

# ☆☆☆ A FIVE-STAR EVENING IN LITTLETON, COLORADO

## The Eisenhower Dinner

by Pierre Wolfe

Was it kismet or good timing, or perhaps just good luck, that in 1952 I became the Chef at the Patio Lamaze Restaurant in Littleton Colorado? This was after my one year at the venerable Brown Palace Hotel in Denver, being introduced to American culinary methods and terminology.

The Patio Lamaze (renamed The Patio Restaurant in 1953) was located at the southeast corner of South Santa Fe Drive and West Bellevue Avenue, part of the Patio Motel with a nice swimming pool. This location became very prominent since it was directly opposite the Centennial Racetrack.

Since its inception, in 1950, the Patio Lamaze Restaurant had become the place to see and be seen. The outstanding service by professional wait staff and the legendary food preparations, much of it tableside, became the talk of the town. Steak Diana, Frog Legs, Chateaubriand, Parisian Chicken, Bananas Foster, Cherries Jubilee were the rave. Lewis W. Dymond, later President of Frontier Airlines, fledgling cable TV magnate Bill Daniels and Robert Six, Continental Airline President, gave private parties at the Patio. Hollywood celebrities

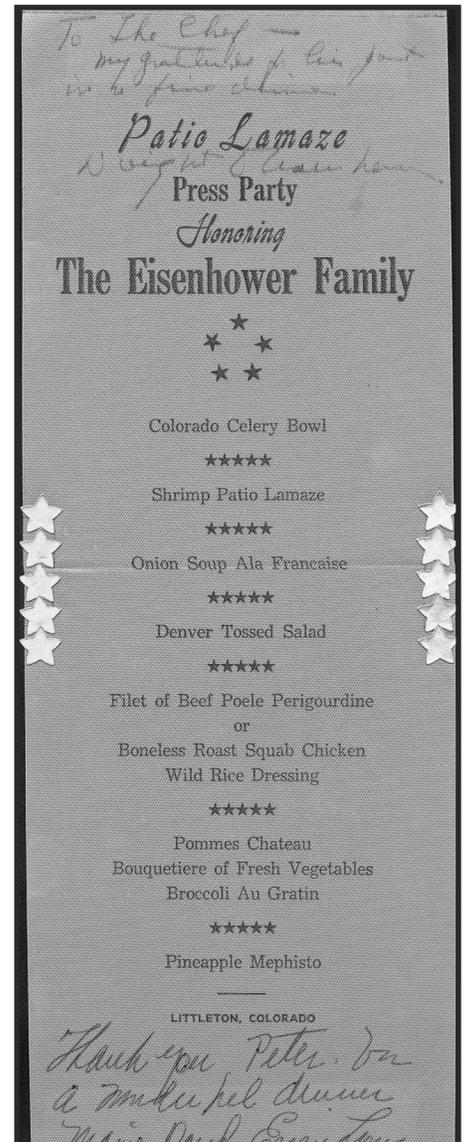


Ethel Merman, Audrey Meadows, Phil Harris, and Alice Faye, were often seen at the Patio. Residents from nearby Bowmar, emerging Cherry Hills Village and, of course, socially prominent Denverites, frequented my restaurant. Jimmy Stewart and Audie Murphy ran horses at the popular Centennial track.

But when I met James C. Hagerty, press secretary to General Dwight D. Eisenhower, the martinis began to flow, all on me! The Denver press corps had brought Hagerty to the Patio initially; it soon became his favorite hangout. Much to my surprise, Hagerty suggested to bring the entire Eisenhower family and press corps to the Patio. This was to take place on Wednesday, June 25, 1952, during Eisenhower's campaign for the Presidency of the United States. Mamie Doud Eisenhower had close ties to Denver and the General often went fishing with his friends Aksel Nielsen and Carl Norgren in the Colorado mountain streams in Grand County near Fraser.

So it came to be, and the satin menu for the Eisenhower family, pictured here, became my treasure. My conversation during the dinner with General Eisenhower dealt mainly with my military service with the Allies in North Africa, while Mamie Doud inquired as to my culinary career. Once General Eisenhower was elected President, he still frequented Denver and often stayed at the Mamie Doud residence. Hagerty also remained in touch on those visits.

\*\*\*\*\* June 25, 1952 \*\*\*\*\*



Above: Satin ribbon dinner menu signed by General and Mrs. Dwight D. Eisenhower

## IKE'S FAMILY DINES WITH PRESS LEADERS AT PATIO LAMAZE

A press party for the Eisenhower family was given at Patio Lamaze at Littleton Wednesday with 65 guests. Famous newspapermen, magazine writers, and radio announcers were present. The menus, mostly in French, were printed by the Littleton Independent on 4½-inch wide satin ribbon.



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# The Patio Restaurant

*Located across from Centennial Race-track at West Bellevue Avenue and South Santa Fe Drive, Littleton, Colorado.*

*Recounted by Chef Pierre Wolfe.*

In 1952, Joe Sperte, then manager of Green Gables Country Club, recommended me for the chef position at the Patio Lamaze in Littleton, later renamed the Patio Restaurant. James Blankenship was the owner. The restaurant was not doing well, due to a number of changes in kitchen personnel. But Jim was a great promoter and knew how to get publicity for his newly arrived chef. In later years, I would adopt some of Jim's affinity for attracting the news media and famous people. But Blankenship had plans to move on to Las Vegas and tried to persuade me to come along, which I refused.

In 1954, Bob Allphin and brother-in-law, Vic Hawkins, took over the Patio. Poor business practices brought the Patio to its knees, and I was offered the opportunity by the landlord, Carroll Quelland, to become lessee of the operation. Carroll, however, cleverly kept the liquor operation for himself, which made it very hard for me to make a go of things on food alone.

With hard work and determination, long hours in the kitchen, a fine staff of professional waiters, many of whom had formerly served on the railroads, and others from the Air Force Finance Center, part-timing at night, we succeeded. Joe Hamilton, an imposing six-footer, was our captain. To see him drop an egg into the Caesar salad bowl from his lofty height was a show worth watching. Ira Martin, from a poor family, would become everyone's darling. He cooked a mean Steak Diana tableside, a dish that in later years at the Quorum would become our signature dish. We served tasty lobster, shrimp, and crab-meat canapés prepared tableside as well as Frog Legs and Lobster Sauté Cardinale. Crepes Suzette, Cherries Jubilee, individual Baked Alaskas, and Scuffle Grand Maniere were show stoppers!

The Patio was a unique restaurant. Its location opposite the Centennial Racetrack made it a popular meeting place for horse-racing enthusiasts, gamblers, and bookies, including prominent members of the Smal-done clan. They celebrated various "comings-out" and "goings-in" to the peni-



teniary. Francis Smaldone, son Eugene, Checkers, and other well-known Denver crime lords became good Patio customers. Later, at the opening of my Quorum Restaurant in 1960, a warm embrace by Francis and an enthusiastic greeting by a party of ten Smaldones caused consternation among my patrons. Who could blame them?

The Patio was frequented by jockeys scheming to fix a race for "get-away money." I also owned a racehorse called Starry Night and had great fun racing my horse all over the country. Starry Night earned enough money to pay the hay bill and "Heavy Hulse," the trainer. The horse won four races and \$5,510 in 1957. Many customers of the Patio wanted to know when Starry Night was going to win. Heavy's answer was, "He's eat-in' good." Would you bet on the appetite of a horse? Go figure!

The Billy Wilson Trio, who had formerly performed at the Wolhurst Country Club for Eddie Jordan, along with Bill Bastien on bass and Mickey McGee on the

guitar, brought dinner dancing to the Patio. From his vantage spot on the stage, Billy surveyed the crowd, winked at the ladies, and played the hell out of his accordion! For birthdays and anniversaries, Billy had a special song: "Stick out your can here comes the garbage man!" Billy repeatedly told me that he also closely observed my "working the room" as host, which would help him in later years at the Tally Ho Supper Club in Lakewood.

Ray Baker of KOA radio decided to pick up the Billy Wilson Trio music from 11:00 P.M. to midnight live from my Patio Restaurant. People driving toward Denver from other states and those cruising Colorado would follow the fine music right to our restaurant. Dinner dancing gave us a huge lift in business.

The Patio became the place to see and be seen. Robert Six and Bill Daniels held private parties at my place. Ethel Merman and Audrey Meadows were seen frequently. Phil Harris and Alice Faye loved the Patio. Jimmy Stewart and Audie Murphy became my friends. These were just a few well-known persons to visit us often. But the main groups of loyal customers came from Littleton, Bowmar, Cherry Hills, and, of course, Denver.

But the most significant event took place in the summer of 1956. I met Jean Brown, who became my wife in 1960. Jean, throughout all my years in the restaurant business, gave me the utmost support and two fine children.

The food at the Patio took on a form of a theatrical production, as many dishes were cooked in chafing dishes tableside. Morris Crawford along with Walter Clark, Bill Jackson, Don Thally, Vernon Baskerville, Ira Martin, and one-eyed Sammy followed me to the Quorum when I left the Patio on December 31, 1959. There was not one sober staff member on that New Year's Eve after we had finished serving. We joined a great crowd; some stayed well beyond normal closing time. My eight years at the Patio gave me a terrific start at what followed, the opening of the Quorum Restaurant on October 4, 1960.

Chapter excerpted from: *Tastefully Yours, Savoring Denver's Restaurant Past* by Pierre Wolfe (2002)



Ike fishes the Fraser River and stays with friends at the nearby Byers Peak Ranch owned by Aksel Nielsen and Carl Norgren.



## Norgren, Inc. Littleton, Colorado

Ike's friend, Carl Norgren, founded the C. A. Norgren Company in Denver in 1925. The growing operation moved its headquarters to Littleton in 1957 where it has since flourished as a leader in its industry. Today, it is internationally recognized for the manufacture of motion and fluid-control devices. Littleton had a population of 3,378 in 1950 and 41,737 in 2010.

# REPORTERS GIVE IKE TESTIMONIAL DINNER

All the press men were there but there were no reporters present Wednesday night at an "off the record" testimonial dinner for Gen. Dwight Eisenhower given by the press crew assigned to the Eisenhower political campaign here.

Sixty persons, including Eisenhower's staff as well as the candidate himself, attended the dinner at Patio Lamaze, 5100 South Santa Fe Drive, Littleton.

Arrangements for the dinner were made by Jim Blankenship, operator of Patio Lamaze.

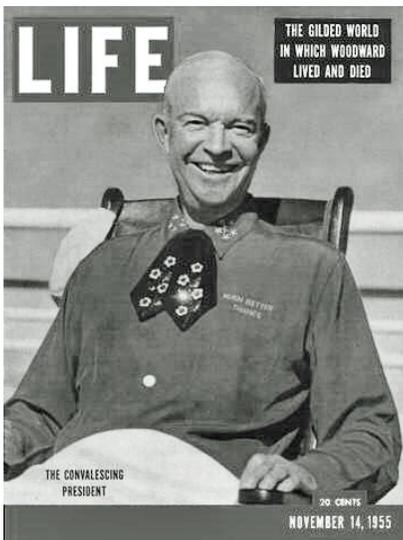
Among the honored guests were General and Mrs. Eisenhower; Mrs. John S. Doud, mother of Mrs. Eisenhower; Major and Mrs. John Eisenhower, the general's son and daughter-in-law; Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, the general's campaign manager; Herbert Brownell Jr. of the New York office of the Eisenhower organization; Arthur Vandenberg of the Denver office; and Senator Frank Carlson of Kansas.

Guests at the dinner said it was given as a spontaneous tribute to General Eisenhower by the newspapermen assigned to cover his campaign, and that reporters whose papers are supporting Ike and those campaigning against him alike participated in the party and the arrangements for it.

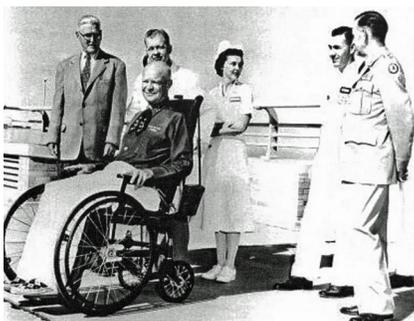
"Whether you're for or against him, he's a great guy and we all wanted to give him this little testimonial dinner," one reporter for a large eastern daily said.



## PRESIDENT EISENHOWER SUFFERS HEART ATTACK IN DENVER



President Eisenhower recovers from his heart attack at Fitzsimons Army Hospital in Denver, Colorado. November 1955



### The Wager by Pierre Wolfe

It was September of 1955 that President Eisenhower suffered a heart attack during one of his many visits to Denver. The President managed to survive, was treated and then remained to recuperate at the Fitzsimons Army Hospital in Denver for seven weeks. All of us at the Patio followed this event with great interest along with a very concerned nation. We hoped for a speedy recovery.

James Hagerty had risen to be a close adviser to President Eisenhower, and still visited the Patio with members of the press, keeping us current. I was proud and had spoken often about the wonderful dinner the Eisenhowers had at the restaurant and probably suggested to my friends that my relationship with the President was a little closer than it might actually have been.

One day I was working in my office at the restaurant when a bunch of close friends challenged me to speak with President Eisenhower personally. It was put up or shut up; put your money where your mouth is time. Twenty Dollars says: "you won't get him on the line."

I thought for a moment; twenty dollars was worth a lot more back then and I stood

the chance of losing a lot more than one twenty-dollar bill. So, I asked everyone to put up their twenty-dollar bills on the desk. Six of my friends did.

I closed the office door, and shrewdly dialed my good friend James Hagerty, Ike's Press Secretary (pictured right), with my request to speak with the President. He considered it for a bit, then advised me to keep it very short, wish him well and God Bless – and gave me a telephone number to call within the hour.



Then, I went out and asked my gang of friends to get close to the extension phones and listen in. I carefully dialed the number, waiting with eager anticipation:

"This is your President speaking, Pierre Wolfe, what can I do for you?"

"Great to hear you are doing better, Mr. President, wishing you speedy recovery from all of us here at the Patio Lamaze! Greetings to your family. I Thank you and God Bless."

With that done, I began to collect the crisp bounty of twenties from all those stunned friends with a grand smile on my face.

## PIERRE WOLFE

Born in Berlin of Alsatian descent, Pierre Wolfe immigrated to the United States in 1950 after having served as a sixteen year-old with the Allied Forces in northern Africa and the Middle East during World War II.

Pierre's culinary training began on the cruise ship Caronia of the Cunard Cruise Line and he furthered his formal culinary studies in Switzerland.

During Pierre's restaurant career he operated three award winning restaurants located in Denver, Colorado; *The Quorum*, *The Normandy* and *The Tante Louise*. He is a Member of the Colorado Restaurant Association Hall of Fame and the Colorado Culinary Hall of Fame.

Pierre's media career started in 1956 when he began broadcasting on many of Denver's major radio and television stations. Currently, his nationally syndicated radio show, now in its 25<sup>th</sup> year, is heard

on hundreds of affiliates around the U.S. and on the internet around the globe. Pierre is considered the longest, active broadcaster in the business.

Over his lifespan, Pierre has frequently traveled the world with Jean, his wife of 53 years. He has traversed the equivalent of four times around the globe. Along the way, he has been a broadcaster and guest chef on most of the leading cruise lines. He and his family have traveled to all of the continents with the exception of Antarctica, which is still on his list.

Pierre has broadcast live from all parts



of the globe. His weekly show, *America's Dining and Travel Guide*, is heard Sundays for two hours from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time. His guests include nationally acclaimed experts in the field of food and travel.

Pierre has prominently established a longstanding reputation in the Denver community as an acclaimed restaurateur, business and cultural leader. For example, current Colorado Governor and former Denver Mayor John Hickenlooper proclaimed June 1, 2007 as "Pierre Wolfe Day" in the City for his many distinguished accomplishments.

In 2002, Pierre published his first book, *Tastefully Yours, Savoring Denver's Restaurant Past*. His compilation of Denver food stories and history became a local best-seller in less than a month.

*The Tall Fellows* described below is Pierre's first novel.

## The Denver Post

*Book Review by Tucker Shaw  
Senior Editor, Features & Entertainment  
June 9, 2013*

Before legendary Denver restaurateur Pierre Wolfe (The Quorum, Tante Louise) moved to Colorado in 1950, the Berlin-born Alsatian served with the Allies in World War II.

His experience as a young soldier informs his new novel, the first fiction title in his oeuvre, *The Tall Fellows*. (His previous book, *Tastefully Yours*, a memoir, was a local best seller in 2002.)

In *The Tall Fellows*, Wolfe paints the war in shades of gray. Enemy lines are fuzzy; much like in the American Civil War, the great wars in Europe often divided communities, leaving friends and even family members on opposite sides of the conflict.

Klaus and Heinz, two friends whose families have long histories together, find themselves in opposite camps as World War II begins — Klaus suits up for Germany, while Heinz (who becomes Henri) fights for France. And as the war progresses, their fates intertwine in unexpected ways and in unexpected places. *Fellows*

takes in Egypt, Libya, Jerusalem and other locations.

Wolfe brings intimate knowledge of life on the ground during the conflict to this short, emotional read. While some of the scenes of carnage are bloody and arresting, they're offset by easy dialogue, a fair amount of sex, and a few welcome moments of humor. Readers who know Wolfe primarily as a culinarian will get a kick out of this farcical menu, joked about in a scene-setting flashback to the Franco-Prussian war:

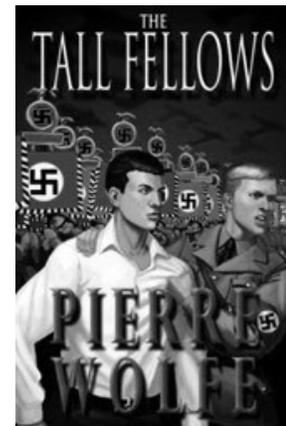
*Second course: A quarter of roasted dog, rat pie with wild mushrooms, eel a la brioche, a small salad and dessert of cheeses and fruit. Voila! Wonderful, n'est-ce pas? "He banged the ashes from his pipe now that it had gone out.*

*The other physician shrugged. Thanks for the meal, but honestly, I'd rather go back to work. "He studied his friend closely*

*once more, and shook his head. You know you've lost your mind, don't you?"*

Heartbreaks fall into two categories: Tragic, and joyous. That *The Tall Fellows* ends with heartbreak is a given. But readers won't know which kind until the closing pages.

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