

# SECTION B

Thursday, September 3, 1987

## Pizza man makes enjoyment, entertainment, all from scratch

New York dough-tosser happy with new life in Sherman

SHERMAN (AP) — Part potter, part masseuse, the pizza man pumps a pile of dough with piston-like fingers, kneading, pummeling, poking, pushing.

Then the fingers shape the lump, raising a crusty ridge, circling the border just so.

But the best part ends almost before it begins. Cradling the flattened dough in both hands, the pizza man throws it high, high, high into the air.

Spinning carousel-slow, the thin, round sheet seems to hang in the sky for a moment, like a pie-shaped satellite.

Then it falls back onto the pizza man's hand where he spins it fast, fast like a 78 rpm record, fast like an NBA basketball.

Plopping the shell back on the counter, the pizza man smiles.

"Flying the pizza, it's called," says Danny Deari, 26. "Pizza flying."

"Twist, twirl, a quick, final pat."

"I'll tell you this: you can't be lazy to fly a pizza," he says. "You gotta work to be a pizza man. You gotta be alive."

Deari learned the art of pizza flying as a 15-year-old, working at pizza places on the streets of Brooklyn, N.Y.

Two years ago, feeling like a pioneer, he packed his pizza pans into a car and brought New York-style pizza and pizza flying to Sherman.

Pizza flying, like the art of making fine pizza, is not easily mastered, Deari says.

"It takes time," he says. "You can't just go in and do it. You've got to put in your time. But after awhile, it just

"A pizza man will let it spin on his hand. Make that pizza fly and come out nice and even. That's talent."

*That's what pizza flying is. Yeah, it's a way for a pizza man to have fun. But it's also entertainment for the customers, especially the kids.*

— Danny Deari, pizza flyer

comes natural. After awhile, you'll be making a pizza and you'll start tossing it up in the air."

Deari owns the Italian Affair, a pizza shop in the food court at Midway Mall.

He said it took him about a year to fly his first pizza. ("No, I never put one on the ceiling or dropped one," he says. "Poked my fingers through a few, though.")

Pizza flying, he says, is one factor that separates a genuine pizza man from just another fast food pizza cook.

"That's what pizza flying is," he says. "Yeah, it's a way for a pizza man to have fun. But it's also entertainment for the customers, especially the kids."

"It takes experience, see? Now, there are people who could just throw a pizza into the air and wait for it to come down. Throw it and grab it. Throw it and grab it—that's not flying. There's no trick to that. But to throw it and let it spin on your hand. That takes talent."

Talent and pride are two factors often missing in modern-day pizza parlors, Deari says.

When he was a teen-ager, Deari served as a sort of apprentice in Brooklyn under a master pizza man named Jimmy.

"He was a pizza man all his life," Deari says. "He knew what he was doing. He taught me how to do things the right way, what to do and what not to do."

"Once, when I was about 17, I told him, 'Jimmy, I don't want to be a pizza man all my life.'"

"He said, 'Let me tell you something. What you do now, you'll do later. You'll make pizzas.'"

"I said, 'Nah, you're crazy. But here I am, making pizzas. And I love it.'"

"People working in these pizza franchises, they're just people who want a job. They'll do it for awhile, then move on."

"But a pizza man is a pizza man for life."

By running his own pizza place, Deari says he can be sure that his product is made right: fresh ingredients prepared just so.

"There's pride," he says. "A big franchise, they all use the same roast beef, the same corn dog mix. The product tastes the same everywhere. "But with my pizza, you can't get this taste everywhere."

"Because I'm not everywhere. I'm here."

A person, he says, could do worse than to be a pizza man.

"Look, I make something from scratch," he says.

"I put it out for people to see, sell it, get money for it," he says. Then I get to watch people eat it. They say, 'Aw, that's great! And I get a feeling of immediate accomplishment.'"

"Very few people get that from their jobs. You make socks, you make a car, you never know who's going to wear them, who's going to drive it."

"But a pizza man gets to see people eat his product. He gets to hear them say they like it."

"That's why I'd rather be a pizza man than, say, a chef."

"A chef is back in the kitchen, away from the people. Here, I get to talk to the people, be around them, watch them watching the food being made."

"When a kid sees a pizza tossed in the air, it puts a smile on his face."

"And that makes a pizza man feel good."

## Life's a three-ring circus for Barnum & Bailey's priest

FORT WORTH (AP) — Tigers and grizzly bears rolled by in cages, and elephants moved within crushing distance of the Rev. Jack Toner backstage at the Ringling Brothers, Barnum & Bailey Circus.

The longtime Catholic priest didn't budge an inch, Toner is a circus priest.

He smiled and waved at a showgirl atop one of the elephants just before the nation's largest circus began a recent performance at the Tarrant County Convention Center on its current tour of Texas.

"They say this is the greatest show on Earth, but I say these are the greatest people on Earth," Toner says.

He travels everywhere with the circus, counseling employees and conducting church services while wearing vestments decorated with a clown on one side and a circus ring on the other.

Each day, he prays that trapeze artists, animal trainers and others performing dangerous acts will come through safely.

He's had to conduct one funeral for an acrobat who was killed in a fall.

"I love the circus," says the gray-haired 73-year-old priest as he watches the performers parade. "I never get tired of it."

"This is like a typical parish, except it is on wheels. Our church services are ecumenical because there are many non-Catholics and even atheists that we minister to."

Circus life is grueling for the performers and also for the priest, Toner says.

"I like the nomadic lifestyle," he says. "If you don't you couldn't survive."

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