



## THE CHEF WHO SHARED GOOD SECRETS

By Nancy McAdams

How many times have I declared, "I don't need another one, don't give me one, and by all means don't ever let me buy one again!" We're talking about a cookbook addiction here. However, recently but ever so fortunately, I back-slid when I spotted John R. Hanny's *SECRETS FROM THE WHITE HOUSE KITCHENS* in what I thought was a most unlikely venue, Laurie Holladay's Interiors in Gordonsville. Jack, as he likes to be called, had just dropped off a precious little stack of autographed copies of his latest book.

How could I resist? Jack, who served as a visiting White House chef for six presidents, is a resident of Keswick and more precisely my neighbor in Cismont. As I learned that morning in mid-December, the book had yet to be delivered to the big book shops, so I had my hands on a first. Fortunately and much to my delight, this cookbook is more than a cookbook. It is a colorful history of dining and

entertaining at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, well researched and splashed with recipes of both high-end and just occasionally rather common ingredients. The cookbook is also a creative cooperation thanks to some of our own area's fine visual and food talents.

Author, historian and accomplished chef Jack Hanny was only 14 when he began to work in his family's highly respected Buffalo, New York, restaurant business, which was well more than a century old in his childhood. "I'd hop a bus after school to my dad's restaurant to work with some of the finest chefs in the country," Jack recalls. "At day's end, I'd do my homework in his office. By age 20 I had earned the title of master chef, working under the likes of famed French chef Jean Citheral."

By the time Jack was 23, his hobby of collecting the food likes and dislikes of heads of state, even dictators, came to the attention of the Canadian Food Journal, which sent him to Washington to interview President and Mrs. John F. Kennedy and their world-renown chef, Rene Verdon. Jack recalls, "If I had not had responsibilities back in Buffalo, I would never have come home." Fortunately, Jack

developed a close working relationship with Verdon that led to his becoming a visiting chef, advising on state dinners as well as chopping and peeling in the White House kitchen for several subsequent presidents.

Jack knew he eventually wanted to do a White House cookbook, but at the time his Buffalo responsibilities took priority: a restaurant business, six children, county legislator's job and managing other politicians' campaigns. As off-spring matured and other family members settled into the restaurant business, Jack moved to the Mid-Atlantic region and eventually to Virginia, turning to his other love: writing.

Jack began with a terrorist thriller, *ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL*, which has sold upwards of 400,000 copies, before he presented his first *SECRETS FROM THE WHITE HOUSE KITCHENS* in 2002. His 2010 edition of *SECRETS* is greatly enhanced (see side bar), but keeps the insider's flavor and researcher's thoroughness.

In 2008 Jack and his wife, Debbie, who is a full-time nurse in a doctor's office, decided their farm outside Gordonsville was too much work given their projects and Jack's writing schedule, so they decided to move and renovate a cottage-sized abode in Cismont. Three years later, the cottage is loved but not finished, including the almost-perfect chef's kitchen. "Talk about a project," Jack moans. "There's no room for my 150-cookbook collection, and I have yet to hang my beloved copper pots."

Jack designed the kitchen so it is wired and laid out for filming cooking demonstrations, which will be viewed at a future date on his website and perhaps on a food network. He doesn't mind being called a "Foodie," because he says he is one, and he does eat up the food shows on TV, naming Emeril Lagasse, Mario Molto, Rachael Ray, Paula Deen and Bobby Flay among his favorites. "However," he admits, "many cooking shows are becoming more entertainment and less educational than they were in the beginning."

Interestingly, with all of his chef credentials and gourmet accouterments, Jack is not above preparing an occasional crock-pot meal, due to his busy schedule. He's currently writing two more books, *THE THIRD OPTION* and *LUCIFER'S TROPHY*, sequels to his first novel *ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL*. Plus, he is co-owner with Paul Manning of LAMARQUE Publications, located in Gordonsville. "We are especially interested in helping writers over the hump of being published for the first time," Jack explains. In addition, Jack is working on producing *SECRETS OF THE WHITE HOUSE KITCHENS* in e-book formats like Kindle and Nook, plus he still has interest in his family's restaurant business.

And true to pristine gourmet ingredients, we should not ignore Jack's plans for the upcoming season's garden plot at the Cismont cottage. There, he and Debbie produced 50 bushels of tomatoes last summer while many surrounding gardens were close to barren. What was their secret? "Oh, just a bit of fish oil in each hole with the tomato plant. It worked for us."

Hum. Let me jot that down before I forget.