



# FOUR COZZINI GENERATIONS

## AND NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Just over 115 years ago, in 1905, with one small suitcase each, a pushcart to sharpen knives and an abundance of courage, two cousins from a small village in Italy's Northern Dolomites region, boarded a ship destined for America. Four weeks later, Giuseppe and Eduardo Cozzini stepped onto New York Harbor's Ellis Island, the landing point where thousands of immigrants from every country in Europe were arriving in America, the New World, to begin new lives.

**B**oth cousins had lived their entire lives in what is known today as the Northern Italian Alps. Back then the area was mostly comprised of small farming communities, all within the boundaries of Austria. Giuseppe and Eduardo were from the small Austrian town of Pinzolo which bordered Italy and became part of it in 1916. Both young men spoke fluent Italian and German.

Also in 1905, largely due to the necessity to communicate in an already known language, the two made their way to Milwaukee where a large German speaking population had already settled. Pushing their knife

sharpening cart from one butcher shop and restaurant to the next, the two soon built a knife sharpening business in Milwaukee, that was large enough to sustain one person.

In 1907, Giuseppe Cozzini made his way to Chicago where his hard work and sharpening skill soon resulted in the ability to send money home to support his family, which gave him great satisfaction. Pushing his cart and sharpening knives at butcher shops and restaurants in Chicago's Northside neighborhoods, Giuseppe bartered with local fire stations to sharpen their knives in exchange for housing his pushcart overnight. He trolleyed home in the evenings, returning the

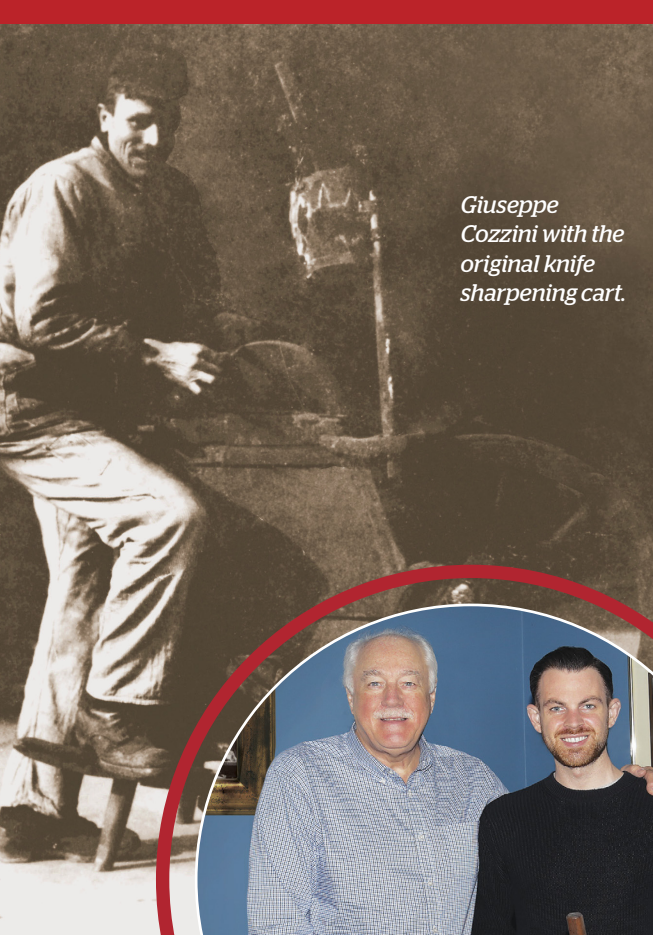


*Ottorino Cozzini  
with the first Cozzini  
mobile unit.*

**"I WANT TO WORK WITH  
AND LEARN FROM  
MY FATHER."**

—Ivo Cozzini





Giuseppe Cozzini with the original knife sharpening cart.



Ivo and Alex Cozzini with the original cart in 2021.

**"IT JUST SEEMED  
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HAND KNIVES."**

— Ivo Cozzini

following morning to push on to the next fire station's evening destination, sharpening knives along the way.

Thus, a thriving one-person Chicago business was born.

### ENTER 2<sup>ND</sup> GENERATION COZZINI LEADERSHIP

In 1931, Giuseppe's three sons, Ottorino, Lino and Angelo Cozzini immigrated to the U.S. and settled in Chicago to become part of their father's business. Unlike their father however, they didn't utilize pushcarts, they used a horse-drawn wagon. Calling themselves COZZINI BROS., they continued to focus on butcher shops and restaurants on Chicago's Northside. Although Chicago was thriving and becoming recognized as the meat processing capital of the world with its enormous packers on its south side, COZZINI BROS stuck to its longstanding and proven business model of satisfying the knife sharpening needs of Northside butcher shops and restaurants.

Cozzini's horse-drawn wagon business soon gave way to the company's first *mobile-unit*, a tall truck, large enough to facilitate a complete knife sharpening operation inside. It now became possible to establish daily routes and continually expand its Northside market reach. As core values of hard work and customer satisfaction continued, so did business growth.

Eventually the Cozzini mobile-unit business model encountered a paradigm shift. Multiple COZZINI BROS pick-up and delivery vans were acquired, giving rise to *centralized sharpening*. Dull knives were picked up from customers and now exchanged on the spot for already sharpened ones. Hundreds of dull knives needing sharpening were delivered daily to the basement of Ottorino Cozzini's home in Wrigleyville (a Northside Chicago neighborhood). No longer was COZZINI BROS sharpening conducted on the streets of Chicago. With an anything-but-fortuitous poignancy, the COZZINI BROS knife sharpening business entered its next chapter, an era of tremendous growth.

As business continued to flourish, the regularly scheduled pick-up/drop-off model became a barrier to growth. Customers frequently needed knife sharpening ahead of schedule, while others occasionally skipped a week unannounced prior to driver's arrival. Customers owned their own knives and, of course, paid only for the sharpening they received.

Enter the COZZINI BROS knife exchange program. Leveraging its sizable customer base and mountains of knives being sharpened, COZZINI BROS began purchasing large volumes of knives, routinely *exchanging* sharp ones for dull ones. Never again did a Cozzini customer experience a dull edge. They no longer owned knives, they owned perpetually sharp cutting edges. They paid a flat, weekly fee and when knives were eventually retired due to systematic removal of metal during the sharpening process, they were automatically replaced with new knives, at no extra charge and no questions asked. This knife exchange program, another important game changer for the business, is flourishing nation-wide to this day.

In the mid 1960s, Ottorino Cozzini bought out his two brothers, Lino and Angelo, who both retired and moved back to Italy.

### ENTER 3<sup>RD</sup> GENERATION OF COZZINI LEADERSHIP

Enter now the sons of Ottorino Cozzini: Ivo, Oscar and Oswald. Ivo, the oldest, graduated high school in 1969 and opted, in his own words, to attend "Cozzini University", another way of simply saying, "I want to work with and learn from my father."

"During those years," recalls Ivo looking back on his lengthy career, "it just seemed natural to expand the business beyond hand knives to include industrial blades and cutting edges such as slicer blades, chopper blades, portioning blades, grinder plates and knives, skinner blades, bandsaw blades and more. One of our first Chicago-based customers for these additional types of blades was Oscar Mayer, at that time located near downtown Chicago."

During the 1990s, the COZZINI BROS name became COZZINI and then PRIMEEdge. Its product line grew, and its market scope became international.

In 1991, the company made its first offshore business acquisition by purchasing a prominent blade manufacturing operation outside of Paris, France. In 2010, PRIMEEdge acquired and merged two of the world's largest German manufacturers of high-quality slicer blades and bowl chopper blades. To this day, the company's product line remains focused on the world-wide meat and poultry industry supplying OEMs and selling direct to end users.

Today's PRIMEEdge has grown from Giuseppe's one-person Northside Chicago business into a diverse, multi-national group of companies with thousands of products, hundreds of employees and manufacturing, sales and service operations throughout the world, including the United States, France, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, Spain, and Brazil.

#### ENTER 4<sup>TH</sup> GENERATION COZZINI LEADERSHIP

Once again, the time to pass along the Cozzini torch arrived. Ivo Cozzini announced the appointment of Alexander Cozzini to the position of president. Alexander, who previously held the title of vice president of the company, succeeds his father Ivo Cozzini, who has now assumes the position of chief executive officer. The executives took their new roles effectively on March 1, 2021.

Since a young age, Alexander has been involved in the company,

first working weekends and summer vacations during high school on the production floor of PRIMEEdge Chicago Headquarters. After his graduation from the University of Wisconsin, where he earned a business degree, Alexander began working full-time at the PRIMEEdge Chicago headquarters, in its European headquarters at PRIMEEdge France, and most recently at its primary blade manufacturing site, BE Maschinenmesser in Berlin, Germany.

"This exposure has helped Alex gain in-depth knowledge in all facets of the business including administration, sales, marketing and manufacturing. One of Alex's strongest contributions has been establishing a creative business environment which fosters success-driven team spirit," said his father, Ivo Cozzini.

"Simply put, Alex says, we're a company made up of great people. Our employees are far-and-away our most important asset. This is one of my guiding principles going forward and one in which I strongly believe."

And speaking of business philosophy, Alex continues, "It's really not that difficult or complicated, make sure our customers are always happy. Service, service, service. Not who is right or wrong. We always stand behind what we do. We adapt what we do to help our customers, not make them adapt to us."

"And don't forget," Alex adds with a smile, "Never a dull moment!"

**"OUR EMPLOYEES ARE  
FAR-AND-AWAY OUR  
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ASSET."**

— Alex Cozzini



Left to right: Mike Wolff (USA Western Sales Manager), Jose Favela (Customer Service Manager), Alex Cozzini (President), and Hector Jimenex (USA Eastern Sales Manager)

**COZZINI PRIMEEdge**  
CUTTING EDGES AND SHARPENING SOLUTIONS

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