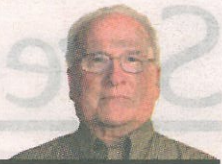


AROUND PLEASANTON



By JEB BING

Always a smile at Eddie Pappas

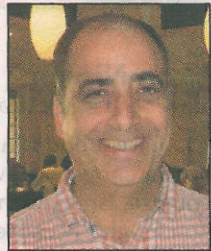
Eddie Pappas, a popular Hopyard Road restaurant which its owner Ed Westmoreland calls "America's Hangout," just gained more fame in a Forbes magazine article that cites its "Apple Store-like values." Although the near-full page commentary by Forbes business writer Carmine Gallo came as a surprise, Westmoreland (who expected a sentence or two of praise) says he spent some time with the author when Gallo and his family stopped by. Gallo has a book, "The Apple Experience," and he asked for feedback from readers. Westmoreland read the book and wrote Gallo about how he tries to make Eddie Pappas the restaurant version of the Apple Store.

Gallo came the 3,000 miles from New York to see and was amazed, as he told Forbes' readers, about the uniqueness of the Eddie Pappas' strictly American cuisine from regions across the U.S. Even Westmoreland's hiring philosophy reminded Gallo of a chapter he wrote in "The Apple Experience," called "hire for smiles." Westmoreland, like Apple, values magnetic personality over proficiency, although those of us who dine there believe he offers both quite abundantly.

When Westmoreland opened Eddie Pappas 4-1/2 years ago, his was the fourth restaurant in the stand-alone building at 4889 Hopyard Road in the Gateway Center. But his research for a location to launch his own restaurant showed that despite the failure of those earlier eateries, restaurants such as the nearby Chili's and Faz were doing quite well. Besides, a long-time resident of Pleasanton, he liked the idea of a five-minute commute from his home. What he didn't know, nor did most of us, was that when he opened for business in February 2008, a major business recession would follow. Still, his emphasis on American regional cuisine proved a welcome addition to a city that has many ethnic food restaurants. Customers told him from the start that they liked the tastes of his homemade salad dressings, sauces and soups, and they kept coming back. While some restaurants have fallen on hard times in the slow economy, Eddie Pappas keeps growing with

Westmoreland's business so far in 2012 well ahead of a year ago.

It's a wonder that Eddie Pappas isn't another Chinese restaurant. After receiving his degree in sociology from UC Berkeley in 1988, with a heavy emphasis on management style, he parlayed the part-time and night-time restaurant jobs he worked while a student into a retail partnership with P.F. Chang's. He opened that restaurant's Walnut Creek location and then later, as a market partner, opened up more P.F. Chang's restaurants, including the one at Stoneridge Shopping Center. That brought him to Pleasanton where he quickly became involved in sports and community affairs, activities that continue today.



Ed Westmoreland

It was at a marketing meeting in Arizona where he was discussing possible other Chinese restaurant opportunities that the discussion turned to American food. While there were plenty of "down-home" ham and egg and hamburger places around the country, no one had put together a restaurant that served regional food. Most diners had to travel to different regions to experience those special tastes. Westmoreland grabbed the bait and started looking for his own place to give regional American food a try, taking the space being vacated at the Hopyard restaurant by Baci Steak and Seafood Restaurant on Jan. 30, 2008, and opening Eddie Pappas that Feb. 25.

Westmoreland, born in San Francisco and raised in Orinda, comes from a large family and he's keeping pace. His son Jason graduated from Amador Valley High School in 2010 and hopes to transfer from Las Positas College to UC Davis. Mia, 5, is signed up for the dual immersion Spanish language program at Valley View Elementary when school starts Aug. 28. Little "Eddie" is 3 and will be in pre-school. Frankie, who just turned 1, will stay at home with his mother Anette. Whether talking about family or to customers, there's always a happy smile on Westmoreland's face, just as Gallo wrote in his Forbes article about Pleasanton and Eddie Pappas. ■