

Chef found recipe for happiness at Dallas church

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By George Henson

Staff Writer

DALLAS—John Jost had no idea what God was cooking up when he led him to Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas as the church's chef.

Jost began his training as a classically trained chef in Germany, and had worked in hotels throughout the United States. But was looking for a job when God began dropping the bread crumbs that led Jost to the Wilshire kitchen.

David Norris, a member of the Wilshire staff, was working alongside a chef-friend of Jost's at an charity event to help the homeless, and he mentioned the church was without a cook. The friend called Jost and told him about the job.



When John Jost took a job in the kitchen at Wilshire Baptist Church in Dallas, he saw it as short-term employment until he could “find a job as a real chef.” After finding faith in Christ and a supportive church family there, now he says, “I will be here until they cart my tired bones away, and I retire.” (Photo courtesy of Mark Wingfield/Wilshire Baptist Church)

“Why would I want to work at a church?” Jost recalled asking. “I’m not a church-lady kind of cook. I need a hotel.”

But Jost was finding it difficult to find a job with benefits. So, he spoke to his father about the prospect of working at the church.

“My father told me that he was praying for me to find something that would work for me,” Jost said. “But at this time I was not a man of faith, so I wasn’t doing any praying.”

Norris called Jost to tell him about the job, and the benefits attached to it grabbed his attention.

“At that time in my life, the benefits package was huge, because my body was breaking down,” Jost admitted. At the time, he weighed more than 500 pounds.

When Jost came to Wilshire for a job interview with Norris, he recognized it was different than the environment where he had worked in hotels.

“He talked to me exactly the same in person as he had on the phone. People didn’t do that at that time. My size always caused them to treat me differently when they saw me, but he didn’t,” Jost recalled.

In July 1997, he accepted the job. But he told them up front, “I’m here to work—not to be Bible-thumped, and I don’t want to hear ‘God this’ and ‘Lord that’ and ‘Jesus loves you.’”

“I thought religion was something I could do without,” he said.

But he was not prepared for the unconditional acceptance he discovered at Wilshire.

“They just welcomed me and accepted me just as I was,” he said.

In particular, Jost felt encouragement from two women in the church—Clairene Herold and Jorja Krause, who Jost calls “my angels.” They constantly sent him notes of appreciation, he said.

“They were my two angels guiding me on the path. I was beginning to think about becoming a Christian, but thought I was too big a sinner,” he said.

Their kindness finally broke through to him one morning, when they were worlds apart. One of the women left a note on Jost’s desk. As soon as he read it, an e-mail from the other, who was vacationing overseas, arrived on

his computer. They both, with no idea of the other's having done so, had left him the exact same message—Philippians 4:13: “I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”

While he was still pondering that apparent coincidence, he opened two fortune cookies. One said, “Take the next step.” The other said, “Sometimes we're not ready but have to go ahead.’

He talked to Pastor George Mason about making a faith commitment to Christ but told him, “I'm not ready.”

“None of us are,” Mason said. “And we all fall, but then we have somebody to fall back on.”

Jost was baptized May 16, 1999. Early in his Christian walk, Jost acknowledged he fell often, but God remained faithful to him.

About this time, friends and family began to grow concerned about the impact Jost's weight was having on his health. One of those most concerned was a friend in Germany who is now his wife, Christine.

“She began to tell me: ‘I'm so afraid. I fear for your life,’” he remembered. From Christine, he first learned about gastric bypass surgery, and in February 2001, the procedure was done. He lost 50 pounds the first month. Over time, his weight dropped from 525 pounds to about 270 pounds.

“My spirit was saved in May 1999, and my life was saved in 2001,” he said.

After his health improved, he began to think more of a future with Christine, whom he had met more than 30 years ago when he first arrived in Germany to begin his training as a chef. He recalled being smitten by her at first sight, but since he had returned to the United States, she had married someone else. Once that marriage ended, they began talking daily.

Eventually, she came to the United States with her two daughters, Stefanie

and Alexandra. Christine was baptized in June 2006, and they were married that August.

When Jost arrived at Wilshire, he saw it as short-term employment until he “could find a job as a real chef.”

Now he says, “I will be here until they cart my tired bones away, and I retire.”

The authentic Christian community he found at Wilshire changed his life so dramatically he can’t imagine what would have happened to him otherwise, he said. But he is fairly certain he would not have lived this long.

“Here, I found a family of real people with foibles, dreams and talents who were willing to accept me just as I was. They gave me a new life and it kept me alive long enough to be rejoined with the love of my life.

“They gave me so much more than a job.”