

Events Leading to the U.S. Department of Labor's Change in Designation of American Executive Chefs

Louis Szathmary, Ph.D., chef and former owner of The Bakery restaurant in Chicago, commenced his now-famous Keynote Luncheon address at the 1974 ACF National Convention in Cleveland with: "Mr. President, distinguished head table, fellow domestics!"

The fiery speech which followed highlighted the fact that the trained and skilled executive chefs who directed and managed large foodservice operations in the United States of America were not considered "professionals" by our government, that is to say, by the U.S. Department of Labor.

"Chef Louis" as he is popularly known, pointed out that other nations, particularly in Europe, bestowed special awards, titles, and decorations on their chefs. But that the American executive chef was considered no more than a domestic by his government, being officially listed in the "Service" category in the U.S. Department of Labor's Dictionary of Occupational Titles.

He recommended the creation of a "Washington Fund" to lobby the cause of the American chef to influential Department of Labor officials. Started with Chef Louis' personal check for \$600, the Fund grew to \$4000 by the end of the luncheon, and later to more than \$10,000.

Chef Louis also recommended that Lt. Gen. John D. McLaughlin, recently retired from the U.S. Army and in attendance in the convention audience, be designated to handle the Washington negotiations with the Labor Department.

Prior to retirement, Gen. McLaughlin was Commander of the U.S. Army Theater Support Command-Europe, the Army's largest field logistical organization. Earlier, he commanded the U.S. Army Quartermaster Center and was Commandant of the U.S. Army Quartermaster School at Fort Lee, Virginia.

He was also highly respected within America's food industry, winning the coveted International Foodservice Manufacturers Association "Silver Plate Award" in 1973 as Best Foodservice Operator of the Year, Military & Government Category.

Also in the audience, and instantly receptive to Chef Louis' recommendation, was Dr. Lewis J. Minor, president and owner of The L. J. Minor Corporation, founded in Cleveland 23 years earlier. As Gen. McLaughlin was soon to accept a position with The L. J. Minor Corporation, Dr. Minor promptly instructed him to undertake an "all out effort" to help the American Culinary Federation attain official government recognition of the professional status of ACF certified chefs, and to assist the ACF in every possible way in other matters.

Moreover, Dr. Minor stated to Gen. McLaughlin that money in the Washington Fund should not be used for this purpose. Instead, he said that he felt he owed a debt of gratitude to ACF members for their support, faith and confidence in The L. J. Minor Corporation over the years, and that Minor's would pay for any and all expense incurred with this project.

Promptly after the convention, Gen. McLaughlin commenced a series of visits and negotiations with the Department of Labor which culminated, in January, 1977, in a historic meeting in Washington, D.C.

Present were Richard Bosnjak, Jack Braun, Ferdinand Metz and Edwin Brown representing the ACF, Gen. McLaughlin, and decision-making officials of the Department of Labor.

At this meeting, the Department of Labor officials agreed to the ACF draft revision of the occupational description of the Executive Chef. And it was also agreed to advance the occupational description of the Executive Chef, in the Dictionary of Occupational Titles, from #3 "Service Occupations" category to #1 "Professional, Technical and Managerial Occupations" category.

The entire cost for time, travel and other expenses incurred for Gen. McLaughlin during the years of Washington negotiations was paid by Dr. Minor. At the 1977 ACF Convention, Gen. McLaughlin proposed that the Washington Fund, then exceeding \$10,000, be transferred intact to the ACF Building Fund, and this was approved by the Convention.