

Dear Friends,

Greetings from **Preferred RV Resort** in **Pahrump, Nevada**.

This will certainly be our last travelogue from Pahrump this year. We expect to leave Pahrump on December 22 and head for **Desert Hot Springs, California**. Christmas this year will be in the Palm Springs area. We plan to stay at **Catalina Spa and RV Resort** again this year. Our **temporary** address while we are there this winter will be:

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Desert Hot Springs, CA 92241

Our annual Christmas greeting is yet to come.

We have recently discovered that we have been missing some darn good food and a lot of fun in **Wulfy's** bar/restaurant at the **Best Western Hotel** in Pahrump. Not only that, this quaint watering hole has an extremely interesting history, and that is the basis of this travelogue. Part of what makes the history so interesting is the history of the very unusual and unlikely owner. But let's start at the beginning.



Wulfy's Sports Lounge and Grill in Pahrump, NV

The owner is **Ray Wulfenstein**. To most of you the name will mean nothing. But if you're a long time Las Vegas resident and if you enjoy oval track car racing, then you know Ray. For 14 years, "The Stormin' Mormon," absolutely dominated oval track racing in Las Vegas. Ray was so good that they invented a rule to handicap him. If you

were the points leader, you had to start at the back of the pack. Heck, he was always the points leader. Ray was extremely aggressive and extremely good. One day after being retired for 19 years, he borrowed his son's car and raced one more time. Amazingly enough, after 19 years of no practice, he still terrorized the local boys. It must be in his blood for his sister was also a good racer, as is his son.



Chuck with Ray (Stormin' Mormon) Wulfenstein

At any rate, when Ray retired from racing, he bought an old Las Vegas army barracks and moved it to Pahrump. With a bit of remodeling, the army barracks became the **Starlite Motel**. The rooms were small and, in fact, the Starlite was small. But in those days, there wasn't much else in Pahrump. Ray had a vision for his motel and for the town.



Old army barracks on the way to becoming the Starlite Motel

Now you savvy readers would assume that Ray would have faced tremendous problems with the building inspectors. But guess what? Until the year 2000 Pahrump did not have any building codes or any building inspectors and so Ray was free to do whatever he wanted...and he did! And so in 1977, the Starlite Motel came to be.



The Starlite Motel in 1977

Well what did a retired race car driver know about running a motel? As far as we can determine, absolutely nothing. But he must have figured it out because his dream about what could be accomplished in the little desert town of Pahrump was expanding. When building codes were introduced in the year 2000, there was a grandfather clause that said you could expand your existing buildings provided that the new addition was connected to the original. Ray took advantage of that provision and started building with a vengeance. Ultimately, the little Starlite Motel became a much

more upscale Best Western Hotel complete with palm trees.



Best Western Hotel

So where does this story end? We are not sure it ever will, but here's what happened next. Ray started taking serious advantage of the grandfather building rule and continued his expansion. Adjoining the hotel is a large building that could become a casino. **Behind the hotel is a very nice car wash and a beautiful RV park.** On the other side of the street is a strip mall with many shops. When Chuck asked Ray why the big expansion, he replied, "because I could." If there hadn't been a highway in the way, the man may have continued building until he hit Las Vegas 45 miles away. Ray shares Chuck's philosophy of, "a job worth doing is worth doing to excess." Did Ray have experience running hotels, restaurants, and bars? Nope, not as far as we can tell. But he has made it work primarily because he genuinely cares about his customers.

Ray still has a dream and a passion, but now his passion is to provide the best food and the best service possible. A more generous and kindhearted man may not exist. Every day he's in the kitchen tinkering and developing recipes. No, he doesn't do the cooking, but he has personally developed and improved every recipe the grill has. Not a week goes by that he hasn't asked us to taste test some new culinary delight. Everything has the best possible ingredients that are absolutely, perfectly fresh. If you order potato chips, a special low water content potato is sliced and deep fried while you wait. His cole slaw is incredibly crisp and fresh because he only makes one pound at a time. He makes his own bread and so on. Everything is fresh and the best it can be. His bar-b-que is some of the finest we have ever eaten. Ray takes bar-b-que extremely seriously. He even designed his own custom bar-b-que.



Wulfy's wood burning custom built bar-b-que smoker

As you may have guessed, we have become big fans of Wulfy's bar and grill. The food is exceptional, the drinks are good, and the place is fun. The family dining room even has a Duck Pins bowling alley which we found to be quite a challenge. So, if you're an RVer, you've got a nice park with large pull-throughs, a darn good restaurant, good service, a fun bar, and race car memorabilia on every wall. But you know us. **We want to know the history and the human story, and boy, the Best Western has the history and the human story in spades.**

Until next time, home is where we park it.

Chuck & Donna Cole

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