



A COMMON SIGHT at Alice's Restaurant is the tiny owner stretching to push Cheeseburger Deluxes through the serving window. Photo by Cynthia Stowell

Alice Dishes Out Food For Thought



by Cynthia Stowell

Back in Massachusetts we took pride in a little town named Stockbridge because a tiny restaurant within its limits had been celebrated by folk singer Arlo Guthrie. "Alice's Restaurant" became the most sung about eatery in the country, but I was one of the millions who never laid eyes on the legendary establishment.

Far from the home of the original Alice, a couple named Alice and Jim Florendo were being persuaded by local kids to keep up with the times and change their cafe's name of "Alice's Restaurant." I never would have guessed that several years and three thousand miles later I would come face to face with Warm Springs, Oregon's answer to the musical statement: "You can get anything you want at Alice's Restaurant . . . excepting Alice!"

In fact I wore the red tunic labeled "Alice's" for three months and became intimately involved with the operations of this proud family business.

When you dine at Alice's Restaurant you receive more than good food. Contrary to the song, you do get a bit of Alice — her warm welcome, some humming from the kitchen (if it's been an especially good day), and a taste of Alice's philosophy.

Alice's business is not just food — it's people too. "We have all kinds of wonderful customers — millworkers, office workers, administrators, elderly Indian people, kids, travelers — and we try to accommodate and be fair to all of them." When you watch Alice laugh, chat, counsel, cry gossip and eat with her "guests," you can see how the restaurant reflects Alice's caring for people.

But of course the preparation and delivery of food is of primary concern. "We serve food that is fresh, as quickly as possible." Speed is essential. I should know — I learned to respond to Alice's bell and call of "Order up!" with utmost haste, or risk a dose of Alice's fury! Hot meals must go out to the customer piping hot . . . or else. Many customers have short lunch or dinner breaks from their jobs and quick, efficient service is crucial.

Daily specials are designed to take some pressure off the cook at noontime, but also to satisfy hungry, hurried people. Every weekday a sandwich special is offered for \$1.75. It usually consists of a cold meat sandwich with a bowl of homemade soup and dessert. As an alternative, a heftier meal of a meat or fish entree, french fries, salad, soup, toast and dessert is offered; this special might run anywhere from \$2.00 to \$3.95. "Our specials are always fresh — not leftover or old food that's been sitting around and has to be sold right away," comments Alice.

There are two shifts a day and ideally there are at least two workers — a cook and a waitress, — on each shift. Alice usually cooks during the early shift. During the noon rush a relief waitress and a dishwasher are often needed.

Turnover is high partly because of the difficult and demanding work but also because employees feel free to use Alice's as a launching pad to jobs that might be more suited to their interest and skills. "I encourage my workers to get better jobs if they can. Everyone leaves here in

good graces and they know they can come back and work anytime."

Of course every good show has people working hard behind the scenes, too, and Alice's is no exception. Jim Florendo, Alice's husband, not only works full time at the mill but also does all the book-keeping for the restaurant. Payroll, quarterly reports and other business matters don't take care of themselves — Jim can often be found in the back room hunched over a stack of bills and a calculator, shaking his head until he makes ends meet. And it is not uncommon to see Jim slip into the kitchen during noon pandemonium to slosh around in the soapy dishwasher.

Keeping a small business like Alice's Restaurant together and in the black is no easy feat. There's rent to be paid (to the tribe), repairs to be made, irregular help to

contend with, payroll to meet, and unpredictable patronage. But the tension, the hassles and the hard, long hours seem to be worthwhile. The restaurant is a challenge to the Florendos, and the rewards, though slim monetarily, are rich on a personal, human level.

And for the patrons who visit regularly or are just passing through? Well, where else can you get anything you want . . . including Alice? Not

even in Stockbridge, Massachusetts.

Alice's Restaurant Hours:
Mon-Thurs - 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.
Fri, Sat - 9 a.m. to midnight
Sunday - 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Phone: 553-1523

All of Alice's soups are homemade, usually by the head lady herself. Don't hold her to it, but Monday and Friday are normally her potato soup days — and that's worth a special trip.

Food preparation was not new to Alice when she started her business seven years ago. She had spent many years cooking for and serving other people — at ranches, restaurants, and resorts in city and country. Kah-Nee-Ta was her last employer before she decided to become her own boss.

"I always wanted my own restaurant but I could never get the funding I needed," remarked Alice. She had her

eye on the Village Cafe for quite a while and watched several businesses come and go. "Finally Vern Jackson (the Tribal Manager at the time) came to me and asked if I was still interested. He took me to the Tribal Council and he started the ball rolling by giving me support." Meanwhile Alice's Loan Examiner suggested the Small Business Administration as a possible funding source. The SBA is a group of retired businessmen who put up money for people who are in some way disadvantaged and would like to start businesses. Alice qualified because of her location in a flood area. She quickly drew

up some plans and cost estimates, SBA representatives visited her, and within a week she had a check in the mail.

"Whenever I get discouraged I think about all the people who were behind me when I was starting out — the Tribal Council, administrators, elders, the church, friends — and I feel so thankful," says Alice. "Some people gave me three months to last, but many more came in and gave me a lot of encouragement."

And Alice in turn provides support and encouragement for local people, often kids, who need work and training. Alice feels that one of the primary functions of her restaurant is to create jobs for people, particularly Indians. She proudly points to a big change in recent years: "Now I have many more local people to call on for work." Helping inexperienced, unskilled people or those lacking confidence or responsibility is one of Alice's aims.

She gives everyone a chance — often second, third and fourth chances too. "Oh, Mom, you're too lenient" say her kids. But the streak of social worker in her doesn't

allow her to turn away even the most unlikely applicants. You'd better pick up on her instructions though, because patience can wear thin when there's food to get out and customers to please. Nobody ever said it was a breeze working for Alice. Her lessons are tough ones but you leave there with some skills you didn't have when you arrived — even if it's just how to stifle tears when being "growled" at (as Alice describes her customary noontime manner of communicating).

to be continued

W.S. All Indian Rodeo Set

The Warm Springs Rodeo Association is presenting a rodeo June 26, 27, 1976, in conjunction with the treaty and Pi-um-sha days here at the W.S.R.A arena.

The major events will include saddle bronc, bareback, bull riding, calf roping, wild cow milking, team roping and the girls barrel racing. An added event will be the wild horse race for which the entry fee will be \$30.00 per team with \$100.00 added, and will be limited to 8 entries. The entry fee will be \$25.50 per event in all major events unless specified during signing up at the rodeo headquarters.

The bull riding will be limited to 40 entries; with all riding events a one go round. Also a one go round in the wild cow milking; the calf roping, team roping, barrel race and the wild horse race where there will be two go rounds.

Slack time on Sunday morning is at 9:00 a.m. The bull contractor will be Glenn Condon of Turner, Oregon.

Another event which drew attention during the last W.S.R.A rodeo that was held in April of this year, will be presented again for the children 12 years old and under is the chicken scramble. The time will be announced during the show.

This rodeo is sanctioned by the Western States Indian Rodeo Association, and all contestants must have a 1976 membership card and is in good standing with the Association.

The committee will select one judge, and the contestants will select the other before the first performance Saturday. Judges are required to be W.S.I.R.A members.

Mail entries to: Charlotte Sengleton, P.O. Box 294, Warm Springs, Or., 97761; or phone (509) 553-1454; between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. only. The books will be open June 12th, and will close June 24, 1976.

The Admission to each performance will be \$2.50 for adults, \$1.50 for 16 and under, pre-schoolers will be admitted free.

The stock will be from Warm Springs except for the bulls which will come from the Condon Rodeo Stock contractor. The Warm Springs Rodeo Association will not be responsible for any injury, theft or other damages.

Show starts at 1:00 p.m. each day.

School Budget

The school budget will be re-submitted to voters Tuesday, June 29.

Prior to the special election, Dr. George Bowers, (Superintendent of 509-J) will be at the Warm Springs Community Center to explain the budget to the people. He will speak Monday, June 21 at 7:30 p.m. in the social hall.