

The Cherry Creek Valley Loses Restaurant Legend Dale Peterson

by Laura Lieff

Restaurant pioneer and *Bull & Bush Pub and Brewery* Co-Founder Dale Peterson lost his battle with cancer on August 29. He was 72-years-old.



Local Legend: Described as genuine, honest and generous, Dale Peterson was one of the most respected people in the restaurant business. He is pictured here in 1983 at age 46.

Dale and his identical twin brother Dean were born July 18, 1937, in Lincoln, Nebraska. Six months later the family moved to Denver and settled into a house located one mile from the *Bull & Bush*.

"We spent a lot of time riding bikes into Cow Town which is now known as Glendale," said Dean. "The Brookridge Dairy was where the *Bull & Bush* stands now, and I remember they used to bottle milk where our brewery is currently located."

From junior high all the way through college Dale had numerous jobs including a paper route, washing dishes and working as an usher at *Central City Opera House*. Because of all the time he spent there he also became an extra in many of the performances and taught himself to play the piano just by listening to others play. Music, specifically jazz, played a huge part in his life and his business.

Dale graduated from *East High School* in 1955 and continued on to *Colorado State University* where he spent one year. While at CSU he was on the ski team before transferring to the *University of Denver* where he earned his BA in business. After college the brothers spent time in Cherry Creek and Aspen playing music with Dale on the piano and Dean playing banjo. In the early 1960s, Dale moved to Seattle to work for *Ford Motor Company*, but he quickly returned to Denver to be a stockbroker with *Hayden, Stone & Co*. In addition to being stockbrokers, Dale and Dean opened their first bar in 1963. It was called *Grandma's House* and was located in Breckenridge.

After a short stint in the mountains, Dale married his college sweetheart, Christine Fyfe, and the couple had two sons, David and Erik. After that Dale stayed in Denver and in 1971, *Bull & Bush* opened.



Father Figure: Dale took his sons on many golf outings including going to Oregon in 1995 for a brew pub scouting trip.

The Beginning Of Bull & Bush

Bull & Bush would be the first of nine restaurants the brothers opened throughout their careers including *Toby Jug*, *Ichabod's*, *Simm's Landing*, *Marina Landing*, *H. Brinker's*, *Duggan's*, *Off Bellevue Grill* and *Manor House*.

"Our restaurants had longevity," explained Dean. "The easiest thing in the restaurant business is to open a restaurant; the tough part is staying open. It's something special to have one for 38 years."

The brothers would sell most of the restaurants (with the exception of *Bull & Bush*) by 1994 but they each averaged at least a 15-year life span. Both Dale and Dean were inducted into the *Restaurant Hall of Fame* in 2003.

"*Bull & Bush* has the longest standing liquor license in Glendale so there is definitely something to be said about that," noted David, who along with brother Erik, took over the business in the late 1990s.

When Dale and Dean were coming up with the *Bull & Bush* concept almost four decades ago, initially things were going to look a lot different than they

do today.

"We were watching the documentary television series *Victory At Sea* and someone in the show said that during wars and hard times pubs and horse tracks always stay open," remembers Dean. "So we decided to build a pub in Glendale because there was nothing else there."

Originally the *Bull & Bush* was going to be a wine-themed pub and Dale wanted to decorate the restaurant with 10-foot tall wine barrels. Since he couldn't find any for sale they switched the concept to an English pub. The brothers took a trip to England to take photos and do some research and wrote out a list of names for their new place and the "*Bull & Bush*" beat out the "*Bent Elbow*." The original *Bull & Bush* still resides in England where some of the most famous authors spent their time, including John Keats and Charles Dickens.

Brother, Husband, Father

When he wasn't spending time at one of his restaurants, Dale Peterson could be found playing golf, skiing or playing poker or blackjack. He was an exceptional brother, husband and father.

"We were identical twins and we talked to each other every day," said Dean. "We owned cars together, traveled together, shared a business and loaned each other money without ever knowing who owed who. We had a very unique relationship."

He continued, "Our wives used to say that if you married one, you married the other."

Dale's sons have nothing but kind things to say about their father. Both David and Erik said that their father was into wine before being into wine was cool. He spent a lot of time in the Napa Valley to visit the wineries and see what was out there. Dale



Twins: Dale and Dean Peterson traveled together, shared a business and spoke to each other every day.

also took his sons on many golf trips which included traveling to places like Scotland and Hawaii.

"He was a great dad and he always took good care of us," remembers David. "We played golf together, he taught us how to ski and we took a ton of trips together."

"My dad was the most generous guy and very giving of himself," said Erik. "He was very genuine, honest and never had an enemy; everyone loved my dad."

When David and Erik took over the business, they said their father had prepped them well.

"He helped start my interest in hospitality, food and beverage," explained Erik. "It was because of him that I knew the inner workings of the business."

"He gave us a head start in the business," noted David. "He was the one that made sure we had the ability to run *Bull & Bush* and we are very fortunate to be able

to do what we do."

Dale's Legacy

Dale Peterson leaves behind a stellar reputation for being one of the most respected people in the restaurant industry. He was the first to bring 150 beers to *Ichabod's* and did the first wines and champagnes by the glass. His innovative thinking made him a success in business and his generosity and integrity helped him succeed in life.

"He was very successful in one of the toughest industries out there," added Erik.

A private celebration of Dale's life for family and friends will take place September 14 from noon to 5 p.m. at the *Bull & Bush*. Donations in Dale's honor can be made to:

The Dale A. Peterson Memorial Fund
c/o Queen City Jazz Foundation
4700 Cherry Creek Drive South
Denver, CO 80246



Vegas Birthday: Erik, Dale and David Peterson in Vegas for Dale's 71st birthday in July 2008.

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