



DALLAS, Jan. 17 /PRNewswire/ -- Dwight D. Eisenhower was in the White House and Elvis made his national television debut. January 1956 was also when Paul De La Torre debuted in his 50-year career welcoming customers to El Chico on Abrams Road in Lakewood. At that time, El Chico was one of the few air- conditioned restaurants, an appealing workplace to Mr. De La Torre. Mr. De La Torre continues his career at the same restaurant, since refashioned into Cantina Laredo, to this very day 50 years later.

Cantina Laredo and El Chico restaurants parent company, Dallas-based Consolidated Restaurant Operations, Inc., marked the occasion today with a special plaque installation at the Lakewood location.

Mr. De La Torre recollects his first day this way. "I remember serving a man and a woman, and I was making a lot of mistakes. Yet when they left I received a \$5.00 tip. I told him that I did not deserve it, but he said that I would become a great server. That day was the very beginning for me. That was the day that I realized [the restaurant] would become my other family." Early in his 50 years serving Lakewood customers, Mr. De La Torre befriended many notable residents including SMU football player, NFL Hall-of- Famer and Heisman Trophy winner Doak Walker. Many of his most loyal customers specifically request Mr. De La Torre when dining at Cantina Laredo. Mr. De La Torre's recipe for a long and happy career is a simple one. "Rest, eat and sleep," he advises. "I visit my children often and check that they are doing okay. First thing in the morning I get a cup of coffee and read the newspaper." What motivates a man to maintain a 50-year career in the same restaurant? "Knowing that all my guests are waiting for me to be there, and having the satisfaction to serve them one more time. That's what assures me that they will keep coming to my restaurant."

Cantina Laredo, serving gourmet Mexican food for lunch and dinner, opens daily at 11 a.m. and is part of Dallas-based Consolidated Restaurant Operations, Inc.

(CRO) which operates and franchises 140 restaurants in 18 states, employs more than 6,000 and has system wide sales of approximately \$265 million. In addition to the Cantina Laredo concept, CRO operates El Chico Cafe, Spaghetti Warehouse, Good Eats, Luckys, Ill Forks, Silver Fox, and Cool River. About Mr. De La Torre, CRO Chairman Gene Streets says, "Paul is family. He welcomes customers with open arms. Many have known Paul since childhood and now bring their grandkids to the restaurant." "We are extremely proud of the loyalty of our team. Company-wide, we have over 500 associates with over 10 years service, but Paul is in a class of his own ... the Class of 1956," added CRO Chief Executive Officer John D. Harkey, Jr.