

Ed and Sylvia Weinrott

Ed Weinrott is no ordinary person. During his 98 years he has developed a network of friends around the globe with one central focus: the love of fine food. Ed and his late wife Sylvia began exploring the great restaurants of France early in their 52-year marriage. At the time, no food and wine travel tours existed, so Sylvia and Ed decided to create them. Sylvia learned French and sent letters of introduction to many renowned chefs listed in the Michelin guide, requesting reservations.

Sylvia took cooking classes at La Varenne in Paris and they both worked a "stage" at Troisgros near Lyon. Sylvia, an accomplished home cook and dynamic woman and Ed, the quiet accountant, became well known to many of the two and three star chefs of France, dining in their restaurants over 314 times. As tour guides, they introduced scores of American friends and acquaintances to the joys of exploring the great cuisines of France and Japan. Ed completed 37 trips to France and 7 to Japan, all of which centered on a culinary quest.

The Weinrotts developed many personal friendships over the decades traveling thousands of miles to enjoy the dining experience and company of gifted chefs, often traveling with companions who shared their love of food. This shared love was a wonderful way to connect with others and reinforce their central belief: good chefs are artisans who deserve loyalty. "Patronize the chefs you admire and share with them how much you like the food."

For over 20 years, Ed and Sylvia enjoyed a special relationship with culinary giant Jean Louis Palladin, and would think nothing of driving over four hours to dine at Palladin's restaurant at the Watergate in Washington, D.C. They made the trip 143 times, never ordering from a menu but simply trusting the talent of Chef Jean Louis to present them with his finest, often a 10 or 12 course dinner, made just for them. When Sylvia developed Alzheimer's in the 1980's, Ed continued to take her to their favorite places in a wheelchair. He unselfishly cared for her as he watched her deteriorate for the last 17 years of her life. When Sylvia died, one of Ed's greatest tributes to her was to continue the tradition of fine dining they had enjoyed for over half a century. When Jean Louis passed away in 2001, Ed was asked to be on the Board of Advisors for the Jean Louis Palladin Foundation, serving with world-famous chefs who shared a common passion for fine food.

In 2001, Ed began another personal relationship with a chef he admired; Thomas Keller. Whether it's the 3,000 mile flight to the French Laundry or the 2 hour drive to Per Se, Ed believes that Thomas Keller is America's most gifted chef and he loves to experience his culinary magic with friends where he can put aside the menu to place total trust in Chef Keller's exceptional talent.

Locally, Ed has a cadre of favorite Philadelphia Chefs he affectionately calls his "A" list. They include Peter Gilmore, Daniel Stern, Pierre Calmels, Nick Elmi, Christopher Kearse, Bryan Sikora, Ted Miller, Lee Styer, Kevin McMunn, Yianni Arhontoulis, Jimmy Sugalski, Andrew Deery and Hyvel Volodymyr. Those who tracked their customer's visits saw Ed's reservations appearing hundreds of times in their records. Ed has always made it a point to invite his favorite chefs out to dinner. It is one of his many ways of giving back to the people who have given him so much.

This year Ed celebrated his 98th birthday. The Ed and Sylvia Weinrott Culinary Scholarship at Delaware County Community College pays honor to Ed and Sylvia and thanks them for developing a culinary tradition and culture that brings people from all over the globe together. Many of us have had the pleasure of knowing and dining with Ed and becoming part of his community. Ed's dedication, enthusiasm and loyalty have enlivened our spirits and enriched all of our lives.