

ENTERTAINMENT

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The Park Hotel IS A SWEETHEART!



Marketing Director Doug Wrench with Franklin Lawson & John Martin

By William James Brock
Post Entertainment Editor

What's big and beautiful, adorned with four stars, can hold about 1,250 people, has a heated outdoor swimming pool, loves sweethearts and is famous for its strawberry soup? Give up? Why, it's The Park Hotel, of course. And it's the only hostelry in Charlotte to be classified

be getting more of these as time goes by—now that the city has the Piedmont Airlines London Gateway flights. People like Pearl Bailey, Charlton Heston, Patty LaBelle, Mickey Rooney—all are among the Show Biz elite who have been guests of The Park Hotel. Imagine Pearlie Mae sweeping in, calling everybody "honey"—or "Moses" himself



graphic by JASON
Housekeeper Debra Fuller in Presidential Suite



four-star. And the only one famous for strawberry soup—and for going to any lengths possible for its guests. And sometimes for people who aren't even guests. Just listen to this.

"Once during a big snow one of our van drivers noticed a lady at Charlotte/Douglas Airport who looked obviously distressed," said Jennifer Rockett, Catering Assistant with The Park Hotel. "He brought her back here to the hotel then went out and bought some baby supplies for her out of his own pocket. There was this poor lady, stranded at the airport with two babies and a big snow covering everything. She had no formula or diapers for the babies. He helped her get settled in and registered. That's the kind of service we're proud of."

That's the kind of service that attracts show business, political and corporate royalty to four-star hotels. Charlotte will Catering Assistant Jennifer Rockett

glides in. Did the water in the famed heated outdoor pool part like the Red Sea every time Heston went for a dip?

But exactly what is a four-star hotel? Well, imagine New York's Waldorf-Astoria—which hosted the Rock'n'Roll Hall of Fame Awards dinner a while back—and you've got it. Or The Peabody in Memphis. Or The Fairmont in Dallas. Then there's La Costa, near Beverly Hills. Charlotte is becoming a class act, mairion?

"Four-star hotels are designated by the Mobil Travel Guide," said Kathy Barringer, executive assistant to general manager Richard L. Arsenault. "It is a guide for travelers that rates 21,000 U.S. hotels, motels and restaurants annually—in 4,000 cities. Only 409 such establishments were rated four-star this year. The Park Hotel is in exclusive company. That puts us in

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Chef Abdou & Morrocoffs Buffet

THE HEART OF DARKNESS



Poet Robert Martin

By William James Brock
Post Entertainment Editor

Robert Martin was born shortly after John F. Kennedy was shot in Dallas, and right before Martin Luther King led the great march on Washington. Perhaps it was the social trauma of the times that forged what he would become. Maybe it was the environment of the mean streets of New York; where he spent his early youth. He can't put his finger on it now.

Born in Queens, Martin had a relatively happy and stable childhood. It was in his early teenage years that things began to go downhill. His mother remarried, after divorcing his father, and young Robert and his stepfather never got along. In

rebellion, the boy took to drugs—beginning with smoking pot. But he had the soul of a poet-creative and undisciplined.

"My grades were up before I got on reefer," he said. "I had a B average—that dropped to F after I began smoking that stuff. I was doing grass at 13."

The inevitable result was he ran away from home. He became a pusher—getting pot from a supplier for resale to other kids. It was a tough way to make a buck. Sometimes he slept in doorways, on park benches or crashed with friends. He even slept on subway trains, endlessly riding the Big Apple night. He lived at the heart of darkness.

After nearly two years of that he ripped-off his connection one day and fled to Long Island, where his mother now lived. Hearing that his former supplier was gunning for him, Martin tried to vanish into military service. He joined the National Guard. Surviving Ft. Jackson's bootcamp fairly well, he was stationed at the Aberdeen Proving Grounds in Maryland for technical schooling.

Creative by nature, the youthful poet skipped work detail one day to go offbase to party with friends. He was angry because his sergeant had refused him a weekend pass home. He had been in service just three months. His captain gave him

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TELEVISION SWEETHEART B.J. HARRISON



Spotlight



B.J. HARRISON

By William James Brock
Post Entertainment Editor

Television newswoman B.J. Harrison is a real sweetheart—in the truest sense of that overdone word. She defies the myths of TV Airhead by simply being herself, on camera and off. She is warm, articulate, intelligent, caring—and bakes the best chocolate chip cookies this side of Famous Amos. You know. She's just like she is on WSOC-TV 9, where she does the health features. Except she's even prettier off the tube. But she doesn't like to dwell on that.

"I've never been what you'd call real Show Biz," Harrison said. "I know how that sounds—with my being a TV personality—but it's true. I majored in photojournalism in college. I went around like your typical photographer—ponytail, flannel shirts and bluejeans. I was never into the beauty pageants and Prom Queen stuff."

Harrison grew up in San Francisco. Her father, Alvin Harrison, was an FAA official and helicopter pilot. Mother Mickey was a bank manager-turned-public school administrator. There were only two kids—B.J. and older brother Alvin Jr. They were a fairly typical middle class family.

Brother Alvin went to Dartmouth. B.J. wanted to go to a school that offered a good photojournalism curriculum. She had always been interested in photography. As a child she would pore over issues of National Geographic to which the family always subscribed. She loved the beautiful pictures of exotic places. She chose to go to San Jose State.

"I hung out my shingle as a photographer right out of college," Harrison said. "I got really lucky. Some friends partnered-up in San Francisco to form a photo studio. One had cameras, one had lenses, one had lights—that sort of thing. We did pretty well. We stayed in it two years."

When the studio partners eventually went separate ways Harrison did the logical thing. She went into the aerospace industry—working in its public relations aspects for the next two years. After that came her first TV job—in management. She signed on with NBC affiliate KRON-TV in San Francisco as a public relations director.

"Ordinarily, I might have lived out my life and never gotten on the tube," she said. "While I was there the station's talent/crew people went on strike. Managers had to fill-in on various jobs to keep it on the air. I was assigned to cover as a reporter. I got bitten by the news bug then. I did general news for two years then decided to specialize. I opted for health/medical reporting—so I could stay in TV yet do something I felt would be rewarding to the public and myself."

WSOC-TV 9 beckoned in 1982. She moved to Matthews—where she lives with a huge black Labrador Retriever named "Footsie" and a cat named "Sousa." A single career woman, she puts what free time she has into horseback riding, Lake Norman recreation and cooking Creole.

"I do love to cook and bake," Harrison laughed. "My mom was

a Creole lady from Louisiana—I still love that food I grew up on. A college room mate had to teach me to make grits and biscuits. I taught her to bake chocolate chip cookies."

Harrison's mother died two years ago. Her father is retired—and is touring America in an RV. She kept her niece, Amanda, for a year after the death of her mother. Alvin Jr., the child's father, was trying to cope with being a single parent following a divorce. Suddenly it all caved in on him.

"We're a close family," Harrison said. "And Amanda is the most beautiful, intelligent child. I kept her for a year; until my brother could get his life together. She turns nine years old this Valentine's Day. I loved the experience of being a mother for a while."

She is happy doing what she does, so Harrison gives little thought to leaving Channel 9 or the Charlotte area. She gives time to the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, Handicapped Organized Women and Camp Care—a group that sends kids with cancer to summer camp.

"At times I don't know where I get all the time to do all those things," she said. "But I put 175% of myself into everything I do. Especially the work with kids. Young people are our future. I just launched a new five-part health series—"Oh My Aching Back"—here at WSOC-TV on February 8. You might could apply the title to me sometimes."

And so she rocks on. Challenging Famous Amos for the World Cookie Title. Cooking weekend dinners like a Creole Queen. Campaigning for sick kids. Still finding time to be a friendly shoulder for co-workers to cry on. And looking good while keeping her sense of humor. Any way you look at it, B.J. Harrison is a sweetheart. Long may she wave.

THE ROCK'N'ROLL HERITAGE



Born into the numbing poverty of St. Louis slums, right after the turn of the century, Josephine Baker seemed to have little future prospects.

She went on to play the Cotton Club in Harlem, as both a dancer and jazz singer.

Failing to reach the stardom she craved, Josephine decamped for Europe in the Roaring 20s. The French loved her—and made her an overnight star. Still a star when World War II came, she joined the French Resistance against the Nazis. She won the Croix de Guerre for her heroism in working with the French underground forces of Gen. DeGaul.

After the war she established an interracial orphanage.