



Ed Asner receives Golden Plate from Cloris Leachman.



The

Golden Platers

Col. Sanders Meets Gen. Doolittle

By Gayle Pellesen

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ORLANDO, Fla.—The registration book at the Sheraton Twin Towers this weekend read like a volume of "Who's Who in the World."

Steve Wonder. Ray Charles. Alex Haley. Judge John Sirica. Leon Jaworski. Helen Hayes. Howard Cosell. Cloris Leachman. Edward Asner.

They were all there. And they all seemed to have something nice to say about each other.

In one room, painter Leroy Neiman sat barefoot in tennis shorts, chomping on an unlit cigar while he sketched the king of chicken, Col. Harland Sanders.

In another room, Tom Stafford, commander of the Apollo-Soyuz mission, stopped to chat with former NASA administrator Dr. James C. Fletcher.

"I've got to tell my boy I shook your hand. He won't want me to wash it," a man said, looking in awe at his fingers that were just squeezed by baseball's all-time home run king Hank Aaron.

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That is just a handful of the people the American Academy of Achievement brought together for a weekend "salute to excellence."

Picked as leaders who "excel in the great walks of life," they have all received the academy's golden plate award, either during this weekend or in past years.

Also present were 300 high school-leaders, chosen by the academy. The students had their pick of achievers: the self-made billionaire (John D. MacArthur); the world's strongest man (Paul Anderson); the world's highest paid attorney (Louis Nizer), and the first man to make a nonstop solo flight across the United States (Lt. Gen. James Doolittle).

The California-based academy is the brain-child of Brian Reynolds, a former photographer of the great and famous, who started the awards dinners 16 years ago. He now runs the non-profit organization with the assistance of his three sons.

Newscaster, author and adventurer Lowell Thomas chairs the Golden Plate Awards Council, which includes such people as Dr. Jonas Salk, Willie Mays and Donny and Marie Osmond.

War and peace: Guests of the academy received a taste of both.

"The only way to stop terror is not to give in to terror. That's the only way to fight it," said Israeli Brig. Gen. Dan Shomron, the hero of the Entebbe rescue of over 100 hostages from the terrorist-occupied Ugandan airport.

"On the way back from the raid, I thought from now on nations can't accept any of this (terrorism)," he said through an interpreter.

Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan, recipients of the \$325,000 Norwegian People's Peace Prize and founders of the Ulster Peace Movement in Northern Ireland, argued that wars are obsolete and peace begins at home.

"What we are trying to do in Northern Ireland is find an answer to violence. Wars are obsolete. People are more important than causes," said Corrigan.

Sirica, Aaron and Wonder reflected on the rough-and-tumble road to success. "It's been a life of hardship," the famed Watergate judge said, describing how he greased cars, sold newspapers and boxed professionally before becoming a lawyer.

Jaworski labeled Sirica the "real hero" of Watergate and said he has never worked with a judge he holds in greater esteem.

And Cosell surprised some of the audience by saying his childhood heroes were not the athletes that have brought him fame as a commentator, but rather Supreme Court justices.

"When you have men like Leon Jaworski, Judge John Sirica and Louis Nizer, we will have a government of laws and that's what counts," he said.

Everyone had a message for the teen-agers.

"The food you eat today is walking and talking tomorrow," warned Jack LaLanne who at 62 is as trim and firm as he was on his televised exercise show years ago.

Sitting at a breakfast table eating fresh fruit, he looked around at what everyone else was eating.

"Look at the rolls, the ham, doughnuts and coffee. People wonder why they feel bad," said LaLanne, who works out two hours every day.

Cloris Leachman, star of "Phyllis," told nearly 1,000 academy guests at a black-tie banquet Saturday that Alex Haley, through his book "Roots," has "opened up a whole area white Americans have been deprived of."

"It's my personal feeling after working a long time to bring about the black saga that we should all be proud of who we are and where we came from," Haley responded.

At 375 pounds, Paul Anderson didn't have to do much to get attention. Anderson has lifted a record 6,270 pounds on his back and can hammer nails through two-by-fours with his palm. Needless to say, he is a positive thinker.

"Be yourself. Like yourself. Be a self you can like. When a person likes himself, he reaches out," said the 1956 Olympic weight lifting champion.

A list of notables attending the weekend affair was so diversified, at one point newscaster John Chancellor looked at the impressive head table of inventors, astronauts and stars and turned to Cosell.

"The inventor of the artificial kidney is sitting next to the inventor of artificial chicken," he chuckled, nodding his head at Sanders and Dr. Willem J. Kolff.