

## Tom Marshall's Weekly News, October 24, 2011

**Kennett Kandy Kitchen:** For many years, from about 1930 until the 1960s, the Kennett Kandy Kitchen was the only long-lasting restaurant in Kennett Square. Owned and operated by a Greek-American named Alex D. Cozanitis, who worked about 20 hours a day, it served breakfast, snacks, and full-course dinners, all at very reasonable prices. Alex, his wife, and five children lived on the second floor above the restaurant on West State Street. As the kids grew and attended the public schools in Kennett, they all took their turns at washing dishes, waiting tables, and helping their father make his “homemade” candy. As they were graduated from high school, all sought separate and divergent careers, none in the restaurant business.

In addition to his family, Alex (pronounced “Alec”) had a cadre of faithful employees, including two other Greeks named John and “Little Alec” who worked the sandwich and ice cream counter. John was solid and humorless, his expression never changing, no matter what the order or how well he knew the customers. Little Alec (no relation to the proprietor) was nervous and fast moving and the target of many practical jokes. He had no family, but he always had a fairly new car and used it on his days off. Those witnessing Little Alec’s daily morning visit to John Dettori’s barber shop to read the morning paper were in for a special experience. Barber George Rudolph, John’s assistant, who ate at least two meals a day at the Kandy Kitchen, would start off with something like, “Did you hear of the woman who got deadly sick last night?” John would say he hadn’t. George would continue, “The doctor said she had food poisoning because she ate at the Kandy Kitchen.” By this time, Little Alec would be restless behind the newspaper, but the discourse between the barbers did not let up until their guest reader would throw down the paper and walk out. On another occasion, when Little Alec needed a haircut or a shave, John Dettori “accidentally” cut off his necktie.

Regular customers at the Kandy Kitchen would usually sit at the counter, even if they wanted a full dinner. There were about 12 four-person booths, however, and several tables and chairs in the middle of the floor. About three waitresses were usually on duty during the dinner hour. In the late 1940s, my father and I ate dinner there frequently when my mother was in Rehoboth. A full-course roast beef dinner, the most expensive thing on the menu, was \$1.75. The Kandy Kitchen’s cream of mushroom soup was outstanding. Many young people, such as Ruth Pierson (Marshall), were treated to an ice cream sundae after a Saturday evening movie down the street.

Alec Cozanitis always had a nice car, such as a Chrysler New Yorker, and one day each week he would drive into Philadelphia to do his buying, mostly from the purveyors along Water Street close to the Delaware River (much of this area is now part of Penn’s Landing). On a daily basis, however, he was always in the restaurant or its kitchen until it closed about 11 P.M. After that, he would make his candy for retail sale in the front of the store. His cream mints in many colors were a favorite. My mother always wanted them on hand for the holidays. The trouble was, Alec gave away all his profit. If any club or non-profit group was having a benefit, he would supply endless quantities of candy without charge, and when Christmas was just ahead, he planned to give away as much as he sold. People like this, who helped build America, are hard to find today.