

# Chef Pursues an Unusual Culinary Career



By Evan Ortega

Hillary Clinton once remarked that she chose to fulfill a profession rather than bake cookies, but if she had Manhattan Beach resident Maria Zebrowski's job, she could have done both to the extreme. Before she became a personal chef and authored several cookbooks, Zebrowski followed a career path that involved everything from styling food for advertisements to developing products like Nestle's cookie dough in test kitchens. "I've been so fortunate to have work that I love," Zebrowski said. "In all the years that I've been working, which are many, I've probably had one or two bad days. I mean who can ever say that? I've been really lucky."

Having grown up on her father's produce ranch in Delano, California, Zebrowski recalled family meals with fresh fruits and vegetables from the fields. Meals in her home

were treated as events and her father loved to have guests over for dinner. "It was always good food that I guess is in my DNA," Zebrowski said. "When you were the last guy to make it into the kitchen, you had to chop the onions, so it was kind of an incentive to get there early and pitch in."

After graduating from Cal Poly San Luis Obispo with a home economics degree in 1973 and then working as an assistant food editor at the *Fresno Bee* for several years, Zebrowski landed a job developing recipes at test kitchens for Carnation and later Nestle (which ended up buying Carnation) in Los Angeles. "They needed a person to start at the bottom and they hired me," Zebrowski said.

She started by doublechecking the recipes that other people at the company had already been developed. "I've done a lot of work for other companies too, but when you work in a test kitchen you do such a variety of things, so I have a broad skill set," Zebrowski said.

The recipes Zebrowski tested would then be printed in cookbooks, on product labels, promotional materials and advertisements. Zebrowski also started tagging along on photo shoots to observe food stylists prepare food for the camera. "One day somebody was sick and they said 'Okay, it's yours,' so I went on a photo shoot... the photographer was telling me what I needed to do, but you do some and you just learn."

## Food Styling

As a food stylist, Zebrowski had to make food look appealing to the eye but also endure potentially long television and photo shoots. To do this, stylists will often use tools more suited for the garage than the kitchen. "When I was at Carnation, we did a lot of ice cream

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## Dear Carol



Dear Carol,

I have a question for you. I went shopping with my daughter, my friend and my friend's daughter. The next day, my friend informed me that her daughter stole perfume from Victoria's Secret. This is disconcerting to me because her daughter was with my daughter at the time. I hate to think of the repercussions if she was caught. My daughter could have been implicated also, as they were together at the time. (My daughter still has no knowledge that this occurred. I was informed of this by my friend, the girl's mother).

Worried Mom

Dear Mom,

My sources at the police department told me that a shoplifter will be detained at the store until the police arrive. The suspect will be taken to the police station and booked (fingerprinted, photographed, etc.) for a misdemeanor or felony, depending on the value of the item taken. The arrest will stay on the person's record and might affect their ability to join the military, get a job or a loan in the future. You might share this information with your daughter in casual conversation and

your friend in a more serious talk.

The most important consideration is how did the mother react to her daughter's shoplifting? Did she set a moral and ethical example by insisting the girl return the perfume and/or pay for it? Did the girl face consequences from the mother because of her illegal actions? Doing otherwise tells the child that her actions are acceptable. Children will not listen to what we say but they do follow the example we set. Shoplifting is stealing and stealing is wrong. Merchandise is purchased by the store; if it is stolen, prices on other items are increased to make up for the lost income, so all other customers pay for the crime. If your friend is reinforcing illegal behavior it might be time to reevaluate your friendship with her and her daughter.

Dear Carol,

I don't like my son's girlfriend. She isn't very friendly and doesn't like to visit us. We are a small, close family. I buy her little gifts for her birthday and holidays, no one criticizes her or is rude. She just isn't comfortable around us. My son says she doesn't like her own family very much. I'm afraid he'll marry her and then we'll never see him.

MJ

Dear MJ,

Keep being nice to this girl. Do not criticize her to your son. Keep inviting her to your home and celebrations. Either she will relax enough to be more a part of the family or your son will see that he is missing the family time he has enjoyed in the past and find a friendlier girlfriend. His choice is out of your hands and if you push your agenda you may push her into his arms. Be kind, be patient and trust your son's judgment.

Send questions to askcarolnow@gmail.com or mail to Herald Publications.

Carol is a Life Coach available for private consultation in person or on the phone. •

## Political Penguin

By Duane Plank

Veering off the beaten path a little this week. Back to the laughable political escapades next week. Maybe by then, the Governor's wife will start following the cell phone laws, eh?

But did you happen to witness any of the drama in the skies above Colorado last week? The two-hour Heene balloon flight? Six-year-old child presumed to be inside the Mylar dirigible, which "somehow" had broken loose from its tethering and began ascending to heights of nearly 8,000 feet?

If you didn't see the event live on the boob tube, you have to have seen the video. Unless you don't own a television, or any other type of communication device. And if that is the case, you probably don't read the paper either, so maybe it's a moot point.

Anyway, I was settling down to grab some lunch when I noticed this silver flying saucer hurtling across the TV screen. Didn't think much of it. Didn't even know if I was watching a live event, a staged event, or some type of YouTube video. Turns out it may have been a little of all three.

Quick aside: Seems that the Heene adults live to star on reality TV. Well, think I have a title for the show, which they can film inside federal prison once the hoaxers are sentenced. How bout *Richard Heene and (Boy) Friends*?

Back to the balloon escapade. Heard the announcer say that it was believed that a six-year-old boy had somehow crawled inside the balloon and was trapped inside the dirigible as it rose to an altitude of 8,000 feet, reaching a speed of up to 30 m.p.h. As I watched the unfolding drama and the presumed fact that a young boy was on board the drifting balloon, couldn't help but think about the agony the parents must have been enduring. And especially the angst of the father, Richard Heene, who was the guy the folks said was "building" the balloon. Don't know anything about it, but what does it take to build a Mylar balloon? Guess that you have to construct the skeleton of the spacecraft, stretch the Mylar stuff over the framework, add some duct tape, and blow the sucker up with helium?

I am pretty sure I have missed some of the essential steps in the construction of said balloon, but you get the point, right?

So the balloon is drifting, floating to and fro, and I am thinking, what can they do, the powers that be, the really smart guys out there, to somehow intercept the balloon before it crashes to the ground? Cuz sooner or later, what goes up must come down, right?

One side of the balloon seems to begin to deflate, so it appears that this wild ride may be coming to an end. And I am thinking: How the hell can CNN show this balloon crash to the ground on live TV? What if the sucker violently hits the ground and begins cartwheeling over and over the terrain? With a six-year-old kid trapped inside? I don't care how screwed up we seem to have become in 2009, what with everything and anything appearing on video immediately, whether it be on live TV, or the Internet, or your cell phone camera. They can't possibly show on live TV a kid plummeting to his death, can they?

Turns out that CNN had already switched to a 10-second delay, just in case. Good, a little sanity out there in a world gone mad with technology.

As the balloon plummets downward, it looks like the dirigible is landing. One side of the balloon is obviously deflating, and the spacecraft hits the turf, landing pretty softly on a dirt field about a dozen miles from the Denver airport.

Now for the gripping moment of truth, as millions of viewers, riveted to their TV screens for some or all of the past two hours, hope for the best but fear the worst as a rescuer approaches the balloon. The announcer guy, incredibly, blurts out that all is well, the landing was soft and safe, and that all we had to

wait for now was for the young Heene child to emerge from the innards of the balloon.

And I am thinking: What an idiot the announcer is. What if the kid was severely injured on impact? What if he was somehow overcome by the helium during the tumult?

Sometimes the talking heads need to just shut up and let the story unfold without trying to jump the gun. Especially when the story could involve the tragic death of a kid.

As you know by now, the rescuers checked the balloon, and, my God, no kid was to be found! Which made the announcer guy look pretty stupid. So now they started to play the "what if" game. Or maybe, the "where is" game. Now, with the compelling video part of the "show" over, the announcer guy started talking about a basket that had been attached to the bottom of the balloon. And that Falcon Heene may have been in the basket when the balloon was untethered and released into the Colorado sky.

So now the rush-to-judgment theory was forwarded that young Falcon was in the basket and that the basket had somehow become detached from the balloon. And lo and behold a picture flashed on the screen, showing the silver flying saucer drifting skyward and something, the basket maybe, appearing to be falling earthward. Which couldn't be a good thing. Chance of surviving that kind of fall would be nil.

The assumption at this time is that the boy and the basket crashed to the ground sometime in the early stages of the flight.

Right about now, I am thinking, where the hell are the parents in all this? Turns out that the dad, Richard Heene, who has been labeled a "storm chaser," did not call 911 when the balloon broke free. He apparently called the Federal Aviation Administration, then a local TV station, then called 911. Interesting calling order, eh? If my son floats away in a damn balloon, I would definitely want to call a TV station and alert them.

Cuz if the Heene senior was a looking for publicity...

Just heard the 911 call and the parents seemed distraught. Or pretty darn good actors. Anyway, an hour or so later, Larimer County Sheriff James Alderden emerged to face the battery of cameras outside the Heene home. He didn't appear to have positive news, saying that the situation was no in "recovery" mode. Which seemed to mean that the law enforcement folks were now looking for a corpse. Chilling.

But right after Alderden's pronouncement, a deputy off camera yelled that they had found the kid, that he had been hiding in the family's garage. Great news. After all, the most important thing was the safety of the kid. Unless the most important thing was securing a TV show for the Heene family.

By the way, don't know how much faith I would have in the searching abilities of the good old Larimer County sheriffs. Kid was right there, basically in front of them, and they couldn't find him? Or was he in the garage? Maybe he was hiding out down the street at the park?

Anyway, had to hop in the car and get on with the day, so I am grimly assuming that the boy would soon be found, and not alive. Get a text. Says: "They found the boy." Immediately, I am thinking bad thoughts. My return text: "Good or bad?" Expecting the bad, relieved to get a return text saying that all is well, the kid had holed up in the garage.

Right about now, it seems that the whole episode was a hoax, a publicity stunt orchestrated by Richard Heene. Let's hope that is not the case. Let's hope that no one out there would stoop that low to close a deal for a reality TV show. Like any of that crap is reality, right? But if Heene did orchestrate this, put him in jail, make him pay for whatever it cost everyone and anyone, and make sure that he never sees a penny of profit from his lunacy. •