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**EL CHORRO ANNOUNCES WINNERS OF CHERISHED MEMORIES COLLECTION CONTEST**

PARADISE VALLEY, Ariz. (February 9, 2010) - Three Valley residents have been named winners of the historic El Chorro Lodge Cherished Memories Competition. Recollections by winners, JoAnn McMichael, Mary Ellen Brown and Dan Hartrich include a European canon at El Chorro on Fourth of July, a weekly "Eggs Benny" tradition with mom and a marriage proposal on the El Chorro patio.

The cherished memories contest, which closed late last year, called for restaurant patrons to submit their "most cherished memories" of El Chorro Lodge, along with photos. The contest is part of the grand reopening of El Chorro Lodge, which is open to the public February 18.

"It's clear from the community's response that El Chorro Lodge is much more than a restaurant. It is a sacred place to many of our patrons," said El Chorro Lodge operating partner, Kristy Moore. "The photos submitted for the contest are priceless, and a collection has been framed and displayed at the restaurant."

The three grand prize winners each receive a \$250 El Chorro gift card. Finalists receive \$50 gift cards.

"We are grateful to the many El Chorro patrons who have shared their heartfelt and most cherished memories with us. We look forward to continuing the tradition of good times spent celebrating and dining with family and friends. Here's to toasting new memories in the days and years to come," said El Chorro Lodge owner and operating partner, Jacquie Dorrance.

Following are summaries of the winning entries:

**JoAnn McMichael's Cherished Holiday at El Chorro Lodge**

JoAnn and her late husband, Paul McBride, considered El Chorro their second home. In the 90's, they became great friends with long-time owners, Joe and Evie Miller. One summer, the couples toured Europe together and, while visiting a small village in Germany, Joe discovered an old ceremonial cannon in an antique store. The store owner explained the three-foot tall and very heavy canon was not for sale. After an hour of persuasive negotiation, Joe purchased the cannon and made arrangements to have it shipped to Arizona. Paul and JoAnn were certain the money and cannon were gone forever, but were proven wrong when the cannon arrived at El Chorro Lodge one month later.

On the following 4th of July, Joe set up the cannon for a test. JoAnn had no idea what Paul and Joe stuffed into the cannon, but recalls them having a lot of fun planning the demonstration. With great anticipation, everyone was told to stand back as they lit the cannon. And much to their surprise, it worked! It also shot off part of the roof and made so much noise that the neighbors called the police. That was indeed JoAnn's favorite 4th of July.

#### **Mary Ellen Brown's Cherished Traditions at El Chorro Lodge**

For Mary Ellen Brown, the Phoenix landmark is deeply woven into the fabric of her life for the past 30 years as it's been the setting for many "milestone meals."

Mary Ellen remembers the close relationship she and her mom shared from the time she was in high school, based on a weekly tradition of "Eggs Benny" and conversations on the El Chorro patio looking up at Camelback Mountain. She also recalls El Chorro being a part of many poignant moments in her life including, arranging her travels plans back to New York City, where she lived years ago, around a stop to El Chorro for "Eggs Benny"; celebrating with friends after receiving her Masters degree from Thunderbird; and dancing in the promising new year in '99 with her husband under the twinkly lights on the patio and being newly pregnant with their first child.

Mary Ellen feels that going out for a good meal must be a treat in every way; the food and service must be consistent and enhance your precious moments with family and friends. In Mary Ellen's words, "A quality restaurant often ends up as the back drop to your life."

#### **Dan Hartrich's Cherished Engagement at El Chorro Lodge**

Dan Hartrich proposed to his wife on the El Chorro Lodge patio in October of 2005. Dan chimed his glass to get the attention of the entire patio, he introduced himself and his girlfriend, Jessica, then bent down on one knee to propose. He can't remember what he said, but does recall that she did said "yes" and the patio guests applauded.

Throughout the evening the newly engaged couple received many words of congratulations from patrons and staff. When Dan requested the check he was surprised to learn that someone had already taken care of their meal. Dan asked their server to identify the generous patron. As Dan and Jessica were leaving, they introduced themselves and thanked the family who took care of their meal. The gentleman congratulated them and said, "If you ever have the opportunity as I did tonight, pass on the favor."

Dan and Jessica, who married in 2007, now refer to El Chorro as "their restaurant" and hope to one day pass on the generosity and congratulations to another couple.

#### **Additional Photos:**

Lloyd and Cherie "Pug" Cobb at El Chorro Lodge circa 1940s

Stephen Q Shannon at 12 years old outside El Chorro Lodge circa winter of 1946-47

Ed Ryan and son Ted Ryan riding their horses to El Chorro Lodge circa 1947

Premier Old West artist Harland Young next to his bronze cougar - located near the entrance of El Chorro Lodge

#### **About El Chorro Lodge**

The iconic setting, historic buildings and Continental cuisine are El Chorro's trademark. Originally built in 1934 by noted Valley businessman, John C. Lincoln, as the Judson School for Girls, the original schoolroom currently serves as the main bar of the restaurant. Situated on 11 acres in the heart of the Town of Paradise Valley, El Chorro Lodge is one of the area's last traditional fine-dining establishments. For more information, visit [www.elchorrolodge.com](http://www.elchorrolodge.com).