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LI BUSINESS

THE SCOOP



JAMES BERNSTEIN

Lessing's enters new territory

FOOD

Lessing's may not be a household name, but the restaurants the company owns are — the Bulldog Grille in Amityville, Finnegans in Huntington and Maxwell's in Islip, among others.

All are prominent in their respective towns. But now Great River-based Lessing's has struck the biggest deal in its 121-year history, a "multimillion-dollar" purchase of 80 cafeterias in mostly community colleges and businesses in upstate New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts and Rhode Island that were owned by Canton, Mass.-based Next Generation Vending.

Michael Lessing, chief operating officer, declined to give the exact purchase price but confirmed it is a multimillion-dollar deal, the largest since the company was started by his great-great grandfather, **Maxwell Lessing**, in 1890. The privately run company now has sales of about \$55 million.

Maxwell Lessing started with one coffee shop in the Wall Street area. By the 1940s Lessing's was operating cafeterias for financial firms on the Street. It bought its first restaurant, Kennedy's in Breezy Point, Queens, in 1975.

The deal takes the company back to the days when it ran food operations for Wall Street firms. But Lessing said the company is looking forward. The deal gets the company into geographical areas other than Long Island.

"We're looking to grow the restaurant and food ser-