

THE BROADMOOR

C O L O R A D O S P R I N G S

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HOTEL HUMOR AND INSIGHTS FROM THE BRO^ADMOOR

Colorado Springs, CO (Spring/Summer 2008)...Spencer Penrose was an anti-Prohibitionist of some renown. In September of 1920, a few months after he and his wife, Julie, opened The BRO^ADMOOR, Mr. Penrose brought 55 top hoteliers and five press people by private train from New York to Colorado Springs to show off his property. In his invitation letters, he advised his guests to bring “five bottles of your favorite cologne,” a euphemism for illegal alcohol. He also had a flatbed car on the train guarded by a US Marshall. The flatbed contained what Mr. Penrose called his “gasoline.” During their trip, the men (who did not bring their wives) enjoyed dinner dances every night, drove their cars up Pikes Peak in what was the precursor to the Pikes Peak Hill Climb race, played polo, golf and raced bi-planes to Denver and back. When they all returned to New York, this group that Mr. Penrose dubbed “The Hundred Million Dollar Club” as that was their estimated worth at the time, awarded Mr. Penrose with a plaque dubbing him a Bon Vivant of Rare Accomplishment and The Prince of Entertainers. The story of the trip and the club (which still exists today as the Tavern Club of top hoteliers) is told in The BRO^ADMOOR’s Hotel Bar. Make sure that you have the bartender tell you the story of the murals, too.

Next to the Tavern restaurant on the lobby level is one of the most famous places in the hotel. Bottle Alley contains many bottles from Prohibition, most of which were consumed by Spencer and Julie Penrose and their guests over the years. If you look closely, you will see bottles where Mr. Penrose not only wrote where the libation was consumed, but who he was with at the time. You will also find one bottle in the collection that is not from Prohibition. It was signed by George W. Bush on the occasion of his 40th birthday. That was the last time the now-president Bush imbibed.

On the ceiling over the fireplace in the central Mezzanine area you will see two dancing cherubs. When the hotel was being constructed in 1917, Mr. and Mrs. Penrose brought in over 100 Italian artisans and craftsmen to do the elaborate ceiling work you see today. The gentleman who was assigned the Blue Room (as it was then called) was a very religious man. He believed that no one could do anything perfect except God. As he was finishing the ceiling, he became quite nervous as he felt this was his most perfect work. In order to save himself from what he was sure would be certain death, he created a purposeful flaw. If you look at the cherub who has his back to you, note that he has two right feet. On the opposite end of the room, the cherubs are repeated. There, the cherub has two left feet. The artist lived on for some years after.

When The BRO^ADMOOR’s current CEO, Steve Bartolin, started at the hotel, he was inspecting an area under the old Main pool (which is now gone). As he was walking through the basement with

the hotel's maintenance staff, he spotted a ¾ door partially hidden behind some filing cabinets. He asked if anyone knew what was behind the door. No one did. Moving the cabinets, they broke open a lock and were nearly bowled over by the smell of rotting hay and fermentation. It seems that Mr. Penrose had hidden three flatcars of alcohol in the tunnels that ran from the original casino to the “houses of ill repute” that were located across the street in the mining days. He apparently either forgot about them after the repeal of Prohibition, or neglected to tell anyone about them before he died in 1939. Some of the bottles were bad; some were kept by the hotel as part of a collection.

The BRO^ADMOOR has long been a favorite vacationing spot for celebrities. Back in the 1950's, while on a break from filming in Arizona, John Wayne was a guest. Staff members who were working at the time tell a story about taking a banquet tray of shrimp up an elevator to a waiting party in one of the suites. As it happened, they got on the elevator to find Mr. Wayne on his way back from a day of filming. As they rode up the elevator, Mr. Wayne kept taking shrimp off the tray and eating them. Not knowing what to do, the servers reached the floor with a half-eaten tray for the party. As they pushed the cart off the elevator, ready to explain to the guests that they would need to get a new tray, John Wayne took the tray, pushed it into the room of waiting guests, and in that distinctive voice announced, “Here's your tray, and I ATE the shrimp.” Everyone was so amazed that no one could say anything. Mr. Wayne had more shrimp sent up to the party and stayed to sign autographs.

The BRO^ADMOOR is the longest-running consecutive winner of both the AAA Five-Diamond and the Mobil Travel Guide Five-Star awards. For more information on The BRO^ADMOOR please call 800.634.7711 or visit www.broadmoor.com.

