

## George Luciano

**D**on Rickles fell to his knees and claimed that “Lucky Luciano” had been sent to knock him off when George Luciano went to pick up the famous comedian for a public appearance. It wasn’t the first or last time someone called him “Lucky Luciano,” but George has always been a good sport, and never took offense to the nickname he shared with the mobster some consider the father of modern organized crime. The fact that he must have heard the nickname thousands of times from people he hardly knew and always responded with a big grin and a hug on the neck tells you more about the kind of man George Luciano is than anything else.

To a generation of loss prevention executives, his real nickname is “Pops.” A counselor, advisor, friend, and father figure to many in our industry, he is known as a man you can count on to give you the “straight scoop.” And like a real Pops, if you’ve been fortunate enough to know him, you know that he is always there for you. Whether it is a few kind words of encouragement during a difficult time, or using the guest room over his garage, his legacy will be that he cared more about the people in our industry than most people will ever know.

### From Cop to LP

Luciano came to retail loss prevention after spending ten years, from 1956 to 1966, in the detective division of the Alhambra, California, Police Department. While there he took an extra assignment as a range master at the shooting range and worked seven days a week to support a growing family. An opportunity to work at Von’s Grocery “making a little more money” was his first step in a long and prosperous career in retail loss prevention.

Joe Matthews, director of loss prevention at Academy Sports, put it this way, “Pops has the unique ability to adapt to any business situation.” He went from being a cop to working in grocery

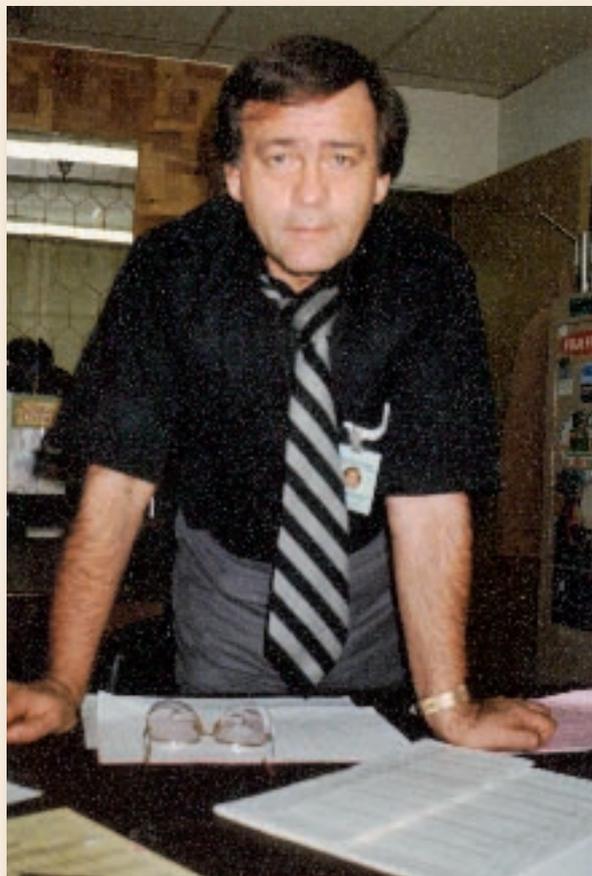
stores, department stores, electronics stores, home centers, pet stores, and then as a consultant and successful business owner, making life-long friends every step of the way.

But being friendly does not by itself make a great leader. Rod Holm, vice president of loss prevention at Limited Brands, credits Pops as the first senior LP executive to recognize and implement chain-wide “target store” or “blitz store” programs, a practice Holm and many others unashamedly copied.

Luciano was also among a small number of executives who realized early-on that electronic article surveillance (EAS) would revolutionize theft-deterrent programs in all types of retail environments. During his career he “introduced” EAS to home centers and pet stores and made those programs successful.

Other LP executives who at one time worked for Pops describe him as sometimes having a rough exterior, but in the same breath, say that he is a “real cream puff.” They also say that he always stressed being innovative and not getting stuck in the same old routines.

And of course you can’t say anything about Pops without recognizing that he is one of a handful of former retail loss prevention executives who successfully transitioned from a top job working in retail to a vendor serving the retail community. As senior executive VP and co-owner of Civil Demand Associates, he built a successful company providing civil recovery collection services for more than 100 major retailers in the United States.



### A Family Man

Luciano was born in Los Angeles in 1932 and must have had countless opportunities to leave California for a higher paying job or a bigger title elsewhere, but he stayed in California because he wanted to stay close to family. This devotion to family is aptly illustrated by the words of wisdom given to one of his protégés who called him for advice about accepting a job in another part of the country. Luciano’s first question was, “What does your wife think?” The message was clear—it doesn’t really matter how good the job is if your spouse goes along reluctantly.

Luciano has always known what is important—family, good friends, good health, a good book, and fishing. He credits Jacqui, his wife of thirty-one years, with giving him the support and family life



**George Luciano**

- 1966 – 1971 Vons Grocery
- 1971 – 1976 Smith's Food King
- 1976 – 1985 Zody's Discount Stores
- 1985 – 1986 W.R. Grace Home Centers
- 1986 – 1987 Circuit City
- 1988 – 1990 Clothestime
- 1995 – 1997 Petco Animal Supplies

that made it possible for him to succeed in each endeavor. Although neither of them play golf, they now live on a beautiful golf course where they enjoy visits from three children and four grandchildren. Since he doesn't need to mow the grass, Luciano stays in shape by swimming twenty laps a day and doing sixty-five pull-ups.

As he approaches his 75th birthday, he is "thinking about" contributing to the book category by writing about his experience as a Pop Warner football coach in the early 1960s. During the 1965–1966 season, he took a group of 12-year-olds all the way to the state championship. Winning there earned them a trip to Hawaii to play in the Hula Bowl, a once-in-a-lifetime experience many will never forget.

It does not matter if the book makes it to the top ten on *The New York Times* best seller list or not; the fact is Pops taught 12-year-old football players and many experienced loss prevention executives how to win and, more importantly, how to live. ■

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