

## **Harold K. Radtke (96) 08/12/1922 – 8/12/2018**

Harold Radtke was born in Germany, the son of Kurt and Anna (Korbitz) Radtke. The Radtke family came to America in 1925 and settled on the West Side of Cleveland. (see story about Radtke's Delicatessen from westparkhistory.com). Harold was an US Army veteran of WWII, serving in England as a translator for German prisoners of war.

He enjoyed caring for and riding the family ponies and horses at their home in Middleburg Hts., OH. He had fond memories of riding thru the fields which is now the Cleveland Hopkins Airport. He ended his equestrian activities by driving his American Saddlebred "Walter", but continued attending horse shows with Linda to visit with all of the friends he had made over the years.

Harold is survived by his daughter Linda Radtke, grandchildren James and David Scarborough, and sister Erika Boehnke. He was predeceased by his wife Marilyn (Boehnke) Radtke, daughter Marilyn Scarborough, and sister Ingeborg Zeinert.

## **RADTKE'S DELICATESSEN**

4187 Rocky River Drive & 4181 Rocky River Drive

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At one time the family-owned grocery was a neighborhood institution. West Park had dozens of these "mom and pop" stores owned by local families who lived in homes either attached to or behind the store. Many of them are now gone or have been converted to apartments. Radtke's Delicatessen near Kamm's Corners was a family grocery that served the area for nearly thirty years. The building still stands on the east side of Rocky River Drive between Valleyview and Woodbury Avenues.

The property that later became Radtke's had been the location of a food store since the early years of the 20th century. The land was purchased in 1910 by William Carroll who moved into a large two-story house on the site at 4187 Rocky River Drive. Mr. Carroll was the son of an Irish immigrant father and had worked in the grocery business from an early age. By 1921 and possibly much earlier, Mr. Carroll and his wife Martha were operating a grocery in a detached, wood frame store that stood in front of the house.

The Carroll's shop, variously described in city directories as a grocery, confectionary, and variety store, apparently sold canned goods, candy, and tobacco products. Mr.

Carroll passed away in 1933. His widow Martha continued to operate the business until 1939 when she sold the property to the Radtke Family. In her later years Martha Carroll lived in a trailer at park-like Trailer Gardens located at West 150th and Lorain Avenue where K-Mart is now. She passed away in 1970.

The new owners of the house and store on Rocky River Drive were Kurt & Anna Marie Radtke who emigrated from Germany to Cleveland in 1925 with their two children Ingeborg ("Inge") and Harold. Soon after arriving they had a third child, Erika.

"My father was a brakeman on the railroad in Germany," says daughter Erika Boehnke. "Conditions weren't good at the time and my mother's cousin, who was living in Cleveland, said opportunities were better here."

"My father, a very hard worker, went to work for Ohio Farmer's Milk Company on West 106th Street, which is now Dairyman's," continues Erika. "He was a 'filler,' taking the milk bottles off a conveyer belt and loading them into crates."

"My mother helped by doing house cleaning for Mrs. Spang, of the old Spang Bakery. The job worked out for my mother because she could take me with her to the Spang home on West Boulevard."

Misfortune struck the Radtke Family on a rainy night in 1929 when the car in which they were riding was hit by a drunk driver on Almira Avenue. All members of the family suffered serious injuries with the exception of Erika. At this time Kurt Radtke had been working for the dairy about six months but was such a good employee they held his job for him while he got well and even supplied the family with dairy products to help out.

The family recovered and eventually went into business for themselves even while Mr. Radtke continued to work his dairy job.



"Kurt Radtke in his original store at 4187 Rocky River Dr."

"My mother opened a small store located in the front section of our house on West 43rd Street," recalls Harold Radtke. "This was in 1936. We sold groceries, bread, and canned goods. The house is still there but the store has been converted into living quarters."



"Kurt & Anna Radtke in front of their delicatessen at 4181 Rocky River Drive."

Business went well for the family. In 1939 Kurt and Anna Radtke were able to buy the house and store on Rocky River Drive, and move to the Kamm's Corner area. During the first few years in their new home Anna ran the store during the day while Kurt kept his dairy job. After a few years Kurt began working exclusively in the family business. And, of course, the Radtke children all helped at various times.

Son Harold grew up working in the store, served 3 ½ years in the army during World War II, and then manned the counter until the late 1960's.

"I worked in the store everyday after school," says daughter Erika. "When my dad was still at the dairy I'd stay in the store while mom got dinner ready. I remember doing my homework with my school books spread across the counter."

In about 1952 the Radtke's had a new brick store constructed at 4181 Rocky River Drive, immediately north of the original wooden structure, and officially named it "Radtke's Delicatessen." It's this building that stands today. The old store was torn down and they expanded into the new building with an enlarged line of groceries, cold cuts, imports, beer, wine, and magazines.

"Both my parents liked dealing with people," says Erika. "My father was a very sociable man who always used to say 'smile, smile, smile.' That's something that's helped me in every job I've ever had."

After operating the store for over 25 years Kurt and Anna Radtke retired to Boca Raton, Florida, in about 1966. Kurt died at age 77 in 1974. Anna passed away at age 96 in 1995.

After the Radtke's retired, Harold Radtke formed a partnership with his sister Erika's late husband, Robert Boehnke, and kept the deli open until 1967 when it finally closed.

"Convenience stores were opening in the area and supermarkets were staying open later," explains Erika. "The independent grocer couldn't compete."

"I enjoyed my days at the deli, "says Harold." I liked talking to customers and being part of the neighborhood."

Harold went on to spend 19 years as the frozen food manager at Eva's Super Market in Middleburgh Heights. Erika worked for Children and Family Services for many years and has been very active with the Strongsville Senior Center. Both are retired and living in Strongsville. Their older sister Inge, wife of the late Edward Zeinert, had a career in nursing and is now retired in Florida..

After Radtke's closed the building was home to a number of different businesses over the years including a surgical supply, carpet outlet, craft store, gift shop, and fitness equipment company.

Today Oldack's Beauty Salon, built in 1973, stands on the site of the original wooden store. The former Radtke Family house is behind it. The Radtke's Deli building next door at 4181 Rocky River Drive is again serving the neighborhood. It has been renovated to become the new home of Conserv-Air, a heating and air conditioning firm relocated from Westlake to Cleveland by owner Mike Aerni.

## ***Radtke Delicatessen***

■ *My very first job was at Radtke's Delicatessen. I was attending a Catholic Business High School which required tuition, books and uniforms. In other words, at 16, I was old enough to earn my keep and learn the value of a dollar.. so my parents informed me.*

*What? I asked ... Where? I asked ... "Look around ... apply in the neighborhood" was their response.*

*We had shopped at Radtke's for years, not for major items but for fresh sandwich meat, bread, milk and the occasional item we discovered we were out of and needed for dinner ... and, oh yes, the OpennyÓ pretzels which were part and parcel of Radtke's.*

*I talked an idea over with a friend of mine who was in the same boat. We knew the current cashier at Radtke's would soon be graduating from our high school so the two of us decided to apply for her position together. Mr. Radtke and Harold Radtke interviewed us and said they would consider our concept of splitting the job. Shortly thereafter we were both hired and hours were set. We could work alternate shifts during the week (6 - 11 pm) as well as alternate shifts on Saturday and Sunday (1-6 pm or 6-11 pm.) Which nights/weekends to work was up to us as long as one of us was there. Who said job sharing was a new thing? The Radtkes were ahead of their time!*

*Here I learned everything about a grocery store on a small scale. I ran the register, bagged groceries, was in charge of penny candy, sliced sandwich meat to the customer's liking when Bob (Mr. Radtke's son-in-law) and/or Harold (Mr. Radtke's son) were out back taking deliveries, priced merchandise, stocked shelves, checked the produce to see that it was always freshly displayed, occasionally swept floors before closing and balanced out the register after the store was closed. Harold Radtke would be there at closing to see that we were safely headed for home.*

*Radtke's was a place where an honest day's work was rewarded with an honest day's pay (50¢ an hour to \$1.00 an hour in two years). I had good people to work for and good people to work with. Perhaps Radtke's was an omen of things to come? Perhaps my work ethic was established at Radtke's, If so, it has served me well.*

*Radtke's is no longer there. It became expendable. Delicatessens became large grocery stores, which became Super-Stores, and neighbors changed their daily shopping routines to weekly shopping routines. Another sign of the times.*

*--- Fran Hendren, Toledo, OH. 17 February 2010*