

NATION'S Restaurant News®

THE NEWSWEEKLY OF THE FOODSERVICE INDUSTRY

PERIODICALS

Vol. 39, No. 27

PUBLISHED EVERY MONDAY • A LEBHAR-FRIEDMAN PUBLICATION® • \$5 PER ISSUE • <http://www.nrn.com>

JULY 4, 2005

HAVING WORDS WITH Zane Tankel

CHAIRMAN AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE,
APPLE-METRO INC.

Zane Tankel says he has seen it all while he "flirted" with the restaurant industry for more than 20 years as an investor, owner and operator.

Today as chairman and chief executive of Harrison, N.Y.-based Apple-Metro Inc., — the sole franchisee for Applebee's Neighborhood Grill & Bar and Chevys Fresh Mex restaurants for the New York metro area — he is responsible for operating three of the world's highest-grossing Applebee's units.

Running Apple-Metro since 1994 with his business partner and the company's co-founder, Roy Raeburn, Tankel leads a system of 30 restaurants with sales of more than \$100 million — the company's Times Square Applebee's alone tops \$12.5 million annually. The pair also introduced their own concept, Zanaro's, a fast-casual Italian chain with two units in New York.

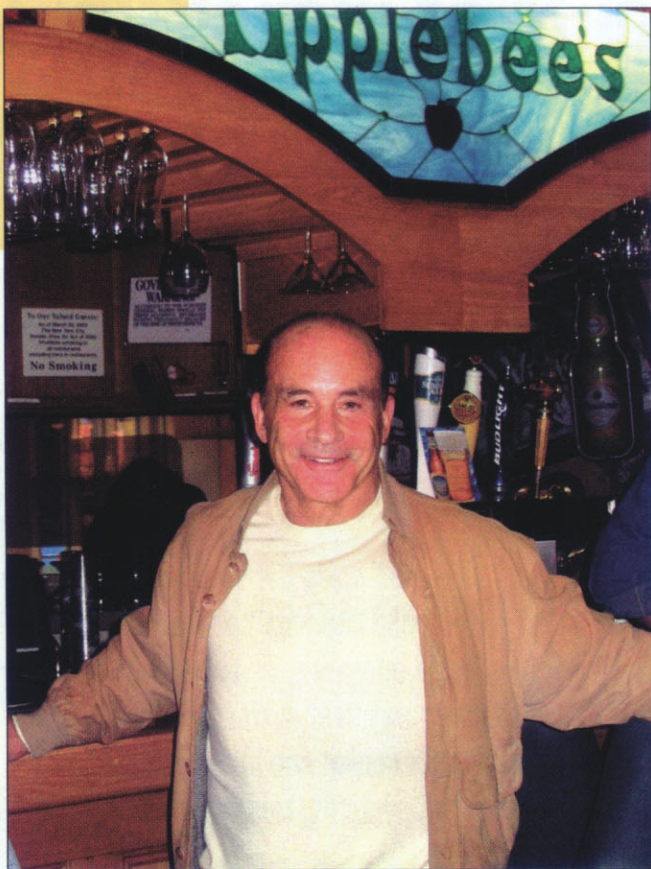
Tankel, outside of his activities at the office, has been on expeditions to the North and South Poles and was part of a Mount Everest climb in 1984. He also participates in "Bridging the Rift," a project promoting stability between Jordan and Israel through economic development and education.

What is it like running the highest-grossing Applebee's restaurant in the 1,711-unit chain?

It is great fun, a great challenge and very exciting. . . . I always tell people the staff is our only asset. A restaurant is four walls and a kitchen, and at the end of the day it takes people working in the kitchen and on the floor. If our people are happy, the guests will be happy.

You have worked with your business partner, Raeburn, for 11 years, which is longer than some marriages. How do you keep it working?

Separate beds! No, we have clearly defined roles. . . . and by not stepping on each other's feet. I'm responsible for the operations, people, systems and marketing. Roy's responsible for development, the building — I mean he practically lives on site. He's also responsible for the cost side. We get along because we honor and respect each other.



What have your polar expeditions and mountain climbing taught you?

Perseverance gets you through. It is about how tough you are [mentally] not how tough you are [physically]. In climbing when you're high on a mountain, you can't turn around and go home.

You get through it. You take a deep breath, and you put one foot in front of the other.

What made you risk starting your own restaurant concept, Zanaro's, after being such a successful franchisee?

Stupidity. I had owned my own restaurant before and have always worked for myself, so I wanted it. We learned a lot as a franchisee, and we had all this knowledge. So we took our corporate chef from our Chevys and spent one year developing recipes, and then we thought we knew what we were doing. But we didn't delegate

someone to be solely responsible for Zanaro's — a lot of companies make that mistake. But we just took a guy from Spirit Cruise Lines, and we will tweak that concept and build it up.

— Sarah E. Lockyer

FAST FACTS

EDUCATION: B.S., Wharton School of Business, University of Pennsylvania

EXPERIENCE: Various roles in printing, advertising, public relations and real estate as well as restaurant owner, operator and franchisee

BIRTHPLACE: Paterson, N.J.

AGE: "I have three ages: 65, officially; 18, mentally; 35, physically."