

Angelo's Paving weathered crushing blows through strength of Ciaglia family

Business has been operating 66 years

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WEST LONG BRANCH - In July 2009, the Ciaglia family, owners and operators of Angelo's Paving Inc., went through a rough patch in their personal and professional lives.

Antoinette Ciaglia, the family matriarch and widow of Angelo Ciaglia, founder of the West Long Branch business, passed away at 97 from natural causes. Within a month, her son Marcellino "Sonny" Ciaglia, who had taken over the business, was killed in a car accident, dead at the age of 73.

Needless to say, the Ciaglia family was shaken up. But they would rise above these tragedies and keep the business thriving while becoming a stronger family.

"It really does make you stronger, despite what people might think," said Mark Ciaglia, one of Sonny's four sons who today are co-owners of Angelo's Paving.

"I worked with my grandfather as a young kid and he always had a high standard of how a family should function and also of how a family business should function," Mark Ciaglia said. "When I started working with my father, he set the bar even higher. They taught us the value of life. Family comes first, but the business is also very important. We learned at a very young age of how to do things the right way. They would have wanted us to follow that family tradition even when they were not around."

Angelo's Paving, which has been in business for 66 years, performs both residential and commercial jobs.

As third-generation owners, all four Ciaglia brothers — Mark, Angelo, Anthony and Michael — recall being shown the ropes by their grandfather and father as early as 7 or 8 years old. Everything was a learning experience and they grew to love the business.

"In the summertime, when all of the other kids were off from school and at the beach, we were working," said Angelo Ciaglia. "We would start off by sitting on the machines and getting comfortable with them. By the time we were 17, you would think we had 30 to 40 years experience on the job. This is all we have done since grammar school, just learning and watching."

Mark recalls always being treated like just another worker and never having it easy.

"Our parents and grandparents loved us, but when we were on family time, it was all business and we were told that from the beginning," Mark said. "They strived to make us better people, as well as hard workers and did not let us stray away from the beaten



The Ciaglia family, Michael Jr., left, Michael Sr., Rita, Angelo and Mark. DOUG HOOD/ASBURY PARK PRESS

Angelo's Paving Inc.

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path."

The founder, Angelo Ciaglia, started the business in 1953 and ran it for 20 years straight. He was one of the first businesses in the area to install asphalt driveways in a time where a lot of driveways were just stones and rocks.

"After coming over as an immigrant and trying his hands at owning a gas station and working a milk delivery route, a friend recommended that he start a paving company with just a truck," his grandson and namesake Angelo said. "Thankfully, my grandfather really did achieve success because a lot of the jobs we perform today are repeat customers from my grandfather's early days with the business."

During the early 1970s, Angelo's son, Sonny, took up the mantle and became the second-generation owner. He gained much of his experience as a young man through his father.

"My father, Sonny, was the only son out of a family of four daughters," Angelo said. "He learned a lot from our grandfather and he took it to another level. A lot of this job is learning as you go along and our father knew a lot and wanted to constantly improve. He bought more modern equipment and did jobs that included small parking lots, as well as sports structures like tennis and basketball courts. After living through the recession of the 1970s, he learned to stick with driveways and made a commitment to maintain doing

that type of work because it was what he knew best."

Just like their father and grandfather, all four of the Ciaglia brothers learned about the business from hands-on work. One way they took the business a step further was recycling the asphalt used to perform jobs.

"We recycle 99% of our material," Mark said. "We started doing it early when other companies were not. It wound up being cost-efficient because, even though the equipment was expensive, the money we saved from the process itself ended up reimbursing us for that equipment."

Rita Ciaglia, Sonny's widow, is president of the company and also takes care of financial records.

"Everyone has a job to do in regards to how the business functions," Angelo said. "Mark takes care of the estimating and the scheduling. Anthony takes care of the day-to-day operations. I take care of seal coating. Mike takes care of the trucks, the employees and the recycling end. If someone has a question about a different department, we don't hesitate to ask each other. We're all part of a well-oiled machine."

As far as keeping the business going beyond the third generation, all four of the Ciaglia brothers agree that Michael Jr. will be next in line to take over the business.

"He has pretty much followed in the same footsteps that we did," Mark said. "He is in the learning phase and is full time right now. On the days he is not learning about the business, he is with us on the job. This is not that type of job that you can learn everything in a short time, but he is doing well and we are confident that he will be a worthy fourth-generation successor to the current generation of owners."