

SHELF LIFE DON'T LET THE **NEW YORK DELI**
GO THE WAY OF THE DINOSAUR

p. 44



› JULY 01, 2011

AMERICAN WAY

AMERICAN AIRLINES • AMERICAN EAGLE



Always A Wizard

Although the curtain is falling on the Harry Potter franchise, **DANIEL RADCLIFFE's** next phase in life is not that of a mere Muggle



ROOF OF THE WORLD
This cancer survivor celebrated recovery by summiting mountains

DIAMOND DAZZLERS
The story of the last sparkler manufacturer in America



Spend more than a day in
PUERTO RICO
p. 15

TWICE MONTHLY

ENTER
for a chance at 100,000
A-Advantage miles
p. 12



A Tale of Two Corned Beef Sandwiches

AS THE YEARS TICK BY, IT'S HARD TO REMEMBER just how this ridiculous conversation came about. It's harder still to rationalize why two buddies would engage in a shoving match over such an easy decision. But the more I think about it, and regardless of my personal preference, I can relate to — if not outright understand, let alone condone — why Dave and Greg almost came to blows over a corned beef sandwich.

Of course, where we're from, and back in those days, corned beef was a serious business. Where you bought your corned beef said a lot about what type of person you were. We approached our sworn allegiance to who had the best corned beef sandwich with the same zeal as we approached our love of Indians baseball. For in our part of Cleveland, you were either a Jack's man or a Corky & Lenny's man. Sure, there was Slyman's on St. Clair Avenue and their 3/4-pound sandwich, but that was a businessman's hangout, and it was all the way downtown. Plus, none of us could eat that much corned beef anyway. Just like a caste system, we ate where our parents ate, and our grandparents before them. Some family loyalties fell along geographic lines, while for others, it was a matter of taste. But when you grew up in Cleveland in the 1980s and '90s, your deli preference was very much a part of your identity.

Sounds funny, right? Just try telling a Corky's customer that Jack's has a better corned beef, and vice versa. Or just try telling Alvie Markowitz, the owner of Jack's (and Jack's son), that the neighborhood deli is going the way of the A&P. "The deli experience is unique," he says. "Home-cooked foods from scratch, friendly service, family oriented: It's unique. Just stop by for the best-tasting corned beef in all of Cleveland, Ohio, and you'll see."

It's a sentiment echoed by crosstown rival Kenny Kurland, owner of Corky & Lenny's (and Corky's son). All except for the "best-tasting corned beef in all of Cleveland, Ohio" part. Kurland said that all these years later, people will still come up to him and proclaim Corky's faithfulness; that they'd sooner cheat on their spouse or steal from their kids than eat at Jack's. "And we also have more square footage," he quips.

The thing is, though, in deli circles — while it might seem like the Corned Beef War is in high gear, especially because the New York deli is becoming a dinosaur and this new generation is

more about the idea of being health conscious and less about the bragging rights that come with eating a sandwich the size of your face — Kurland and Markowitz's sparring is just that. This isn't full-blown combat. This is a dance around the ring with padded gloves and headgear. For even though I broke up a fight between Dave and Greg some 15 years ago, and even though I'd just as soon eat sand than eat at the deli that Greg chose, truth be told, Kurland and Markowitz are the best of friends. When one runs out of a certain ingredient, he borrows from the other. If one's bottom line is hurting, the other offers support. Historically, long before Jack's opened in 1980, a young Markowitz worked at Corky & Lenny's, which opened in 1955. Heck, he even married Lenny's daughter!

This sort of camaraderie, served with a plate of dill pickles — and plenty of kibitzing on the side — is the essence of the deli experience. It's also why the story you'll find on page 44 is so tragic. This is a call to action, folks: Save your local deli. Bring the kids and eat a corned beef sandwich, lest they grow up missing an integral part of an American experience.

As for Dave and Greg, they never did come to blows — not over corned beef, anyway. And even though I'd eat at Dave's choice of deli eight times before I'd eat at the other guy's, I'm not saying which is better. Go to the delis in your community and decide for yourself.


ADAM PITLUK
Editor

 **Want to sign up for e-mail**
notification of Adam's column or to read his past columns? Visit www.americanwaymag.com/whatsnew

 **We're blogging!**
American Way is published twice a month, but our blog, OnTheFly, is updated regularly with exclusive content not found in the magazine. Visit the blog for our product giveaways, great videos, travel news, recommendations and much more. (You can even talk back to us.) Visit us at www.americanwaymag.com/blogs



Enter the 10th Annual
AMERICAN WAY
ROAD WARRIOR CONTEST

at www.americanwaymag.com/roadwarrior
by Aug. 31, 2011 at 11:59 p.m. CDT.