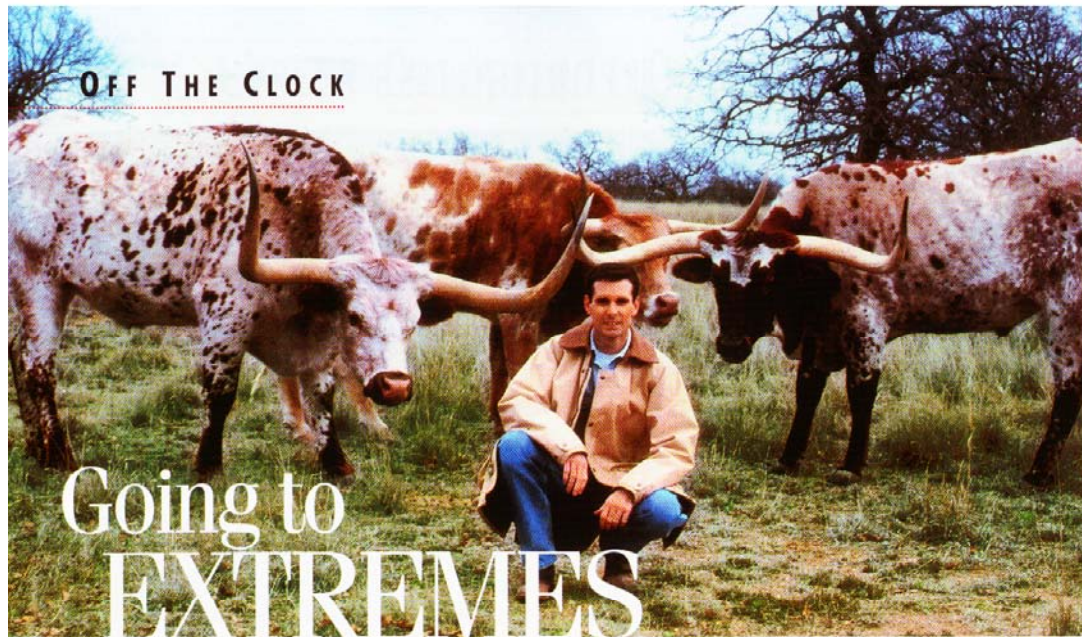


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INSIGHT FOR RESTAURANT EXECUTIVES



Consolidated Restaurants' John Harkey indulges his wild side with extreme sports.

BY CHARLES BERNSTEIN

John Harkey's love of the great outdoors has led him to run his family's cattle ranch while trying out many extreme sports such as motorcycle racing.

John Harkey is an avid outdoor adventurer who enjoys physical challenges. His exploits started in 1997 when he scaled Washington state's Mount Rainier, which is considered the most extreme endurance ice climb in the United States. That same year, he competed in the auto racing World Challenge series at Sears Point in Sonoma, Calif.

This was just the beginning of his adventures. A year later, Harkey, a former attorney and investment specialist, founded Consolidated Restaurant Operations Inc. as CEO, with Gene Street as chairman, to purchase Dallas-based El Chico. This marked the start of a multiconcept operation that now includes 81 El Chico Cafes, 22 Spaghetti Warehouse Italian Grills, and 11 Old Spaghetti Factories, plus five other brands in 18 states and Canada.

Adrenaline Junkie

While his growing company has kept him busy for the past several years, Harkey has somehow found the time and the energy to

try a variety of extreme sports. In addition to snow skiing, skate boarding and hang gliding, the 44-year-old executive has gone snowmobiling in Yellowstone National Park, dog-sledding in Alaska and motorcycle racing in various places.

"These extreme sports are great stress relievers," he declares. "I particularly loved spending a day on the face of El Capitan in Yosemite National Park."

In the Genes

Harkey's enthusiasm for the outdoors has led him into ranching, too. Over the last five years, he has built his family's ranching operation in the Texas hill country. "It gives me great pleasure as a Texan who learned the art of Texas business from my father, a fourth-generation rancher who still owns a farm, ranch and wholesale supply company," he says.

Harkey's 4,000-acre working cattle ranch has been owned by four generations of his family since 1888 and earned the Distinguished Ranch Heritage Award. The ranch is home to white-tailed deer, scimitar-horned oryxes, llamas, axis deer, white bucks, antelopes, zebras and longhorn cattle, as well as Texas Rose granite and topaz.

Tending to the family business hasn't prevented Harkey from looking into other extreme sports. His next goal is to attempt kite-surfing. "This could be dangerous like anything is, but I like to keep trying new things and not repeat the same ones," he emphasizes. **CI**

