

**Eating the Big Apple: From Bugs
to Borscht to the Soup Nazi (& More)**

March 2015



Every couple of years we go into cultural withdrawal. The cure is Gotham - the capital of the world, with the finest of everything.



Our excuse to go is to attend The Explorers Club Annual Dinner.



The Clubhouse is this Tudor style mansion on the Upper East Side built by an heir to the Singer Sewing Machine fortune.



I've been a member so long, since 1986, I've been shape shifted from Fellow International to Fellow Emeritus.



The sold out black tie event this year was held at the American Museum of Natural History ably MCed by Catherine Cooke, a contributor to *Adventurous Dreams*, *Adventurous Lives*. Yes, that's a whale swimming above us.



I organized a Canuck table, mostly friends who have shared past expeditions, though we had guests from Oz (Ally), the US (Nicole) and Robin from Toronto. Long, Tree Stomper, Lady Danger and Captain Hook are here. That's Ally on the right - who landed in the *NY Times* as the lead picture in the spread they did:

http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/31/science/explorers-club-dinner-modern-explorer.html?ref=science&_r=0

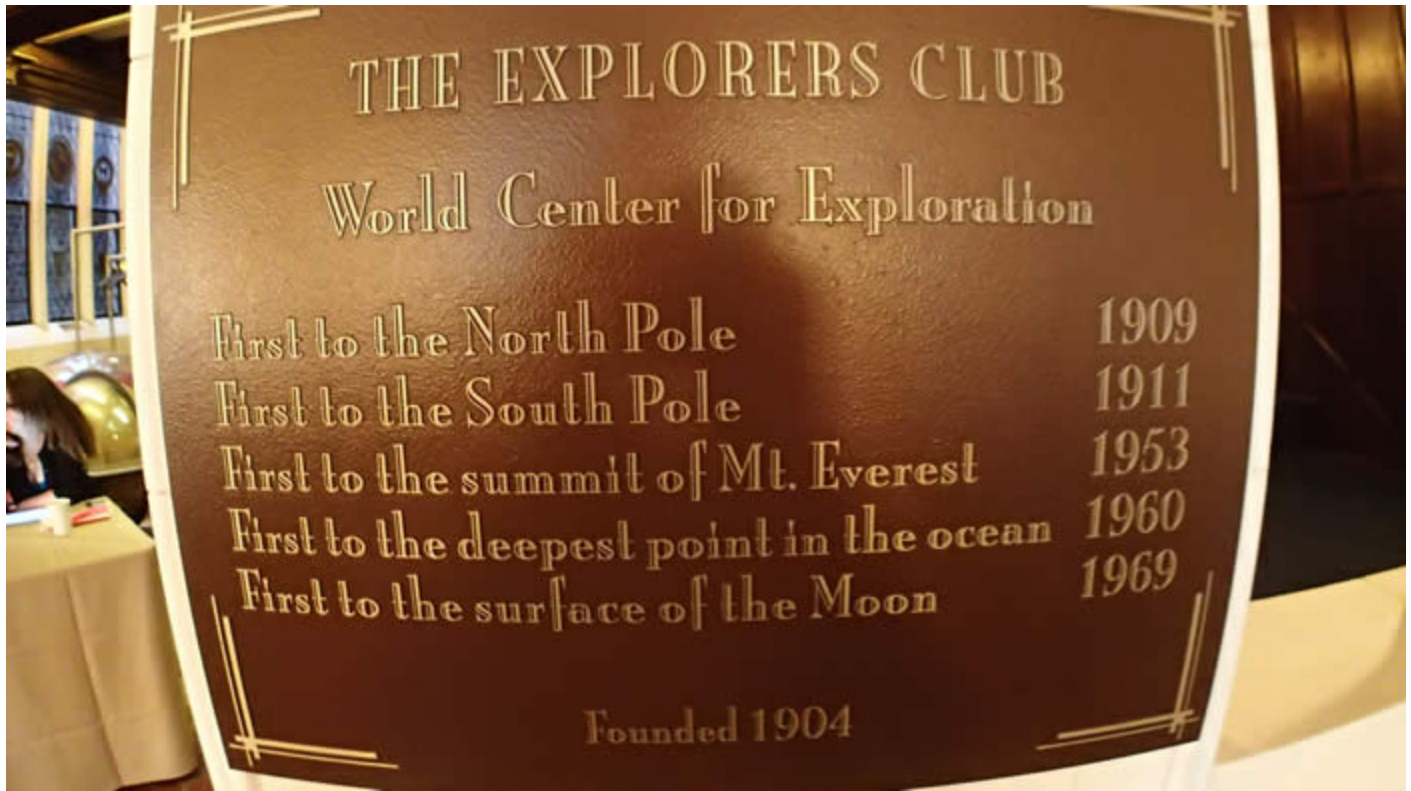


That's Jamie Robinson on the right, with Capt. Hook bookending a member from southern Georgia at our table. The one that was part of Russia, not the y'all one. Jamie invented a fun software program called Magisto. You email in your photos and videos and in minutes it creates a movie. Have a look at what he did with the event - especially if you want to see our bug menu: <http://magis.to/KD89AVVUQEQkPD4PYnZLAnw?!=vsm&o=i&c=c>



e

Neil deGrasse Tyson was awarded The Explorers Medal. His acceptance speech was so modest, natural and eloquent he should go into hosting documentaries. He's director of the planetarium at the AMNH. Like so many who were instrumental in building the AMNH - like Roy Andrew Chapman, Margaret Mead, Theodore Roosevelt and Carl Akeley - they were also members of the Club. Indeed, some served as directors of both.



But then we boast many firsts. There ain't no club in the world like it.



How many can you name that have a Scotch named after them?



President Alan Nichols also contributed to *Adventurous Dreams*, *Adventurous Lives* back when he was a mere member.



Governor Wallace is on our board of directors. You may remember him and wife Meatless in Atlanta from our 2012 Red Deer dino bone expedition.



Uber caver Bill Steele picked up a Citation of Merit. Bill also contributed to *Adventurous Dreams*, *Adventurous Lives*. He's also been on the national directorship of the Boy Scouts of America for years, an organization I strongly support. It was the best boyhood experience of my youth and taught me a lot about the outdoors. I still use all those knots canoeing. Indeed, Capt Hook, who sailed as first mate with Thor Heyerdahl, is the only person I've met who knows more knots.



"Hey Buzz, you didn't answer my email. I had suggested we sponsor (X)."



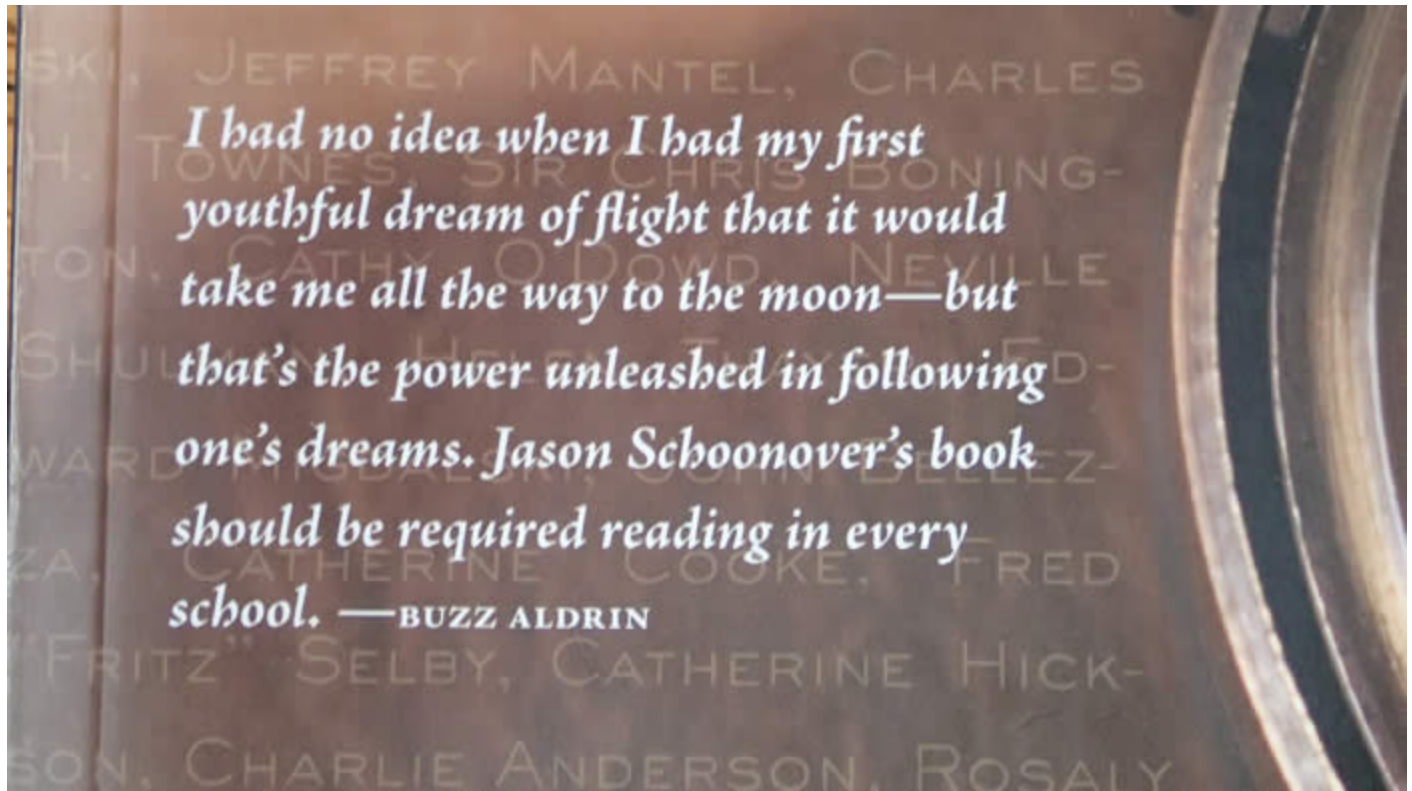
"That's because I don't think he's qualified. What has he done but (blah blah blah)?"



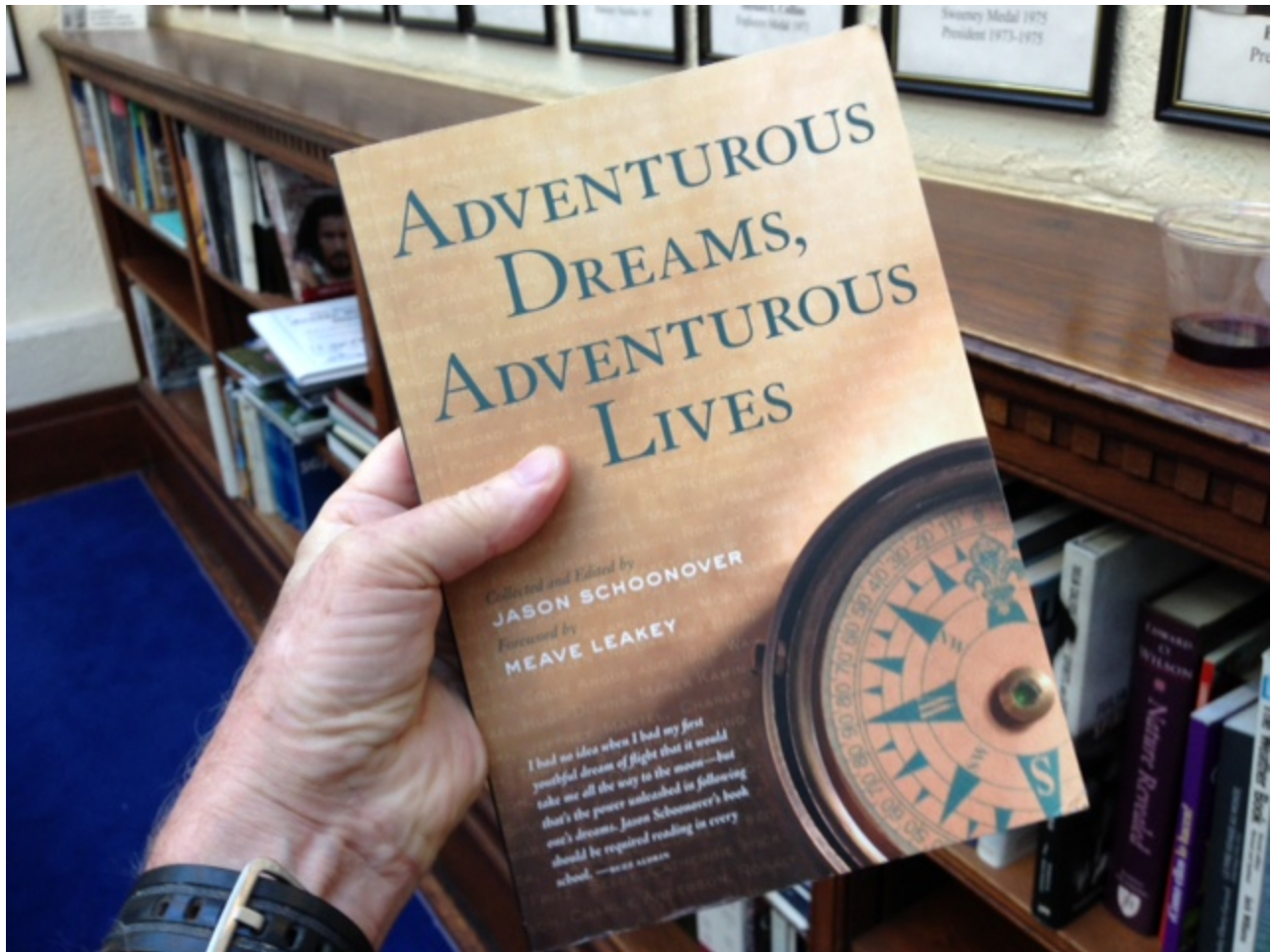
"Yes, but (blah blah blah)."



Body language speaks. No. Not this guy.



Okay, differing views. I can see where he's coming from. I appreciate that he also contributed - and provided this front page endorsement.



Su-san spotted a copy in one of our Club libraries. I invited 120 prominent adventurers and explorers to tell me when in their youth their dream was born, that Aha Moment, with turning points leading to their realization. It's available in Kindle at Amazon. I priced it as low as I could but the 121 pictures drove the price up to \$4.99. That's why it's not priced at \$2.99 like my others. I'm more interested in having readers than making money.



Cocktails and Gene Rurka's exotic food was provided in the rotunda and Akley's Hall of African Animals. Dress is black tie, expedition gear or tribal. Gene is a living treasure in the Club, organizing this feature each year.



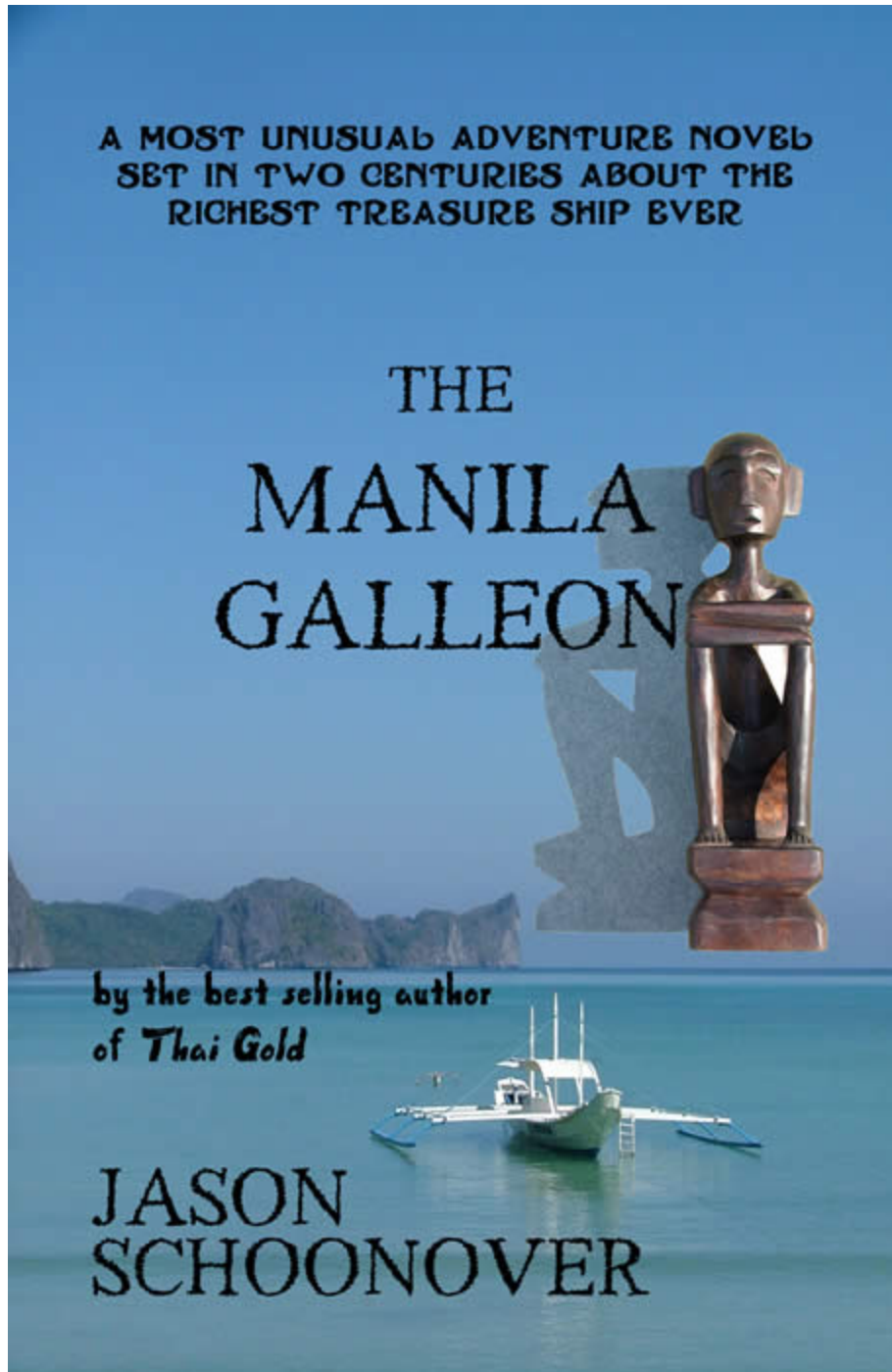
We stopped one couple twice to chat because they were dressed in Hmong gear. Su was wearing a Hmong necklace. They had just returned from Southeast Asia.



Ombudsman, Board of Director member and all around great guy Brian Hanson (in *Adventurous Dreams* naturally) told me later that was Richard Garriott who invented video games which made him a \$28 million dollar fortune. Garriott booked aboard Soyuz TMA-13 to the space station, becoming the first American space traveller. Cool. And a cool couple.



The next day everyone filled the Club to bump elbows and brunch. This is the famous Trophy Room where my adventure-thriller *The Manila Galleon* starts and ends. Several scenes from a recent episode of *Forever* were shot in the Club, including here.



More readers have told me this is their favorite book of mine, which pleases me to no end of course. I really enjoyed writing it, despite its challenges balancing two separate plots and sets of compelling characters in two time periods that dovetail into a single, larger plot. Portraying New York and Manila accurately in 1704 was especially fun. It's on Kindle for \$2.99.

**Twin Tales of Non-Stop Action and Taut
Suspense from the Author of
the Bestselling *Thai Gold***

The Manila galleon was the annual treasure ship sailing between Acapulco and Manila for 250 years. *The Manila Galleon* is two interlocking action-adventure thrillers—one in 1704, the other today. Protagonists in each period—one a young sailor from the frontier town of New York, the other an adventurer from modern Manhattan—try to claim the galleon. One as a pirate; the other as a treasure hunter.

Each tries to understand the purpose of a mysterious statue aboard. In the past, it is possessed by an eccentric Jesuit with world-shaking ambitions.

The stakes are equally high on the modern side—500,000,000 dollars in treasure. If al-Qaeda linked Asian Islamic terrorists seize it, the Religious World War we're engaged in will explode to unimaginable levels.

Past and present collide in a multi-layered and controversial climax, restoring a Legend to his rightful place in history.

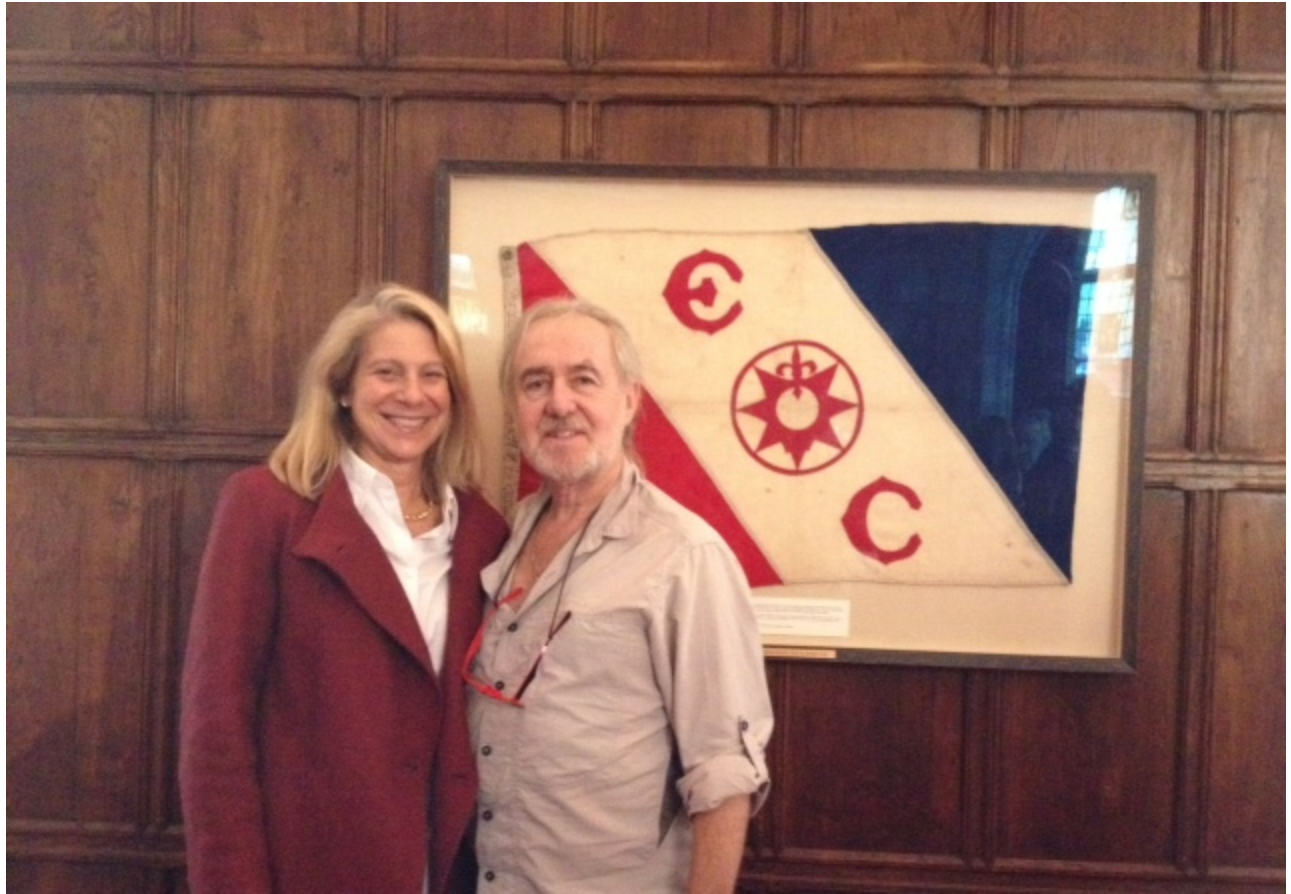
A major writer of the Southeast Asian scene.
Bangkok Post

Jason Schoonover is among a small handful of authors who inspired me to become a writer.

Jack DuBrul – bestselling author of *Pandora's Curse* and *Deep Fire Rising*



One of the trophies, which I included in my description of the room. The rest of the whale must be that one at the AMNH.



Flags and Honor's Constance Difide in The Trophy Room before the flag Jim Cameron took down to the bottom of the Mariana Trench. It's the first time we've met. I've applied for so many flags she calls me her "pen pal."

下七葉葬在上元幕府山西生侍中光祿
宣成太守御史中丞諱靖之字茂宗生巴
道力竝便尺牘少行於代生輔國江夏王
一慟而絕梁武深恨之事見梁周北齊書
撰晉仙傳五篇日月災異圖兩卷文集廿
介著家訓廿篇冤魂志三卷證俗音字五
署矯詔索璽又拒之出為集州刺史新野
周書弟之善隋葉令子孫見于後黃門生
宮學士率子弟奉迎義旗於長春宮招瓜



When we go to New York we make it a feast of 10 days each time. The MET - the Metropolitan Museum of Art - is always our first stop.



And we invariably hone in on the Impressionists, Post-Impressionists and Dutch school.





I always visit my favorite - Peter Bruegel the Elder's *Harvest Scene* of 1565. It's one of a series portraying the seasons which form an important watershed in art. For the first time, religiosity is left behind. I especially love him because he gives me the earliest window into my Dutch heritage. In 1982 I was visiting it and thought I was alone, then sensed someone beside me. Glancing over it was Tony Randall.



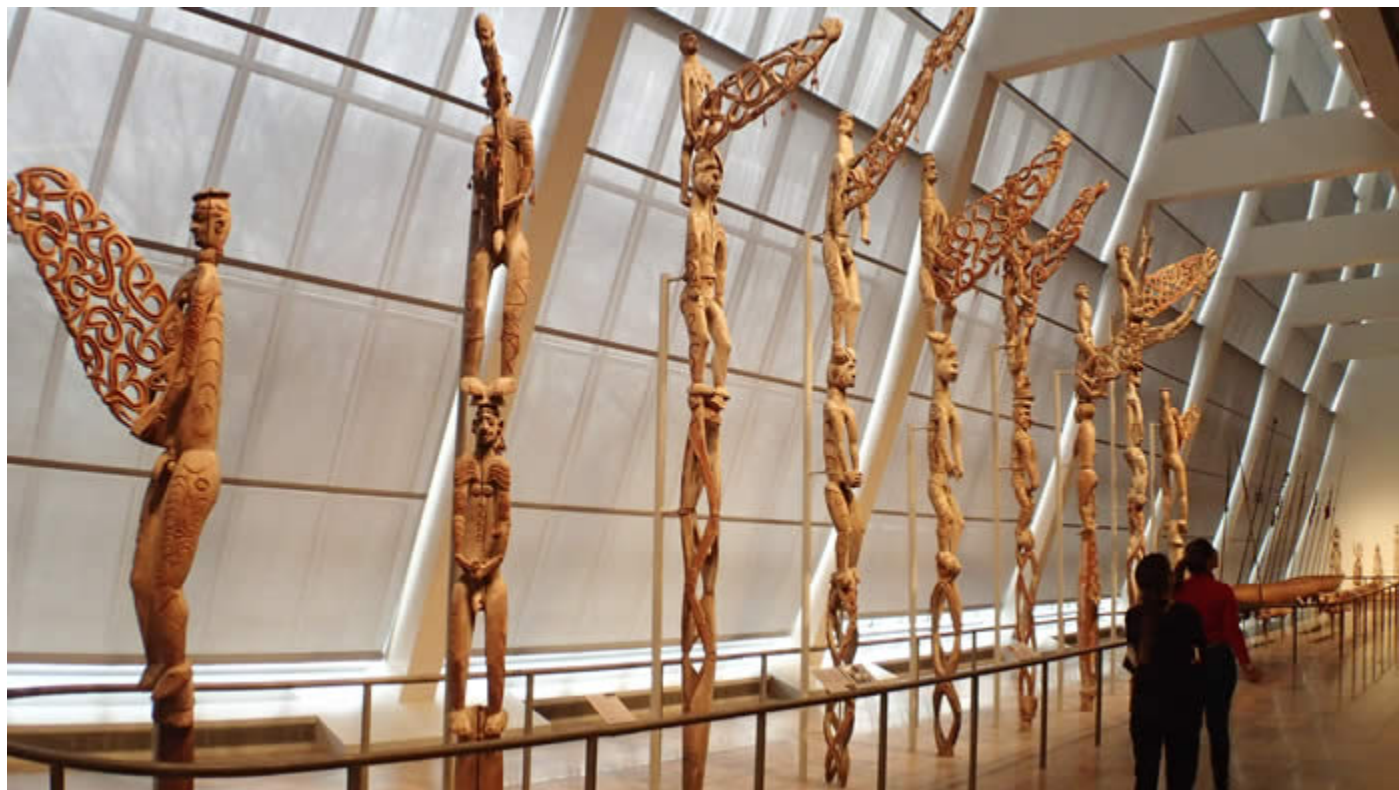
An intriguing show by a young photog was displayed at the MET.



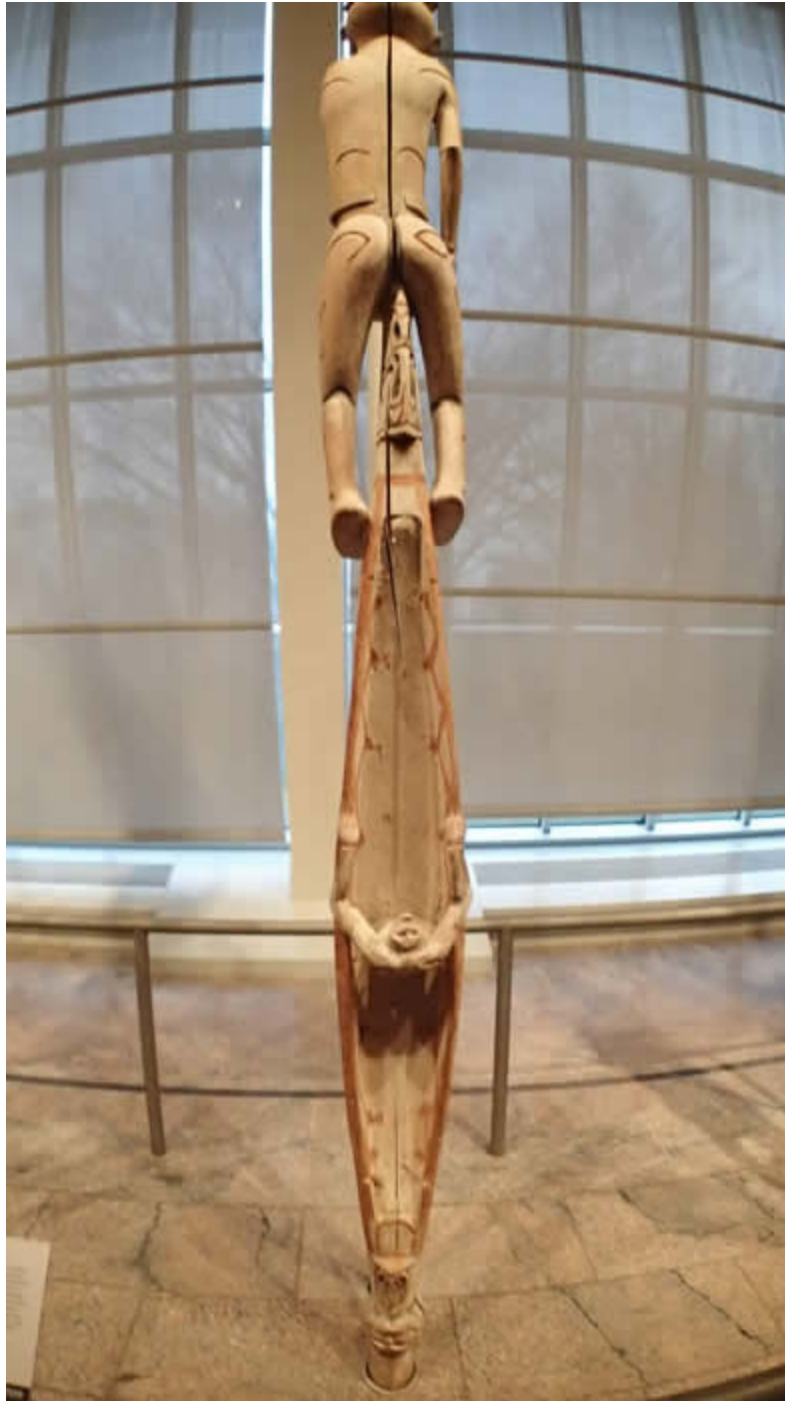
We never miss a visit to Michael C. Rockefeller's wing. The C stands for Cooked.



It's believed he ended up in an Asmat headhunter's cooking pot in 1961. Before he did so, and while still in his twenties, he put together a brilliant collection. He was an extremely talented ethnologist, something I know a bit about. Yes, he had dad Nelson's money - but he had the eye and heart. If he were alive today I have no doubt but that he would be one of the Club's Greats.



Bis funeral poles.



I do a lot of canoeing but I've never imagined a configuration like this....



An Asmat body mask. It's of a female. You can tell because the mouth is open.



Just a stroll across Central Park is the American Museum of Natural History. Here's Madame Su trying to give away another iPhone like she generously did in Buenos Aires when a jerk pedalled by and snatched it.



It's always a second stop for us. We checked out Margaret Mead's wing. It's where she was given space to fill with the ethnology of Oceania, that area that takes in the South Pacific and South East Asian islands.



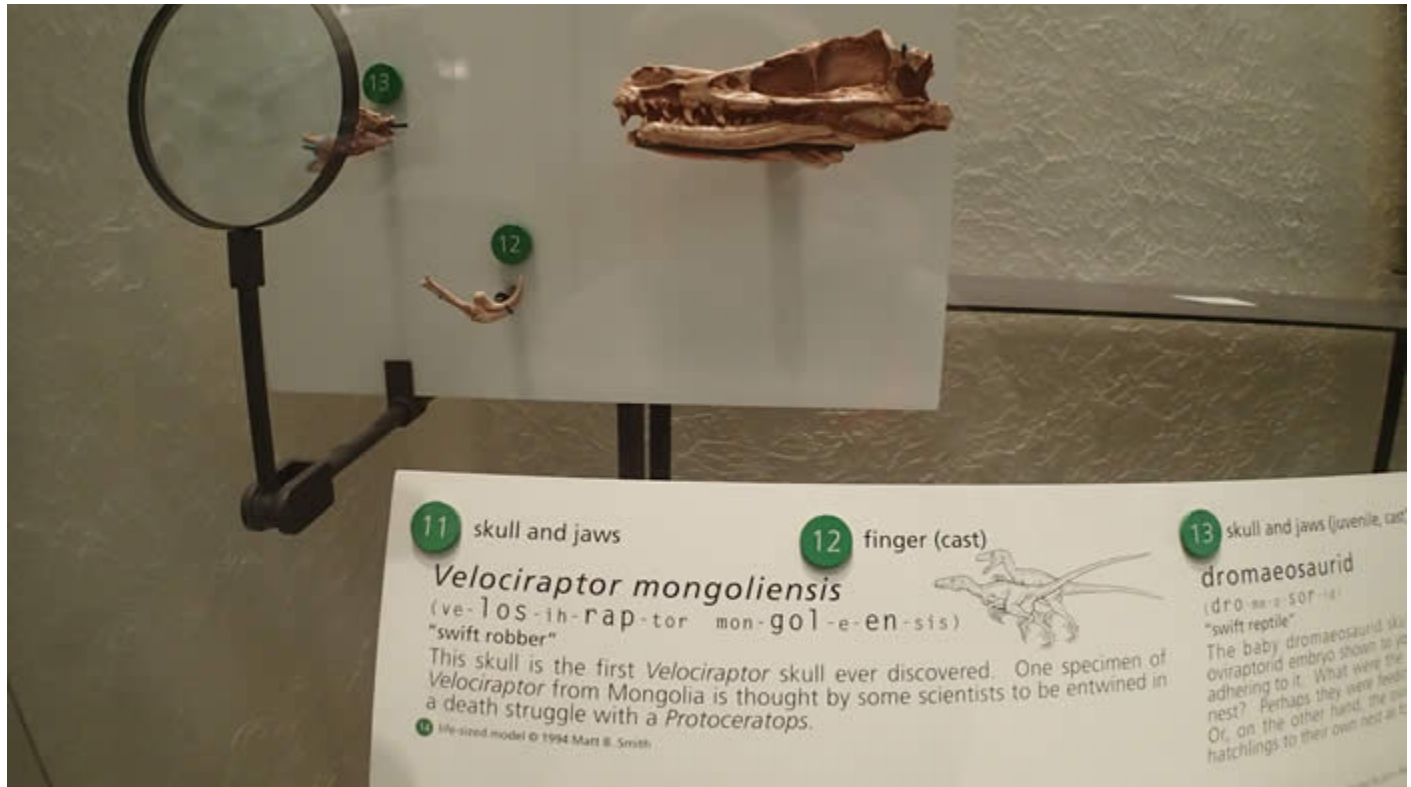
While the huge permanent exhibit is beautifully laid out - not cluttered - I was taken aback by her weak eye for top quality ethnographic choices. We have a large collection of Igorot headhunting material (these last two shots) from Luzon, collected long after she was here, and the vast majority of our pieces are far superior, and more representative. It puzzles me actually.



The dino wing was a stop too, of course.



As expected, a lot of the dinos came from the Red Deer badlands and were collected by Barnum Brown and the Sternbergs in the early 1900s.



Last summer our expedition made that major discovery of the best velociraptor ever found in Alberta giving *P-r*ex - Dr. Phil Currie - the opportunity to compare it with its Mongolian cousin.



It was such a major find that its discoverer Coy-san - Clive Coy - landed on the cover of *The Explorers Log*, distributed internationally to our 3,000+ members. The find warranted a two-page layout inside.



That cute little duckbilled tyke to the right was discovered by *P-r-ex*. Baby dino finds are so rare it rates a place in the AMNH. Not only that but his good buddy Jack Horner is right behind him. Both Jack and Phil are in *Adventurous Dreams, Adventurous Lives* of course.

10

juvenile skeleton



9

hatchling skeleton (cast)



8

Hypacrosaurus altispinus

(hi-pak-ro-so-rus al-te-spi-nus)

“below the top reptile”

Dinosaurs, like living birds and crocodiles, hatched from eggs. Until the 1980s, findings of fossilized eggs and bones of young dinosaurs were extremely rare, but dinosaur eggs are now known from several continents, and fossils of hatchlings to adults have been found for most major groups. This series represents three growth stages of the crested duckbill. Just as in



MOR 548, collected by J. Horner and C. Ancell, 1988, Blacktail Creek, Glacier County, Montana



AMNH 28497, collected by P. Currie, 1987–1988, Egg Coulee, Alberta, Canada

570 PALEOZOIC





All that talk about Michael C. has made me hungry. Let's have lunch. These are Su's grand nieces from Toronto, the family twins, Ella and Abby. They attend a school for gifted children. That they're exceptionally bright and talented is obvious from this shot, isn't it?



We were here, lucky to get in it's so popular. Last visit we couldn't. It's on W57th. You're always seeing famous faces in Manhattan. Meredith Vieira was at the next booth.



I also spotted Yoko in front of the Dakota. Huh? That's not Yoko you say? It's Su? Really? Jeez, you'd think after 27 years I'd be able to tell her apart but all these Asians look the same. I thought she was Thai for years.



There's no place as great for dining as New York. Last trip we stumbled on Patsy's and - like everyone from Frank Sinatra on from 1944 - fell in love with it.



It's been a major celeb hangout for 70 years. Frank signed his portrait to Patsy. This is the "old" wall. You can see Tony Soprano to the left.



That's Glorious Leader Joe Frey on the right. Jamie and Long you've met. Wife Diane on left. Besides being a past Explorers Club director and chair of the Canadian chapter, he's currently governor of the Royal Canadian Geographic Society's College of Fellows. He was on the Sir John Franklin *Erebus* find in the Arctic and wrote it up for *The Explorers Journal*. I was his wingman in reviving the Canadian chapter from 42 to over 200 members, something we take considerable pride in.



After he returned to Toronto, he decided to do a story on the place and asked me to shoot a few images. That's chef Sal on the left with cousin Frank. Sal, who doesn't lack for friendliness or enthusiasm, showed us a page from a New York tabloid from the day previous. George Clooney and his wife stopped by for dinner.

“Since I have a picture of my mom eating at Patsy’s when she was pregnant with me, I can honestly say that I’ve been going to Patsy’s since *before* I was born. It’s been a great part of my life ever since.”

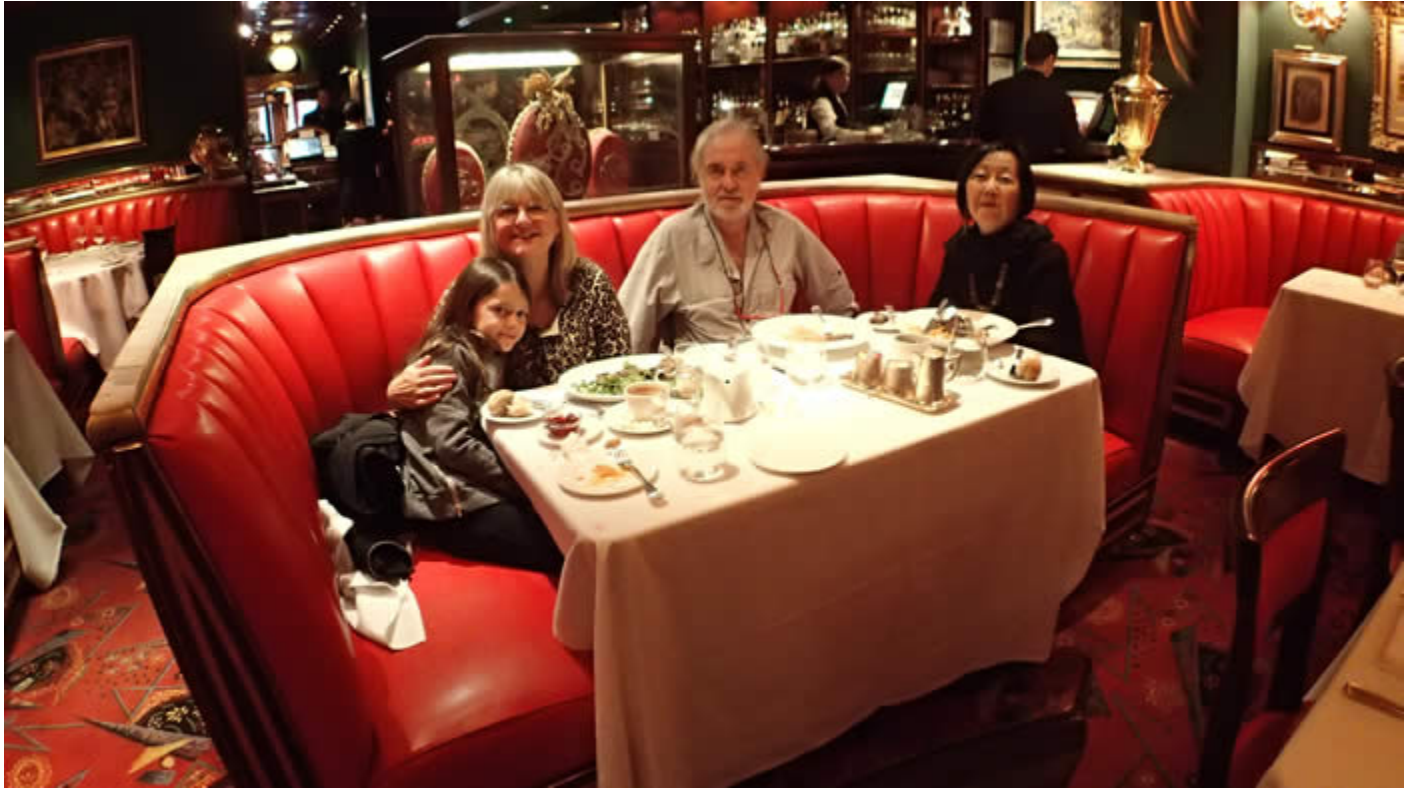
—**GEORGE CLOONEY**



The meatballs are as light as ping pong balls. Incredible. Sal generously gave us a jar of his spaghetti sauce. Great wop food.



We'd never been here before.

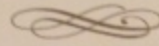


We met Snorkel Master, also on our board of directors. She'll be on our fourth expedition together this summer. They must have seen us coming because they gave us the best seat in the house.



The borscht was excellent but the vereneki, or dumplings, were not Russian! I know, I'm half bohunk. Ukrainian. Rather they were seafood filled ravioli!

APPETIZERS



Traditional Tea Room Red Borscht 20

Pickled red beets, seasonal vegetables and dill in a short rib broth served with a braised beef pirozhok or boiled potato and sour cream.

Onion Soup 22

Caramelized onion soup served with Gruyère and Parmesan cheese and a crouton.

Pelmeni 22

Beef and foie gras filled dumplings in consomme finished with black truffle.

Blinchik 22

Slow cooked corned beef with onions and cabbage wrapped in a crepe with pickled mustard seeds and frisee salad.

Tea Room Salad

Cucumber, tomatoes and tomatoes with mixed baby greens.

I'm used to hilarious typos in Asia - but The Russian Tea Room...? Where everyone who is anyone has been? This place ain't cheap (it's not *that* expensive either.) We spent a very relaxed three hours.



The lone pissoir. If urinals could talk....





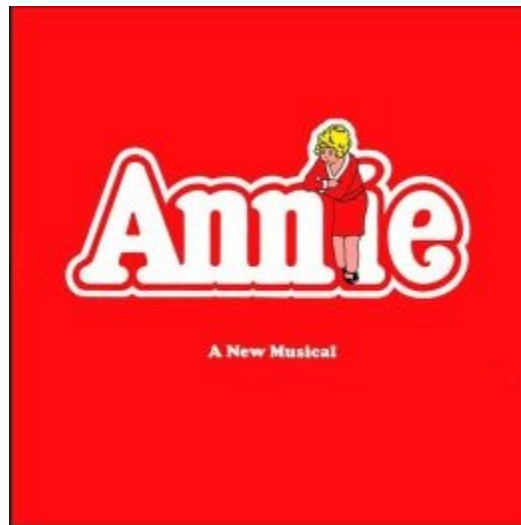
The Tea Room was just two blocks from our hotel...which I'm not going to tell you about...it's too good, and our regular place in Manhattan...and the Soup Nazi was only a block away. The hotel is just three blocks from Central Park, two from Carnegie Hall, a stroll to Times Square. Perfect.



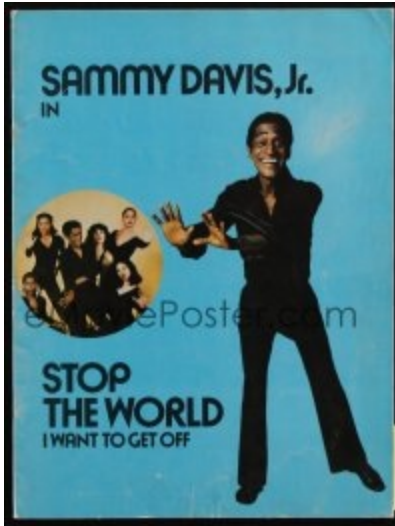
The soup is so good we came back the next day!



And the nightlife? It's like Bangkok. As Frank the goombah sang, it's a city that never sleeps.



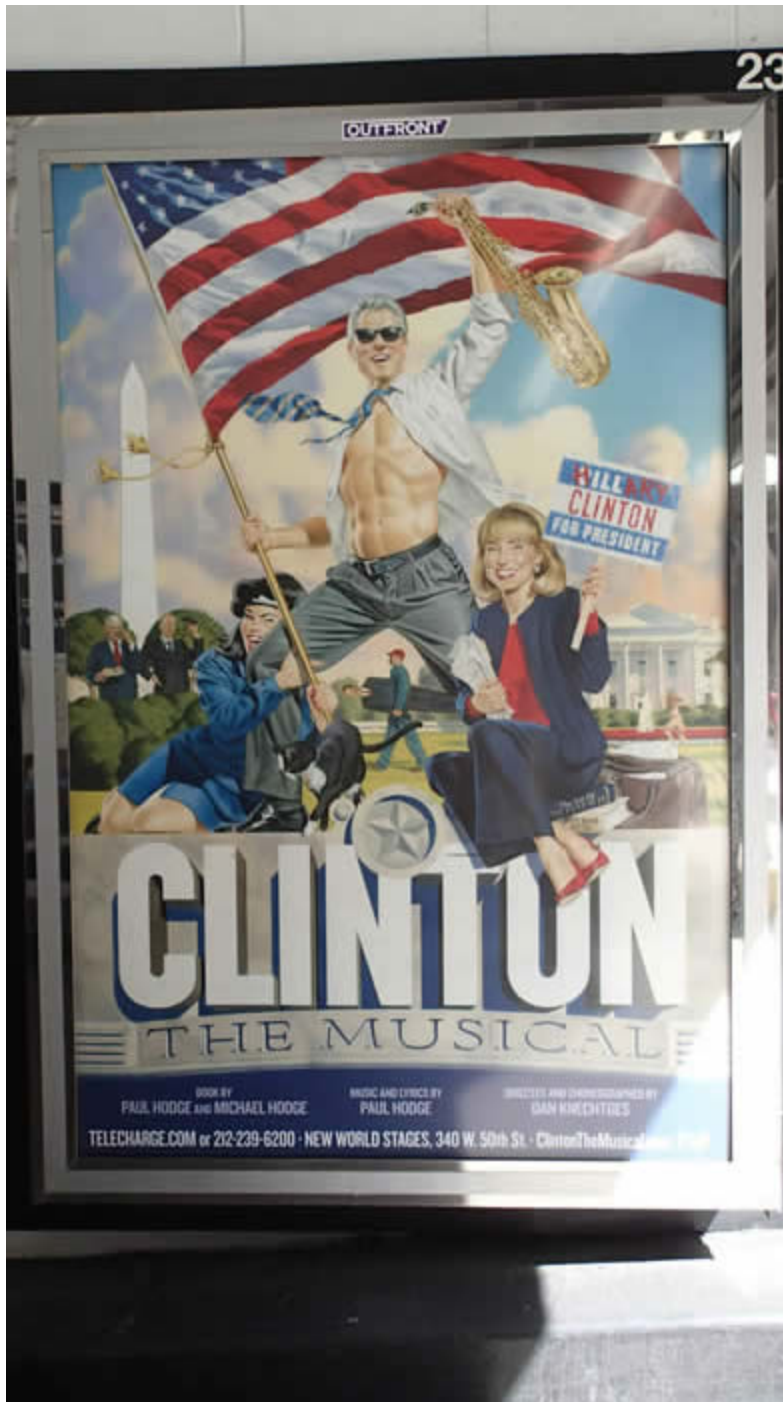
Now, I'm not a theater kinda guy. In '82, I think it was, after I did some stories for some cruise line, I checked out three hit shows.



This was another and I can't remember the third, but they were so shallow and silly I swore I'd never go to another. Especially musicals, though Sammy belting out *What Kind of Fool am I?* at the end was unforgettable. Man, that cat was talented. Don't pass me a karaoke mike. I wish had that talent. I can carry an armload of wet eels better than I can carry a tune, dammit.



Though I was a damned hot music director in radio and had a great ear for picking hits. I love music, who doesn't? Just not musicals. They all remind me of *Oklahoma* which almost made me throw up. But *The Dragon Lady* is quietly persuasive...and musicals mean dancers...and dancers mean great legs...and I am a great leg man...and I did enjoy *Mama Mia* on screen....



Okay then Su-san, how about this one? Oh, it's a spoof. I let her talk me into going to *The Jersey Boys*. But, hey, I grew up with the Four Seasons. And did I say that Frankie Valli has been a regular at Patsy's for 40 years? As a fellow regular, I gave in.



AND IT WAS GREAT! A meaty story of their rise, challenges and changes, natural street language, and all those great songs done so well.



And what's a visit to Gotham without dropping down to Greenwich Village for some great jazz.



Saxaphones are my favorite jazz instrument. I was really disappointed as the sixties left the fifties behind because the music left the sax behind. The evening was dedicated to the 90th birthday of the late, great James Moody, so it was a very saxy night. The average age of the quintet was old enough to collect old age pensions, and, man, could these old cats play. Like us in The Explorers Club devoted to mentoring the next generation of adventurers, they are too with jazz. They brought up a young couple, around 21 each, who could blow like crazy. The future of jazz is secure.



The quintet included on guitar Russell Malone who acted as the smooth voice of the group. After the set I watched him and, man, is this guy suave with the ladies. I've never seen anything like it. I don't think he spends too many nights sleeping alone. Even Madame Su-san got swept up in his charm. She bought and he signed one of his CDs. I think she sleeps with it under her pillow.





This amalgam of the Duke and this mask intrigued me.



I'll bet we were the only people in the joint who knew he was blended with Maha-Kola-Sanni, a major demon of Sri Lanka. It was this devil dance cult that *Survivorman* Les Stroud filmed when I fixed that shoot for him four years ago. We have three of the large masks around the house, including this one.



It had been another great time in New Amsterdam. We dike pluggers know how to have fun.



But after almost seven months (five for Su) on the road we're a little road weary and are looking forward to some home time. And summers on the Canadian prairies are the best in the world, warm and dry. However, we have this compelling invitation to go sailing in BC in a month.... In the meantime, I...may...do a blah blah on the book which IS now done! I polished to my satisfaction the part I wasn't 100% happy with while in New York.

