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Voices

THE BEST OF ALL WORLDS: GOOD FOOD, NO NOISE

EAST SIDE OBSERVER

BY ARLENE KAYATT

Noiseless in NY ... No noise, NY? - Sounds like an oxymoron. Where to eat/dine in Manhattan where there's no noise from street traffic, cars, buses, bikes, parades, protests? Or sidewalk traffic where you have to navigate tables, chairs and constructed spaces for additional seating? Where you have to look out for bike lanes, for the sound of kids making it known that they're happy to be outside? Where dogs are happy to hit the concrete? City sounds are, for many, an impediment to dining on the street. Some prefer quiet, not much ambient sound; some call it noise. To others, a city without those sounds may seem like the suburbs - include me in that one. But there's a place right here in the heart of the city where you can dine and have the best of all worlds. Sounds will come mostly from birds, and traffic will come mostly from cars pulling in and out of parking spaces. Imagine being away from sound of the city's high decibel levels while dining? Happens.

So where to go to enjoy good dining and table talk? Simple. Head over to the Tudor City Steakhouse, located in that enclave of apartment houses and parks on the southern edge of Turtle Bay bordering Murray Hill which lies on a low cliff east of Second Ave. between



Chef Hakan Akbag (left) and Mirso of Tudor City Steakhouse. Photo courtesy of Tudor City Steakhouse

40th and 43rd Streets and overlooks First Ave., the UN, the East River. I'm embarrassed to say that, as a native New Yorker and city denizen, it took me almost a lifetime to figure out that you didn't have to climb the Sharansky Stairs on First Ave., opposite the UN, to get to Tudor City. You just had to cross Second and 43rd after you got off the M15 bus or told the taxi or Uber how to get there.

And when you get to the steakhouse, which is a short walk from Second Ave., there's seating along the sidewalk and in the street opposite the parks. And from the seating on the street bridge overlooking First Ave, you get to see the UN and the

East River. It's a perfect setting for good eating and quiet conversation. It's open all week from four in the afternoon until 10 PM. The staff is hardworking and attentive. You'll be greeted and seated and undoubtedly will see owner Mirso making the rounds of tables seeing that everything's in order and everybody's happy. The menu's standard steakhouse with \$15 cocktails. Mine was a heady Blueberry Mojito - right parts rum and mint and a heap of berries - and perfect for 7 o'clock sipping. And the best side dish/salad was the Peruvian Quinoa, a creation of the new young chef, Hakan Akbag. While I'll

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DÉJÀ VU ALL OVER AGAIN?

VIEWPOINT

Per Yogi Berra, we've learned very little over the last 40 years about dealing with the homeless

BY STEPHAN RUSSO

I had to do a double take when the headline in the news said the city had moved hundreds of homeless men and women into West Side hotels. The public outcry harkened back to an era decades ago when the city, desperate to find shelter beds, paid inordinate sums of money to unscrupulous SRO and hotel owners and "dumped" homeless people into neighborhoods literally in the middle of the night.

What the public was unaware of then (and seems to not have a clue about now) is that the State of New York has a "right to shelter" mandate requiring it to house those who find themselves without a roof over their heads. This includes New York City, where there has been little public conversation about the underlying causes of homelessness or the rationale behind the government's response. The issue will only become more acute as the pandemic lingers and there is an inevitable rise in housing evictions.

The mandate is the result of the 1979 landmark Callahan decision and ensuing consent decree issued by the New York State Supreme Court in 1981 in which the City and State agreed to provide shelter and board to all men who were homeless "by reason of physical, mental or social dysfunction." This right is also embedded in the



The Belleclaire Hotel on Broadway has been housing homeless men and women. Photo: Eden, Janine and Jim, via flickr

New York State constitution, which stipulates that the "aid, care and support of the needy are public concerns and shall be provided by the state..." (Homeless women were later included in the mandate.)

This has shaped homeless policy over the last four decades. The city currently spends over \$3 billion year on services and housing to individuals and families who have been displaced, often because of traumatic life events. In my mind, no municipality in the country is as caring and responsive to those in need (yes, there are imperfections) as New York City. This is a good thing.

Community Support

I come by this issue somewhat honestly. I've been an Upper West Side resident since 1975 and spent my entire working life creating programs for community residents. The majority of those years were spent at Goddard Riverside Community Center, a venerable settlement house on West 88th Street. I retired as the Executive Director in 2017. At Goddard Riverside we

successfully created a continuum of care for homeless people from street outreach to permanent housing - all of which was accomplished with considerable community support and input. We never shied away from the community resistance when we developed housing or introduced a new service. Transparency and good faith efforts to include the community were tools to overcome the resistance and win over our neighbors. We were trusted.

I took a hiatus from Goddard Riverside in the early 1990s and was in on the ground floor when the Dinkins administration created the Department of Homeless Services. I was the Assistant Commissioner for Community Affairs and spent many hours in front of neighborhood groups explaining city homeless policy and the need for different neighborhoods to share the responsibility.

Why this background and context? Simply, because I know this issue well. The recent uproar over the use of local hotels as shelters has

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