

Parker: Tourism Hall of Fame honors builders of city's image

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Hotel honcho **Walter Isenberg** joked that if things get worse in the hospitality industry, he'd be willing to sharpen architect **Curt Fentress'** pencils or run a concession stand at Invesco Field for Broncos owner **Pat Bowlen**.

Isenberg, Fentress and Bowlen were this year's inductees into the Tourism Hall of Fame during dinner for a packed house at the Grand Hyatt on Thursday night.

All three moguls in their respective industries were selected for their countless contributions to Colorado's tourism industry through building hotels and restaurants, iconic structures and a two-time Super-Bowl-winning football team.

Denver Mayor **John Hickenlooper** launched the festivities by asking for a moment of silence for Gov. **Bill Ritter's** ribs. Ritter was hospitalized Tuesday after a bicycle crash and could not attend the event.

The mayor also recognized Visit Denver bigwig **Richard Scharf** for celebrating his 50th birthday Wednesday.

In accepting his award, Bowlen, who's owned the Broncos for 27 years, said, "It's so great for my family and myself to live in Colorado and watch it grow. I hope I can pick up some more Super Bowl trophies; that's what it's all about."

Fentress, who designed Denver International Airport, the Colorado Convention Center and Invesco Field at Mile High — among other landmarks — said, "You know the phrase 'Imagine a great city'? We built a great city. Now imagine a spectacular city."

Isenberg, head of Denver-based Sage Hospitality, said he saw his life unfolding differently when he was a kid.

"I dreamed of being a shortstop for the Kansas City A's (now Royals)," he said. "Then I had another dream of going to Canton, but my mom said football was too dangerous. Then I wanted

to go into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, but my wife and daughter reminded me it would take a sense of rhythm, which I clearly lack. So my two passions became the hospitality industry and the state of Colorado."

Love on the side.

Denver may be getting some extra-positive international exposure in Stella, the Sunday Telegraph's magazine, after a writer for the publication got a proposal during a recent tour of our town.

When writer **Ruth Caven** ordered her meal at Rioja as part of Denver Restaurant Week, she didn't expect the bonus betrothal.

Caven's boyfriend, **Courtney Roberts**, traveling with his lady love, conspired with the Hotel Teatro concierge and Rioja staff to set the mood for question-popping.

She said, "Yes," roses arrived and the entire restaurant broke out in applause.

Makeover mission.

Office Liquidators, the Lakewood-based provider of new, used and refurbished office furniture, has named five nonprofit finalists to compete in the company's \$35,000 Office Makeover Contest. The grand-prize winner will be determined by the public, who can vote at officeliquidators.com through March 29, and by a panel of five judges.

The other four finalists will divide \$5,000 worth of office furniture. Finalists are: Hope House of Colorado, Metro CareRing, NAMI Colorado, Ralston House and Rocky Mountain Youth Clinics. Office pictures and info on each charity also are listed on the website.

Eavesdropping

on a man to a bartender at the Grand Hyatt Denver: "I never met a vodka I didn't like."

Penny Parker's column appears Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday. Listen to her on the Caplis and Silverman radio show between 4 and 5 p.m. Fridays on KHOW-AM (630). Call her at 303-954-5224 or e-mail pparker@denverpost.com.

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