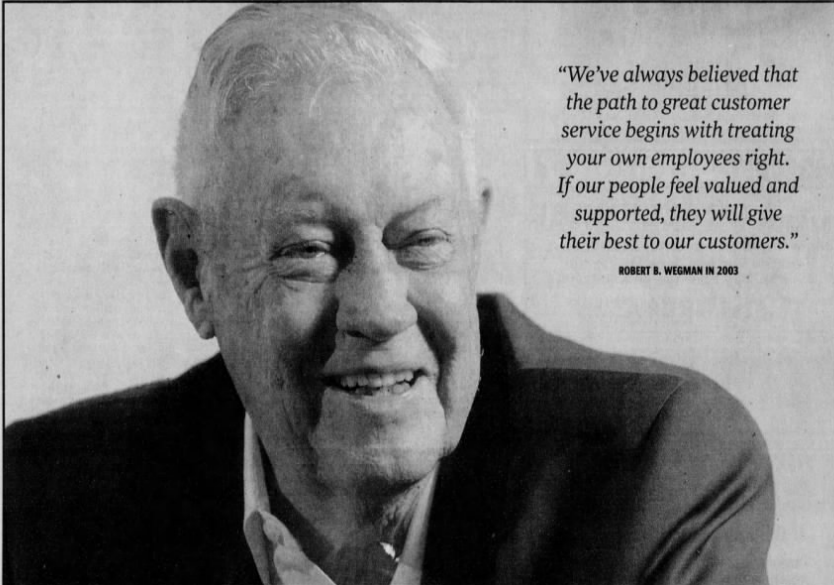


DemocratandChronicle.com 50 CENTS NEWSSTAND

ROBERT B. WEGMAN | 1918-2006

Patriarch dies



"We've always believed that the path to great customer service begins with treating your own employees right. If our people feel valued and supported, they will give their best to our customers."

ROBERT B. WEGMAN IN 2003

AMEE K. WILES file photo 2002

Robert B. Wegman gave away millions to the community but shrugged off his generosity, saying at heart he was only a simple meat cutter who put the customer first.

JIM MEMMOTT
SENIOR EDITOR

He changed lives here. Robert B. Wegman of Brighton, chairman of Wegmans Food Markets Inc., died Thursday at Strong Memorial Hospital at age 87.

Mr. Wegman affected our food, our schools, our pastimes.

It's not just that the Wegmans label is on everything from rolls to milk. It's also that Mr. Wegman took a significant portion of the millions of dollars he made in the grocery business and donated to schools and other institutions here.

Mr. Wegman would shrug when he talked about his giving. He would say that at heart, he was just a simple meat cutter, a guy who put customers first.

"I would much prefer to keep a customer happy than to beat a competitor," he once said. "That's the way I look at the world."

Beyond that, he worked hard to keep his employees happy. His company is continually rated one of the best places to work in the country.

There was a reason why. Nothing could keep Robert Wegman out of his stores.

Looking and sounding a little like John Wayne's younger brother, Mr. Wegman would stroll into a store and chat with the workers, thank the customers, check the produce.

"Put him in front of a store and he's like a 16-year-old," his wife, Peggy, once said.

Mr. Wegman went to work full time in his family's store when he was 16 and his father died. He finished high school and college, but save for the time he was in the U.S. Marines during World War II, he worked for Wegmans.

The company leadership transition at Wegmans is already in place.


In January 2005, Mr. Wegman handed his title as company chief executive to his son Danny. Danny's daughter, Colleen Wegman, became company president.

But transition is one thing, loss is another.

Robert Wegman was the grocer everyone knew. He wasn't a brand; he was a person.

Throughout his life, he was committed to Rochester, and Rochester was committed to him. □

JMEMMOTT@DemocratandChronicle.com



Associated Press 1999 file photo

Robert Wegman greets an employee at the opening of a store. He was known for his interest in his workers.

TWO PAGES INSIDE

BUSINESSMAN Mr. Wegman viewed as a vanguard of supermarket industry **10A**

THE FAMILY The business was all about family **10A**

PHILANTHROPIST He gave with head and heart **11A**

SPORTS BENEFACTOR He was vital to local sports **11A**

MORE Quotes, timeline and editorial **10A, 11A, 16A**

Online Extra

DEMOCRATANDCHRONICLE.COM

- ▶ Click on this story to:
- Contribute thoughts to a community forum.
- Hear excerpts from ex-reporter Frank Bilovsky's interview with Wegman.
- Read an in-depth profile on Wegman from 2002.
- Hear audio from community friends.
- View a photo gallery.

10A FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 2006

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ROBERT B. WEGMAN | 1918-2006

The following story contains an error. Correction page follows.

REMEMBRANCES

"Bob Wegman was a man of great wisdom and inspiration. He was a man who beautifully melded his deep faith, his excellent business acumen and incredibly generous philanthropy to truly change the face of our community for the better."

MATTHEW H. CLARK
Bishop, Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester

"Robert Wegman was a Rochester institution in his own right. He put our community on the map in a very real way. Like George Eastman, Chester Carlson and John Jacob Rausch, Robert Wegman will forever be known as an icon in business."

MAGGIE BROOKS
Mayor, Monroe County

"He has always been a quiet yet inspirational leader in our community. He did a lot of things without fanfare."

MARTIN MUSCI
Senior vice president of operations at Fyres Inc., chairman of the Rochester Business Alliance

"The word that comes to mind when I think of Bob Wegman is heart. He put his heart into his business as well as into our community. This is a tremendous loss. Recently, I described Mr. Wegman as one of the new 'George Eastmans' of Rochester. And that is exactly the company he keeps in Rochester's history."

KURT DUFFY
Rochester mayor

"Bob certainly was a key to work with, and he was someone who gave back to his community more than most people realize. The people that I had the chance to interface with most with were the players, and Mr. Wegman was one of the reasons they loved to come to Rochester."

JEFF STONE
Former director, Wegmans Rochester LPFA golf tournament

"Mr. Wegman has been such a wonderful friend to me and to the LPFA. He had a big heart and we will really miss him very much. I just shared him. He opened a lot of doors for the LPFA."

NANCY LOPEZ
Hall of fame player and three-time Rochester champion

"The LPFA has lost a great friend with the passing of Robert Wegman. He inspired everyone like his own family and his admiration extended to the LPFA."

CAULVIN BYRNS
LPFA commissioner

"We are deeply saddened by the news of Mr. Wegman's passing. He is a Rochester institution and his legacy will be forever etched into the business and philanthropic community."

MISS BRANDON
Executive vice president of business relations for the Buffalo Bills

"I was sad when I heard the news. I thought of how many contributions to our community he has made. There's always been a very nice feeling when you come to these stores. That kind of thing is usually commented on from the top down."

FRANK FERNANDEZ
Rochester resident

"It's really sad. I think Wegman is one of the best things about Rochester and he was a visionary person. On my first visit to Rochester, the real estate agent took me to Wegmans. That's what made me decide that I could live here."

FRANK BRIGMAN
Brighton resident who moved from California three years ago

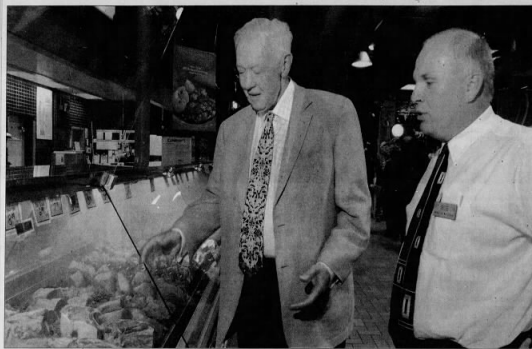
"I think Bob was a really good guy — his stores are a tribute to him. The way they are inclined to treat customers, I've never seen anything like it in the world."

JAMES GILBERT
Rochester resident

Online Extra
DEMOCRATANDCHRONICLE.COM
Contribute your thoughts to a community forum and hear audio from community friends.

THE BUSINESSMAN

Values drove industry giant



AMEL K. WELLS/AP Photo 2002

Wegmans evolved over time as the standard of excellence

By being willing to risk it all, never wavering from his dedication to customers and employees, Robert B. Wegman turned his family's small supermarket chain into a trend-setting company known across the world.

But he was never carried away with growth for growth's sake. When Kroger Inc. sought to buy Wegmans, offering to make Mr. Wegman its chairman, he turned down the offer, saying he wanted to continue to control his own destiny. Only in recent years did Wegmans expand outside its native New York core.

Wegmans' success was based on sales volume. Total employment: more than 35,000. Total employment: equal to about 10,000 full-time jobs. Ranked 32nd on the 2005 Supermarket News list of the Top 75 Supermarkets based on sales volume. Operates 703 stores in five states, including 51 in New York and one in Maryland.

For that focus, Wegmans has gotten notice as one of the nation's best-run companies. Over the last two years it has ranked first and second in *Fortune* magazine's list of the best places to work in America. "Wegmans has 2,500 stores, 100," said Dennis Mullen, chief executive of Greater Rochester Enterprise. "But everyone in that industry looks to Bob Wegman and Wegmans as the innovator and the standard of excellence."

Known for valuing employees, Mr. Wegman left a lasting impression even on Dennis Kipfler of Wal-Mart, who started as a part-timer at Wegmans 38 years ago and worked his way up to store manager. He said Mr. Wegman's reasonable nature stood out the most. "It was just the interest in the person themselves," Kipfler said. "He was very caring and he didn't come across as a high executive. He came across as

just a regular person." Others who knew or did business with Mr. Wegman saw him as a vanguard of the industry. "Having been in the food industry for over 50 years, I can honestly say Bob Wegman set the bar very, very high for all of us to follow in the supermarket industry," said Larry Rothwell, 81, owner of Pennington Quality Market in Pennington, N.J. "He was a gentleman and very honest man, a man that we all respected." Jack Herrema's family business, Herrema's Marketplaces in Brookridge, has been in operation since 1954. While he never met Mr. Wegman, he looked him up as one of Rochester's great men and admired his business approach. "There's no mistaking about it, the man was a pillar of the community," said Herrema, 70. He also doesn't see Wegmans as a competitive threat. "From my perspective, for those of us that are left as independent, (Wegmans) has kept the bar high enough that if we just try to keep up with their challenges and services, we've been able to stay in business."

Wegmans also went to work for Wegmans, which then had 64 stores. In a sense, Mr. Wegman became a pioneer by default. At Annapolis Institute, the young Mr. Wegman was drawn to golf, basketball and other sports rather than groceries. "I never worked in the stores when Dad was alive," he once said. But that death changed everything. "Trained as an accountant at the Rochester branch of Niagara University, Mr. Wegman be-

THE FAMILY



AMEL K. WELLS/AP Photo 2002

Robert Wegman, right, and, from left, son and Wegmans CEO Danny and granddaughter Nicole and Colleen celebrate the Pittsburgh store's opening. Colleen is president and Nicole is VP.

Business will remain, as always, a family affair

Robert Wegman, right, and, from left, son and Wegmans CEO Danny and granddaughter Nicole and Colleen celebrate the Pittsburgh store's opening. Colleen is president and Nicole is VP.

The life and times ...

- 1918 Born October 14 in Rochester.
1937 Graduates from Aquinas Institute and becomes full-time employee of Wegmans Food Markets.
1941 Receives a business degree from Niagara University.
1942 Begins three-year service in U.S. Marine Corps.
1946 Works as meat cutter assistant at Wegmans after being discharged from the Marines.
1960 Becomes chairman of Wegmans.
1964 Karl Hugganoff, left, of Chase-Pitts Inc. and Mr. Wegman.
1974 Company acquires Bill-Rite Chase Pitts Inc., a building and garden supply retailer.
1977 Marries second wife, Peggy Ostinger in the Dominican Republic.
1987 Celebrates 50 years of Wegmans organization.
1991 Vanden Brul Environmental Award from Rochester Institute of Technology.
1993 Opens first store outside of New York in Erie, Pa.
1995 Mr. and Mrs. Wegman give \$3 million to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Rochester for preschool programs in 13 Rochester-area Catholic schools.
1995 The Wegmans donate \$25 million to six city

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ROBERT B. WEGMAN | 1918-2006

FRIDAY, APRIL 21, 2006 11A

THE PHILANTHROPIST

Catholic schools, others benefited

Wegmans gave of themselves as well as money.

JIM MEMMOTT
most since

Robert B. Wegman often told the story of how his philanthropy began.

When he was a member center in the family store after World War II, he judged \$200 as his annual gift to his church.

Mr. Wegman was making \$60 a week at the time, and he met his pledge by putting aside his pocket change each night.

"It was just \$200," he said in 1998, "but it took me a long time."

Mr. Wegman gave much more as he became increasingly successful in the business that he led, Wegmans Food Markets Inc.

Mr. Wegman and his wife, Peggy, have given \$2 million to help Roman Catholic elementary schools in the city.

A 1977 graduate of Aquinas Institute, Mr. Wegman gave more than \$10 million to his alma mater, helping make possible a science center, a fine arts center and an athletic complex.

Mr. Wegman also gave millions to St. John Fisher College in Pittsford, helping fund schools of nursing and pharmacy.

Mr. Wegman's company has also given \$4 million to employers for college tuition assistance.

"I'm convinced that years from now, Bob Wegman will rank alongside George Eastman as one of the pillars of the Rochester community," said Fisher's president, Donald Bitts.

Mr. Wegman's company has also given \$4 million to employers for college tuition assistance.



Robert and Peggy Wegman, center, and Corpus Christi School sixth-graders laugh at a photo of themselves as kindergarten partners with the Wegmans. At far right is principal Sister Ellen Daly.

Mr. Wegman was careful in his giving. He wasn't one to write a check and forget about it, said Mike Daley, Aquinas' president.

"He always challenged me with long-term strategic planning, which would make me Aquinas

education excellent."

Mr. Wegman and his wife sometimes told the story of how they started giving to the Catholic elementary schools.

They had been talking about helping the schools, and on an impulse Mr. Wegman decided to call Bishop Matthew H. Clark of the Rochester diocese.

"I'm going to send you a check for \$25,000," Mr. Wegman told the bishop. "Who do I make it out to?"

Clark wasn't sure, but he got back to Mr. Wegman quickly and the \$25,000 turned into millions.

It also was the beginning of a relationship between the Wegmans and the schools, both of them, most especially Peggy Wegman, would go into the schools often to talk with the students and teachers.

If a new instructional program caught his eye, Mr. Wegman would spread the word, sounding like a proud parent.

And if things didn't seem right, he would express his concerns. Like many philanthropists, Mr. Wegman seemed to give out of a sense of gratitude. In particular, he seemed to feel a debt to his Catholic education.

"There's something about the discipline and the rigor atmosphere in a school like Aquinas," he said in a 2003 interview.

Includes reporting by staff writer Greg Lindsay.

IN HIS OWN WORDS

On his first task as president of Wegmans in 1950

"So I go down to see my mother. I said, 'Mother, they're going to make me president of the company, and I have to make Uncle Jim a vice president, so you have to resign.' She said, 'You're going to resign.' I said, 'Mother, I need this job for a vice president.' 'No, so I said, 'Well, Mother, then I have no recourse. I'm telling you, you are no longer a vice president.' She didn't talk to me for three solid years. If only I knew how often I know now. We now have 37 vice presidents. I would have solved that thing so easily — and she'd have still been talking to me."

On philanthropy

"It's harder to give money away than it is to make it."

On training workers

"What we're doing today — and I don't have any employees other than me — is we really are teaching our people to know everything there is about the product they're selling."

On his management style

"I've got more patience than you can believe. I'll buy a lot and sit on it for 20 years. But you have to establish a procedure for doing that, they enjoy their work."

On managing time

"I don't have things lined out of the way, so I can sit for two hours and think. If I have to work from 8 to 6, I just going, going, going. I don't have any time to think."

On Fortune's 2005 ranking of Wegmans as the No. 1 place to work

"We have developed a feeling in our company that we try to help one another. Our employees — our friends, I call them — don't really care as much about themselves as they do other people. They make a tremendous effort to help everybody and in the process of doing that, they enjoy their work."

On the dedication of the Aquinas Fine Arts Center, named which he donated \$10 million

"It's overwhelming, it's unbelievable, it's the fulfillment of my life. Never did I dream when I left here in '57 that I would come back under these circumstances."

On deciding to build a new \$40 million meat processing plant here

"Our dream has always been to keep this facility in Rochester, first because we have a trained work force here, but also because of our commitment to the community."

On his years at Aquinas

"Math, Oh boy, if I didn't get a 100 in every exam, it was a bad exam. Don't ask me about English. I'd have a 98 average (in other courses), but I'd have about an 80 in English. And subsequent to that I became a big reader."

On growing up

"I get into all kinds of trouble in grammar school. I loved to fight. There was one kid that loved to cause problems. The ball would rip for recess, and we'd get on the playground and we'd get on after each other. We were young, but 8 or 9 years old. That kid was a pain in the neck."

On sponsoring Buffalo Bills training camp here

"This stems from our desire to make the community a better place to live. We plan that above our financial interests."

On competition in sports and business

"I only remember losing one match in the 19th hole. Every other one, if I got to the 19th hole I win. In all the years I've played, I'd love to have to go to the 19th hole and win. It's a great challenge."

On staying active through working, from a 2002 interview

"I don't know how many years the good Lord would let me be on this earth, but if my mind was as keen as it is today, I could be challenged until they carried me out."

THE SPORTS BENEFACTOR

Generous spirit, class acts were a local hit

SAL MAZURKA

Robert Wegman, the super-golfer, was also a vital figure in the Rochester sports scene.

Mr. Wegman is credited with reviving the annual LPGA Tour event at Locust Hill Country Club — now called the Wegmans Rochester LPGA — when his company agreed to become title sponsor in 1998.

He played a key role in brokering the deal that brought the Buffalo Bills training camp to John Fisher College in 2000.

And in 2002, his \$1 million donation to his alma mater, Aquinas Institute, enabled the private Catholic school to build an athletic complex that is one of the finest in Section V, if not the state.

Mr. Wegman was a longtime member at Oak Hill Country Club who, in his prime, played to a single-digit handicap. He competed as an amateur in the 1941 Times Union Open.

His love of golf and sense of community spirit were two of the key reasons why, in 2006, Wegmans Food Markets Inc. became the title sponsor of the LPGA tournament.

"He saved the LPGA tournament," said former tournament director Jerry Stahl. "We were losing (founders) local companies that provided the prize before Wegmans took over."

There needed to be dollars to fund it and there weren't enough there, but Mr. Wegman stepped up.

With a middle-of-the-road purse of \$600,000 in 2002, the top three LPGA money winners at the time of the tournament — Annika Sorenstam, Karrie Webb and Kelly Klaber — as well as stars such as Helen Alfredsson, Laura Davies, Beth Daniel, Juli Inkster, Reye King and Meg Mallon, all played the tournament, which ultimately was won by Wendy Menzies.

In 2006, even with Mr. Wegman increasing the purse to \$1,000,000, four of the top five money winners — Sorenstam,



Pro golfer Paula Creamer and Robert Wegman team up at the Wegmans Pro-Am last year at Locust Hill. In his prime, Mr. Wegman, a longtime member at Oak Hill, played to a single-digit handicap and competed as an amateur in the 1941 Times Union Open.

Donald Anderson, Webb and Liselotte Neumann — didn't bother coming to town, and that sent war-time nerves up at Wegmans headquarters.

"We were at a critical juncture where we needed to stay competitive with other tournaments," said longtime tournament coordinator Linda Hangstrom. "Other purses were growing and we needed to put together a formula."

Mr. Wegman initiated a full-court press to make the tournament more desirable to the players. He increased the purse to \$1 million in 1999, plus he chartered a private jet to transport players from Minneapolis — where the U.S. Women's Open was being played — to Rochester to alleviate what would be a long drive.

He proposed the gesture in 2001, offering to fly players — again free of charge — from Rochester to the following week's big money event in France, the Evian Masters, and his generosity paid dividends as Sorenstam played here both years.

Since then, the purse has grown to its present \$1.8 million, making it one of the largest on the tour.

"It'll all be diminished by his passing, but myself as well as everyone here is committed to carrying out his vision for this tournament, and that was to continue to elevate the tournament and keep it as one of the best in the world," Hangstrom said.

Mr. Wegman, along with St. John Fisher College President Katherine Knough (since deceased) and Buffalo Bills owner Ralph Wilson, teamed up to bring the Bills training camp to Pittsford.

Wegmans became the name sponsor of the camp for two years before Mr. Wegman decided to part ways.

"It turned out to be a one-way street and it was all for the Bills," Mr. Wegman said at the time. "The culture of the Bills and our culture just didn't connect."

Mr. Wegman, a 1977 graduate of Aquinas Institute, contributed more than \$9 million to

his alma mater, most recently the gift that helped pay for the Wegmans Athletic Complex, which opened last spring. It includes new tennis courts, baseball and softball diamonds, additional practice fields and an all-weather track that surrounds the ribbon-cutting ceremony.

"I was privileged to be able to do what has surrounded the ribbon-cutting ceremony," said Aquinas athletic director Dick Gernon.

"We had a give-and-take looking at the facility here and we were able to do a great job. It was a great night for Aquinas. I could see it was a great night for him."

... of Robert B. Wegman

Catholic elementary schools, enabling lower-income children to attend.

1997 Mr. Wegman celebrates 75th anniversary of service.

1998 Wegmans becomes the title sponsor for the Rochester LPGA.

1999 Company opens first new Jersey store.

2000 Start of two-year Buffalo Bills camp.

Wegmans
300 BEST COMPANIES TO WORK FOR IN AMERICA

2007 Supermarket News to list of 50 Industry Foundation Leaders Who Transformed Food Retailing.

2005 Fortune mag ranks Wegmans Food Markets as the best company to work for in America.

2006 Markets makes Wegmans company's list once again as the No. 2 company.

2006 Chase Private Home and Garden centers close.

2006 Mr. Wegman dies Thursday at Strong Memorial Hospital.