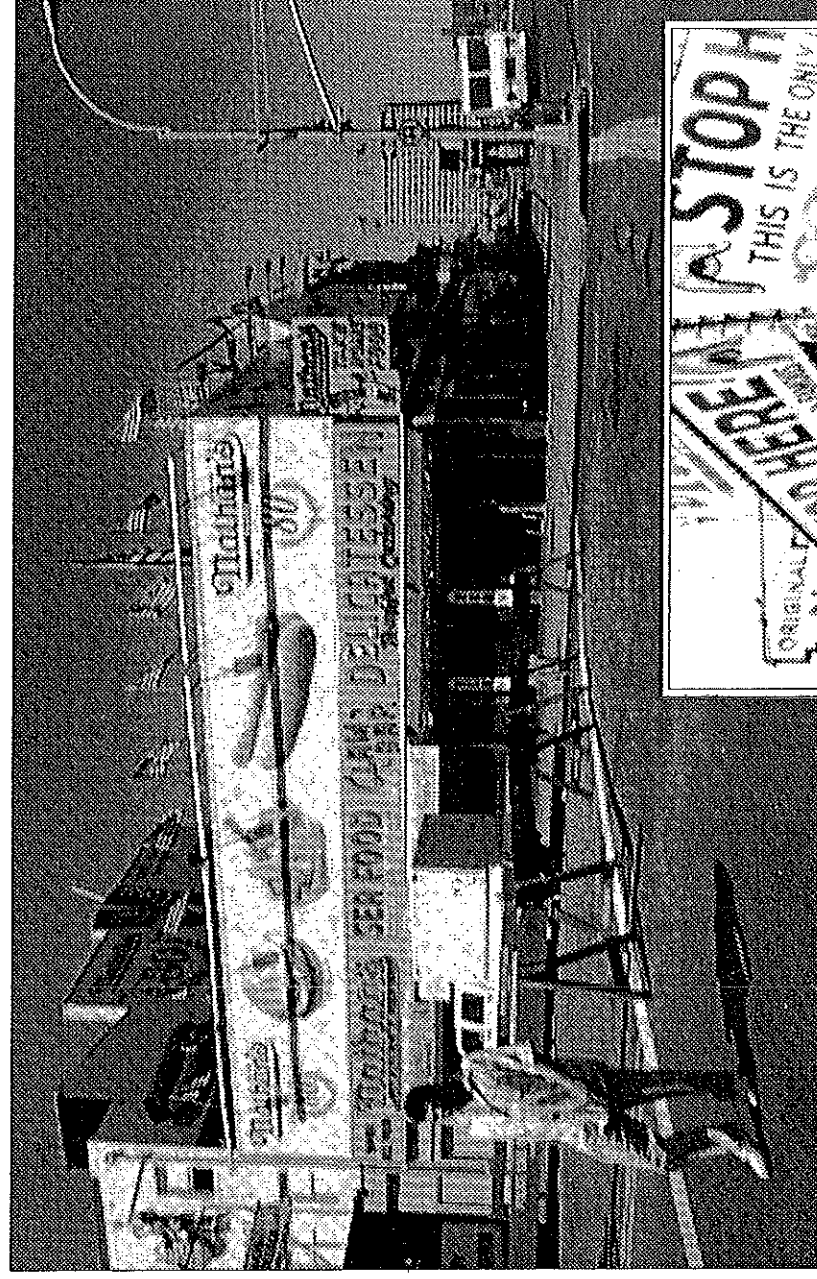
When Bernie and his wife (who has worked in Nathan's corporate office in Long Island for 25 years herself) leave, they will take with them some wonderful memories of one of Brooklyn's oldest commercial institutions. A sign outside the store reads "Forget about it." Nothing is more Brooklyn than Nathan's, and nobody symbolizes Nathan's more than Bernie Nadrich.

The store where Nadrich spent his entire career is the original Nathan's, which, as the years went by, became a very important part of Coney Island. Originally, Feltman's restaurant, the reputed inventor of the hot dog, was better known, but by mid-century, Nathan's had replaced it as an institution. Since Nathan's offered good hot dogs for only 5 cents as well as a variety of clams, shrimp, frog's legs and other specialties, people would crowd the store to get their hands on Nathan's hot dogs.

Its popularity continued to grow, and stars began to visit. People such as Ed Koch and Ricky Schroder have stopped by the stand. The famous boxer Rocky Graziano once ordered three hot dogs with mustard and sauerkraut, some crinkle-cut french fries, and a large drink from the very popular hot stand.

Photos by Josh Simons

Bernie stands in front of what was his workplace for so many years. The original Nathan's sign shows in front of him.



First opened in 1916, the famous Nathan's hot dog stand, on the corner of Stillwell and Surf avenues, continues to stand tall as one of Brooklyn's most famous establishments.

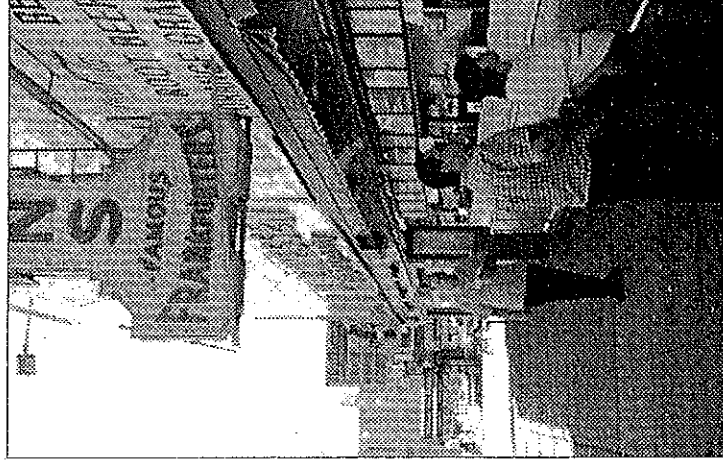


Bernie is pictured buying a hot dog. A "Forget About It" sign, with one of Brooklyn's most famous expressions, hangs in the background.



Back when Coney Island was the place to be in the summertime, people would always stop by Nathan's Famous hot-dog stand to pick up a hot dog or anything else for a nickel.

Photo courtesy of "When Brooklyn Was the World"



Bernie admires Nathan's kitchen as he pays for a hot dog. He remembers that when he started to work there, hot dogs were a quarter. Nowadays they cost \$2.11.

