

What's In A Name

by Lynne Belluscio

Ever since we opened the Jell-O Gallery, we have told people that as far as we know, it was Pearle Wait's wife, May who came up with the name JELL-O. At least, that is what the Wait family told us.

Why the hyphen? Was it a combination of Jelly and Oh? Was it because there were other products that used a hyphen O – like Orator Woodward's Grain-O. And how did Jell-O come about? Where was Pearle Wait packaging the stuff? On his kitchen table? Or the table that was given to the Historical Society a couple of years ago? Who ever thought to ask.

Pearle died young in 1915, but May survived for many years, and died in 1956. But none of the family remembers talking with her about Jell-O. The history of the origins of America's Most Famous Dessert may never be known.

So it was with this in mind that I told Rick and Angie Corcimiglia to stop by and tell me the story of Rickle's Pickles. If you haven't had a chance to taste his pickles, you can buy them at Crocker's Ace Hardware. I love dill pickles and don't like sweet pickles, but Rick has come up with a great pickle – neither sweet, nor too hot, and a good crunch.

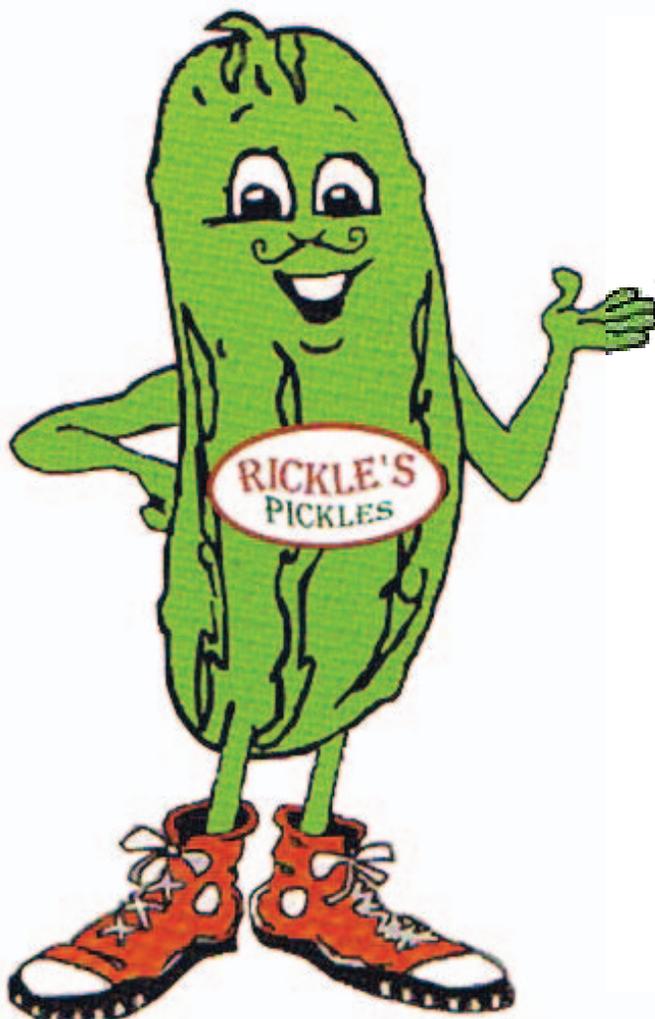
So Rick sat down and I took some notes. He grew up in LeRoy. He was the 12th of 14 kids. He actually was born in the parking lot of the Stafford Fire Department. His mother didn't make it to the hospital in time. He graduated from LeRoy High in 1976. (There were some great stories from those days! Playing with the Jersey Side kids and the yard line marks on the back side of the Jell-O factory where they played football.)

In 2003, he and his wife moved to Indiana to work for his brother, but he decided that he was ready to retire at the age of fifty. His birthday was in October. But like so many retirees, he had time on his hands, so he decided to make some pickles. He bought some jars of Mt. Olive dill pickles, cut them up, added some of his own spices and repacked them. He gave them away to friends and

soon folks were knocking on the back door, asking for more. Six months after retiring, his wife said it was time to stop giving the pickles away and to see what it would take to get a permit to make them commercially. They had to video the entire process for the County health permit and he needed to find a certified kitchen.

On May 1, Rick bought an old Chinese Restaurant and set up shop. He was selling pickles out the back door, \$20 a gallon. About six months later, Rick was standing around with some friends talking about Rick's new pickle business. His friends thought he had lost his mind and out of no where came "Rickle's Pickles." The name worked.

Angie quit her job in August to help cut and process pickles. It took a day to make 40 jars of pickles and Rick was buying skids of Mt. Olive Pickles from Walmart. He met with the president of Mt. Olive and asked if he had any problems with repackaging Mt. Olive Pickles with Rick's spices. He was glad



to have the business, so Rick made arrangements to buy two tractor-trailer loads of pickles. The only problem was that he didn't have room to store them all. So the nearby fire department offered their space.

Then Rick discovered that the health department required that any off site storage had to be within 100 feet of his kitchen. Rick measured and it was 96 feet from his door to the fire hall. He and his wife, and a couple of helpers cut and processed two-tractor loads of pickles all by hand.

Even today with 14 people, all of his pickles are hand packed. Rick never lost touch with LeRoy. His garlic was

shipped from Ed Frazier's farm in Bergen. Rick said it was always funny when the mailman delivered the boxes of garlic. He was glad to get the garlic out of his truck! Then one day, the UPS delivery guy showed up, chanting "munch 'em, crunch 'em, lunch 'em" and soon that appeared on the label. Rick credits his old school mate, Carl McQuillen for a change in the label. Carl announced that he only eats "gourmet" pickles, so Rickle's Pickles became gourmet pickles.

Since then, Rick has introduced pickled peppers – all his peppers are grown in Michigan and packaged in Indiana. He also has "Black Market Mustard" which has become so popular with a company that makes pretzels at sports stadiums, that they want to buy Black Market Mustard by the 50 gallon drum.

If you talk with Rick, it sounds like he's still having fun. He tried selling his pickles in super markets, but that didn't work. Too many choices, so he started pitching his pickles at hardware stores - - like Crocker's.

At first they said why would a hardware store carry pickles, but once they put out a few jars, they couldn't keep them on the shelves. Ace True Value Hardware stores nation-wide carry his products.

Recently, a race car driver wanted to drive with a Rickle's Pickles label, and created "Willie the Pickle." Willie now appears at trade shows and is a big hit. So maybe in time, like Jell-O, Rickle's Pickles may become America's Most Famous. But in the meantime, at least we have the real story of how a kid who was born in the Stafford Fire Department parking lot went into the pickle business. (Notice I didn't say he got pickled.)

YOU WANT 'EM...

**INDOOR OUTDOOR
BANNERS**

LP Graphics ...WE MAKE 'EM

one church st. le roy, ny 585-768-2201 M-F 8-5

- Graduation
- Welcome Home
- Birthday
- Retirement
- Anniversary
- Birth Announcement
- School/Club Event
- Fundraiser
- ANY OCCASION!