

17 million pounds later, Viggy's going strong

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**RANDALL
 BEACH**

She said Vigorito did some work for the Lamberti family's grocery store on Chestnut Street, and when her parents, James and Jean, founded Lamberti Sausage Co. on Grand Avenue in 1946, Vigorito began his amazing run. He was 14.

When the Lambertis moved their sausage company to the New Haven Food Terminal in 1964, Vigorito came across town with them.

Lamberti told me, "We figured out he's made 17 million pounds of sausage."

She said he has never taken a sick day except on two occasions when he needed hospital treatment. "My mom and dad couldn't have asked for a better employee."

Vigorito doesn't like talking about himself, but he grudgingly took off his white smock and work hat and came up to Lamberti's office to answer a few questions.

He got mad when he learned Lamberti had told me the story about the shoebox and the oven. But he confirmed, "I'm the baby" of the family. He was willing to tell me he is 79.

When I asked him what he



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Albert "Viggy" Vigorito has worked at Lamberti Sausage Co. in New Haven for 65 years.

enjoys about his work, he grimaced and said, "Nothing! It's something to do. Otherwise, I'd have to stay home and argue with my wife. It's like being in jail."

But I noticed he was starting to smile. And he proudly told me he and his wife, Fran, produced a boy and a girl and now have four grandchildren. The boy and the girl had no interest

in going into the sausage business.

With some prodding by Lamberti, he acknowledged he has been volunteering for the past 16 years at Harborside Willows in Woodbridge. "I take care of the elderly. I play games with them, tell them a few jokes, give them a few hugs. You have to dance and sing with them, too."

For decades he was a full-timer at the sausage shop, but now his official work hours are Monday through Friday, 6 to 10 a.m. Often he arrives at 5:30 a.m., just to hang out.

But he usually won't join his co-workers on the sausage line until about 7 a.m.

"I don't work hard anymore," he said. "Those days are gone. It's just to keep busy."

Asked if he intends to keep right on doing this job, he retorted, "Why not? If you retire, you won't last long." He also admitted he enjoys his work colleagues.

Vigorito said when he was drafted and sent off to Korea, he didn't like it. He sure didn't get the bug to travel or move from the New Haven area. (He did move to East Haven after he got married.)

"Army life was not for me," he said. "I just wanted to come home."

He didn't go for those young ROTC officers telling him what to do. "I still don't like taking orders. Nobody's the boss around here."

When he was a kid, his jobs included delivering ice, collecting tin foil for the rag man and shining shoes.

"I had my shoeshine box set up at College and Chapel," he recalled. "A guy told me, 'Give me a shine.' After I was finished, he said, 'I'm gonna take away your shine box; you don't have a license.' So I made another shine box."

"Thirty years later, somebody introduced me to the guy, and I remembered his name. I said, 'You S.O.B., you took away my shine box!'"

He also talked about the day he and his buddies got hauled away in a police car and arrested for taking two carrots from a public garden. "They brought us to juvenile court, for two carrots! My father was mortified. Today, people get away with murder. Times have changed."

He added, "I always say I lived in the best of times. Because there was closeness. And respect. I never knew anybody's (any adult's) first name. It was always 'Mr.' and 'Mrs.'"

He stood up abruptly and announced he was done talking about himself. "That's enough!"

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