Dinner

by

*Eyes Right*

**Washington, D.C. –** Although our nation’s capital is less than 15 miles from my home in Virginia, I rarely have occasion to venture across the Potomac River for a visit. Recently, however, I received invitations to two separate events in D.C.

The first was a lecture by a physicist and astronomer friend, Roger Davies, who specializes his research on how galaxies form and evolve. At several previous events in New York, we had discussed his lengthy tenure at Kitt Peak Observatory in Arizona and how I happened to have visited it on numerous occasions. Roger is a fascinating lecturer and patiently answered many questions during his presentation. He is very renowned in astrophysics and has been President of the European Astronomical Society since 2017. Following the lecture, a mutual friend at the dinner, Charles, invited three of us to join him for dinner at the Cosmos Club a few miles away near DuPont Circle. I offered to drive. Charles directed me to an obscure driveway entrance to the club and soon a valet took my keys and parked within the compound.

The only commonality among the four of us was our connection to Christ Church College, Oxford. I was the oldest, and a much younger female British attorney, Kate, was the youngest. We were bracketed in age by Charles and Roger.

This was my first visit to the Cosmos Club, and I soon found it to be a bastion of monied, white privilege. During my two hours there for dinner, I saw no person of color other than waiters and staff. Although membership in the club was originally limited to white males, this evening there were now nearly as many women as men.

The Cosmos Club was founded in 1878 as “a gentlemen’s club” with the stated goal of “the advancement of its members in science, literature, and art and also their mutual improvement by social intercourse.” Membership has been open to women since 1988.

The current building, The Townsend House, was built around 1900 and is quite large and has 50 hotel rooms for members and guests. In addition to a large dining area, it has a billiards room, a fitness center, library, parlors, and a periodical room. And, of course, there is a dress code.

After dinner (no prices listed on the menu – members simply find the charges added to their accounts), Charles took us on a tour of the premises. Various walls are covered with photos of members, past and present. One has photos of 36 Nobel Prize winners; another shows 61 Pulitzer Prize winners, and another features 55 Presidential Medal of Freedom recipients. Charles was none of the above, but he did pick up the tab for dinner.

The second dinner took place the following night, this time in the northwest part of D.C. at Old Europe, a German restaurant. This was the semi-annual meeting the Washington Authors Group. There were about 80 of us jammed into the ground floor dining room of the restaurant which closes to the public for this event. An hour-long “meet and greet” proceeds the buffet dinner. During the meal, each author stands to introduce him/herself and is given a non-policed 30 seconds to stand and share what their current writing project is. One of the attendees just completed her 57th book and is under contract to pump out five more next year. Her genre, of course, is romance novels. Others have recently won awards for their work, while many, such as myself, seem to be mostly interested in the German food while sharing our writing ups and downs.

As I mentioned earlier, I rarely go into our nation’s capital, but was happy to escape this time without parking, or red light camera, or speeding camera tickets – the usual tax on visitors. In view of the fact that my Subaru is somewhat “wanted” in D.C. for prior transgressions, it was a successful two nights – especially in view of the fact that I did not have to pay for two very nice dinners!

I thought you might like to know.

E-R