

# The American Dream come true . . .

by Bonnie Seal

When most people see a barrier, they try to get around it. Jimmy Sassalos, owner and manager of Devlin's restaurant on the corner of North Skidmore and Maryland, breaks it down. That's what his wife and friends will tell you.

From a customer's perspective, he seems to have many friends. People walk into the restaurant, see Jimmy and smile. They shake hands, joke and laugh with him, and coo with his three-month-old daughter, begging to be allowed to hold her.

The Sassalos live only a block from the restaurant and Jimmie's wife, Janie, and their baby daughter, Anastasia, are frequent visitors, with Janie sometimes filling in at the cash register if help is needed.

To reinforce the family atmosphere, Jimmie's two brothers and their children are employed by the restaurant.

"It's hard to stay trim around Jimmie," says Janie.

"How about a piece of pie?" he asks you. Thinking of your waistline, you refuse.

"Sometimes he brings it to you anyway, even if you say no," she comments.

Jimmie Sassalos is popular, but he is also successful, so successful that after eight years in the business, "the business outgrew the building," and he was forced to expand. Last year Devlin's business volume included 395,000 persons served, and Jimmie hopes to make that figure half a million this year. The restaurant has 16 employees.

Last week, the Sassalos opened a bar and lounge as part of the restaurant. The spacious room in the right back corner of the building features a fireplace and a brick decor, and is open from lunch time until 1 a.m. daily except Sundays.

It was the third and last leg of a year-long construction project, in which Jimmie built a new restaurant on the site of the old one while the old one was still in operation.

"We only closed for two weeks during the work," said Janie.



Jimmy Sassalos, owner of Devlin's Restaurant, has learned that, "If you have a burning desire for something, you can do it. If you work hard it is not impossible."

The first part of the job involved enlarging the kitchen in the back of the building, followed by expanding the width of the building to almost twice its original size. Finally, the wall between the old part and the new came down, and a unified decor

was established for the restaurant.

Devlin's is now 4,000 square feet, compared to the 1,200 square feet of its previous size.

How did Jimmie Sassalos get into such an expansive construction project?



Customers enjoy the newly opened lounge at Devlin's Restaurant.

(Photos: Richard J. Brown)

It all started when he bought the restaurant eight years ago after having been a bus boy at the Thunderbird Hotel.

"I made up my mind to make it successful, and I decided to see it through. It was hard, but not impossible," said Jimmie who works fourteen to sixteen hours a day seven days a week.

"I like to serve people," he commented, and that was one reason he chose a restaurant instead of a career in electronics, which he studied for four years, both at Portland State University and Michigan State University before buying his business.

Jimmie was raised on a farm in Greece. He became a radio operator

for the Greek merchant marines as an adult, and has traveled widely.

After leaving the merchant marines, he decided to come to the United States because "I saw more opportunity here than anyplace in the world." Sixteen years ago with two suitcases and no money, and full of dreams, hopes, desires for success and no knowledge of the

English language, he arrived in America.

To anyone interested in starting a business or pursuing some interest, Jimmy advises, "Be well prepared about the business. If you have a burning desire for something, you can do it. If you work hard it is not impossible."

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