



## **Introduction: Danny Wegman**

*"The only mistake you can make in life is to not set your sights high enough."  
- Robert Wegman*

When Randy first approached me and asked me to write this foreword, I have to admit that I was somewhat at a loss as to what to talk about. He told me that the whole purpose of the book was to highlight a number of successful individuals and to examine what points in their lives were most influential in shaping them to become the successes that they are.

When I spoke with Randy about this, he didn't seem to be nearly as concerned as I was. The two of us simply began to talk with one another about the nature of Wegmans Grocery Stores - the business that my family and I run. Randy seemed more interested in the stores than just about anyone I've ever met. The way he spoke about how "big" our stores are in the industry, and how out-of-towners come to Rochester just to visit a Wegmans, really began to open my eyes about how things looked from the outside.

In no time at all, he had me talking about my past and the origins of our company. When Wegmans first started up, it went through the same tough times that are bound to plague any start up business. My grandfather and great uncle owned it jointly, but after the death of my grandfather, my great uncle exercised his right to buy out the whole business. At that point, my own father was really removed from the picture as far as ownership goes, although he stuck at it, working in our family business full time except for his stint in

World War II. In fact, shortly after he returned from the war in 1947 my uncle died and my father was able to purchase the Wegmans business back from my great uncle's estate. It's remained with our immediate family ever since.

The family business in many ways is all that I've ever known. It might be because of this, that it was hard for me to think of myself as an individual who had a real "turning point" - some instant when a bolt out of the blue came and turned everything around for me. However, talking with Randy, I began to realize just how much the atmosphere I had grown up in had really defined me.

When I was growing up, we lived on a farm. The nearest kids my age were some two and a half miles away, so as you might imagine with two older sisters I spent virtually all of my time with them (my third sister had not yet been born). If there was something I wanted to do, it was pretty much a necessity for me to be able to sell the idea to them. Of course, there were plenty of times that they got me interested in their own activities as well, just because there was no one else around.

It might not sound like much, but these experiences did quite a lot to help shape my current worldview. If you ask me, **it's not possible to succeed in today's world on your own.** It's a world that absolutely demands collaborative efforts, and more than anything, I attribute this mindset with much of the success that Wegmans has enjoyed over the years.

It went beyond just my sisters, of course. As I said we lived on a farm, so there was quite a lot of communal spirit. We could count on the assistance of other nearby farms, who knew that in turn they could count on us. We were always lending equipment back and forth, or just doing little things here and there to help one another out. To me, that's the real spirit of business - and even today, some of my good friends are my biggest competitors.

While talking with Randy helped turn me on to the notion that even very little things could add up to a defining

element in somebody's life, there was one other thing that occurred to me that I'd like to share with you.

***In 1967 my father was visiting Thailand and was scheduled to give a speech that would touch upon his insights in the world of business. As it turns out, the person who was scheduled to speak before him took so long that my father never actually got to give his speech! However, he had written it down in preparation, so I was able to get a copy of it. I can't tell you how much of an effect that little speech had on me.***

***It was essentially my father's entire knowledge of business encapsulated into a few short pages. He spoke passionately about the importance of creating your own niche in life and doing something that is totally unique; something that only you can do. He also emphasized that whatever you do, there will come a time when you have to be able to adapt it to the changing times, because if one thing is certain, it's that the times are always changing.***

I took away from that letter the philosophy, when coupled with my feelings on the importance of collaboration, that this basically sums up the way I try to do business today:

**"The purpose of being in business is to give people a choice that they wouldn't have had otherwise – and to do it in a way that the competition can't easily emulate."**

As our interview came to an end, I was surprised at just how much my background has really influenced the way my life has gone. I realized that there's really no event, no person, no moment too small or insignificant that it can't be the single most important thing to somebody. There is no such thing as a life without a turning point, whether that moment spans years and years or it happens in the blink of an eye.

I'd like to challenge the readers of this book to examine their own lives and to look for what they consider to be their own

turning points. Perhaps, like me, you'll look at the stories in this book and think that these are people who are in a different class entirely - that your own story is nowhere nearly as interesting as theirs. Let me assure you, if you look at your life with the right perspective, this is not the case. When I stopped to think about my turning points, it helped me to think more clearly about the way I help to run the family business, and how I should go about doing it in the future. It was about a lot more than just patting myself on the back for past successes; it was about learning more about myself and getting ready for ever greater future successes. I feel confident that everyone reading this book can do the same thing for themselves.

All the best,

Danny Wegman