



JOHN PRADOS, Archive Rat, Pack Rat

John almost never entered a restaurant... except the V&T pizzeria beneath his apartment, the Hungarian Pastry Shop on Amsterdam, and the Szechuan Restaurants on upper Broadway. Cold noodles in sesame-peanut sauce and eggplant in garlic sauce were two Prados faves. Otherwise his ideas on cuisine were limited. He liked the finest coffee and steaks. John grew up in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas; his father was a Puerto-Rican Army Sergeant. Not much culture there, so he lost his Spanish inheritance and had nothing to replace it with. When he came to NY his understanding of Spanish allowed him to enjoy his Nuyorican neighborhood. Amsterdam in the '70's was Borinquen Ave. I think of John when I hear the Borinqueña. He had relatives in P.R. near San Juan. His mother lived in Florida into the 80's. I guess she was from Kansas and a typical housewife of the 50s and 60s.

After moving to Silver Spring, there was one Lebanese lunch counter he would sometimes visit, but that was it. He, I'm sure, never stepped foot in a Starbucks. He had to make an exception when traveling.

As I was helping him move one time, I carried in several large cartons of Spaghetti sauce. "In case ...," he explained. Organizing his basement, posthumously, Andy and I were overwhelmed by a jumble of book-size shipping containers, hundreds of them covering half the basement. We needed to get a small dumpster to dispose of the boxes, magazines, and clipping files, while rescuing the books and games. He was dedicated to clipping articles from the newspaper, working his way through stacks of newspapers that were always waiting in his dining room. In the "Carriage House" above the garage, he had plastic hanging-file crates with the manuscript of every book he ever worked on. All his research notes and laboriously-collected xeroxes, even the mechanicals for the graphic art for his books, returned by the publisher after printing...

Kevin Zucker