



Everyday People

by Larry Baker

Born and raised in Switzerland in the German section, Rolf Gurtner's parents spoke French and German and were of the working class. Upon graduating from high school, his wish was to become a fashion designer, but his mother thought it would be too feminine. She played an active role in his decision to become a cook.

After years of hard work as an apprentice, he learned to appreciate the masterful act of conquering the trade and by the age of 26 his name became well known as a dinner chef throughout most of the finest restaurants Europe could produce.

Rolf Gurtner, today, at the age of 37, brought his class and his talents into Portland's black community. Gurtner has named his restaurant, located at 517 N.E. Killingsworth, "High Society."

Gurtner, during his youth, classified himself as a bookworm. History was his main subject and American history was his best. He loved reading the wild west stories and determined if he ever had the opportunity, he would fulfill his dream of seeing America. But before reaching America, his culinary trade carried him throughout Holland, France, Spain, Yugoslavia, East Germany and South Africa.

"In Europe those with the best reputations in the culinary circle are Swiss cooks, so this was an asset to my madness to travel," says Gurtner. "I knew if I learned my profession and trade exquisitely, I would eventually reach the shore of the 'Land of the Free and Home of the Brave.'"

Rolf Gurtner was given his chance in 1974 to work in Montreal, Canada and he knew then, that it would only be a matter of time before his dream would be fulfilled. It was in 1976 that Gurtner was called upon to be the head chef in Seattle at the Space Needle Restaurant. Then his trade carried him to the Benson Hotel in Portland.

After a few years Gurtner decided to become self-employed and opened his own restaurant in Beaverton. Immediately it became successful and popular for its dishes. Shortly after that success, Gurtner introduced his style of cooking to the black community by opening High Society.

Gurtner believes in the 17-hour-a-day habit he has placed upon himself. He also believes courtesy to his customers seasons their meals and comes number one on his menu.

Five years ago, Gurtner met his present wife, Wynona, a black woman with a very religious and stable background. It was at this



ROLF GURTNER

point that Rolf's need for travel stopped.

Wynona, a graduate of Jefferson High School in Portland, obtained a degree in History at Whitworth College in Spokane, Washington. Although their backgrounds and life styles were different, their love climbed all the barriers. Today, Wynona spends her time helping her husband at High Society, directing the choir at Emanuel Pentacostal Church and raising their year-old daughter.

High Society has brought a touch of class to the Albina community, which has never been found in fine foods before. For instance, one may order Rolf's specialty for breakfast: Omelette with shrimp and mushrooms or omelette prepared with smoked salmon.

For lunch Rolf's masterful touch in his one man kitchen can produce

a filet mignon with crablegs and mushrooms, and always with fresh vegetables, salad and soup of your choice.

He loves to brag of High Society's dinner, which he named the "Carpetbagger." It's a New York steak topped with oysters.

"I feel I have something to offer my community, which I now call home, because my wisdom in foods can cross any boundary in life," says Gurtner.

So 17 hours a day you can find Rolf Gurtner living out his dreams in the little kitchen in the restaurant with a very warm and pleasant atmosphere called "High Society." It's located on N.E. Killingsworth, just off Union Avenue.

"You can only give three things to make people immediately happy," claims Rolf Gurtner, "sleep, a kiss good-night, and food. I have chosen the latter and enjoy it."



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Judge denies second trial

Circuit Court Judge Philip Abraham denied the request for a new trial by Robert Fentress, who was convicted for the murder of Carolyn Williams on Union Avenue last June.

Defense attorney Wendell Birkland asked for a new trial based on finding a new witness who said she saw Ms. Williams arguing with a heavy set man who did not fit Fentress' description. Fentress was convicted in the testimony of a witness who identified him as the man he saw in the vicinity of the killing.

Judge Abraham indicated that he did not believe the new testimony would change the outcome of the trial. Fentress has been sentenced to life in prison.



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