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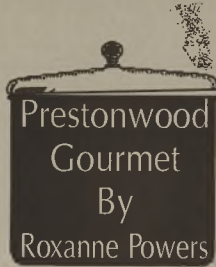


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No-show Al missed 'best of show' salmon



Our September dining experience at Prestonwood was to be shared with Al Phillips and his wife, Teri. However, about a half hour before time to leave for our dinner reservation, my oldest daughter Holli said, "I thought Al and Teri were going out with ya'll (ya'll being myself and husband James) to celebrate James' birthday and Teri's retirement as a flight attendant."

I absentmindedly responded, "Yeah, and I'll be doing the formal dining column on tonight's dinner." Holli chirped, "Oh well, I just saw Al drive by on his tractor."

I pondered this for a moment before replying, "You must be mistaken."

Holli, full of confidence, replied, "Nope. It was definitely Al." Now concerned, I asked, "A few minutes ago as in a few minutes ago, or a few minutes ago as in half an hour ago?"

Holli, seeming to understand the gravity of the situation but also seeming to find it irresistibly humorous, attempted to keep a straight face as she answered, "A few minutes ago as in 10 minutes ago."

When the phone rang minutes later, Holli couldn't resist eavesdropping. "Hello?"

"Roxanne this is Teri. You're not going to believe this..."

"Oh I might. Does this have something to do with Al's more stubborn side still being seated on the tractor?"

"Yes, How'd you know?"

"Never mind. It's okay if we're a little late. Listen Teri, just go outside with the Windex bottle and tell him he can get a shower indoors or out, that it makes no difference to us."

Sounding dismayed, Teri wailed, "Seriously, Roxanne, he's not going to do it. He says he's got to finish while he's got the help and the weather. Is it okay if just I come, or could you and James just go out for a romantic dinner or something? I'm so sorry, I hope we haven't ruined your evening, or you're not mad or anything..."

"Teri..."

"Of course it is okay if just you come. Of course it will have a great time."

"You're sure?"

"Of course I'm mad, but only at Al, so come on and let's go have a great dinner."

A short time later the three of us arrived at Prestonwood, only for James to run into someone he knows. They chatted for a few minutes before James turned to us and said, "Um. Look...uh, I've been

playing phone tag with this guy all week. We really need to talk. Would you two mind entertaining yourselves for about 45 minutes?"

"Who's? We'll just pretend to be acting in a segment of Home Improvement where Tim and Al forgot to show up!"

Deciding that this would be an excellent time for me to give Teri a grand tour of the Prestonwood facilities, we walked off to the workout room where we happened upon a man hard at work lifting weights. Feeling as if we were intruding, I hurriedly said, "This is the workout room. Now for the Jacuzzi."

The man smiled and pointed to the ceiling, his muscles rippling and gleaming admirably with the movement of his arm, and said, "Jacuzzi's up there."

A bit taken aback, I replied, "But that's the men's locker room!"

The man only grinned and drawled, "I'm not shy if you're not." Teri and I looked at each other, grinned and shrugged, and in unison said, "Why not?"

One hour and two bottles of champagne later, Teri and I met James in the formal dining room.

With the arrival of our first course, we were so impressed with the choreography of our waiters (three waiters came to our table and placed our courses in unison), that we indulged in a little choreography of our own. First we placed a bite of food on our forks and passed to the left, then we placed another bite and passed to the right.

For the first course, James' pistachio crusted breast of duck with a bramble berry compote won the taste test. While it is pretty much universally accepted that duck is almost always better served with a sweet sauce, it is also my opinion that it is better served with some kind of nut (watch it James!) and with something of color...in this case the bramble berry compote.

My spinach draped salmon with a tomato coulis won "Best of Show." The rectangular-shaped piece of

salmon was so neatly wrapped in a steamed spinach leaf that the chef must have used hospital corners, but most impressive was the play of color and texture between the deep green color of the spinach against the backdrop of vivid red tomato coulis. Teri had the red lentil risotto with bransioe crudités (box-cut raw vegetables) on a plate painted with oil infused with chives.

For the second course we didn't do much choreographing (or sampling of each other's soup), but James' classic onion soup gratin looked and, according to him, was delicious. Teri's Maryland corn chowder was predictably pale yellow in color but with a colorful infused oil drizzled over the top, it took on an added visual appeal, and Teri proclaimed the corn flavor in this creamy chowder to be so subtle that it left the taster wanting seconds. I had the harvest pumpkin soup which was good but tasted suspiciously like pumpkin pie that didn't set.

For the third course, Teri had the leaf spinach with sun-dried tomatoes and gold peppers with Bermuda onion and Valencia orange vinaigrette. James had the caesar salad prepared tableside. I know, I know...it's not original, but it's tried and true, and furthermore, no menu is complete without it. I had the ripe fruit with toasted hazelnuts and a warm brandy dressing. This dish was nicely presented with thin slices of honeydew fanned out in one direction and thin slices of cantaloupe fanned out in the other, topped and surrounded with bramble berries and drizzled generously with a warm and creamy brandy dressing.

Since Al Phillips loves a good paella, we couldn't help but think of him when we saw that this month's menu included a Mediterranean jambalaya with littleneck clams, shrimp, scallops, crayfish, calamari and angel hair. I believe it was at this point that Teri really began to miss Al and mused that the rock she usually wears on her left

hand might indeed make half of a decent set of earrings. Of course, in order to remain in good stead with Mrs. Al Phillips, he might need to come up with the other half of this set of earrings, and, of course, the rock on her left hand needs to be more carats than the rocks in her ears...so Al, old buddy, old pal, the way I figure it maybe you were here for dinner tonight after all, because it looks as if you have about six more carats you need to choke down.


Meanwhile, back to the entrees. James had the char-grilled Black Angus sirloin strips sliced and fanned on the plate and topped with a cracked peppercorn demi-glace with garlic roasted red potatoes and sweet peppers left undressed.

Teri had the cayenne pepper seared fillet of salmon served on a bed of sauteed string beans, topped and surrounded with a cucumber relish, with all resting on a plate painted with an infused chive oil and an oil infused with sun-dried tomatoes.

I had the roasted field quail with a wild rice dressing and Parisienne vegetables. I was a bit concerned that the wild rice dressing might be a little more "textured" than I would like, but I'm happy to say that it wasn't. The quail, too, was thoroughly enjoyed, so when the chef does his customary inspection of my plate to see for future reference what patrons didn't enjoy, he won't find much to inspect. He might, however, find a few of those carats what Al couldn't choke down.

Speaking of Al, I love ya, Al, but I hope you're squirming a bit over the champagne and jacuzzi thing. As for the rest of you who know Teri Phillips and Roxanne Powers and believed that nonsense for even a minute, "shame, shame, shame!"

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Soccer league gets green light to use Lumley Park

By Ron Page
For youngsters playing soccer, the Town of Morrisville will be the place to be. Town commissioners have agreed to permit CAMSA (the Cary, Morrisville, Apex Area Soccer League) to use the large open area at the rear of Lumley Park for practices.

Approval of the recreational area by the league of nine- and ten-year-olds came at the Sept. 25 meeting of the Morrisville Board of Commissioners. It was among a variety of projects acted upon by the commissioners.

The soccer league has been given a five-year use of the large area. Some landfill work will be needed to level the area into two playing fields. The town will retain use of the fields for other events that may occur.

In other town business, Oct. 23 was the date set for a public hearing on a request from Cary Montessori School, Inc. to consider rezoning about 30 acres of land off Morrisville-Carpenter Road from agricultural district to office and institutional district. The site is opposite the Morrisville Town Hall. The school wants to buy the site to build a \$4.5 million campus.

Approval was given to purchase an equipment truck for the fire department in the 1995-96 fiscal year. Cost was set at between \$210,000 and \$215,000. It was pointed out that the equipment was needed for the town to maintain and improve its insurance rating, and that funds for the new truck are included in the capital equipment reserve fund.

Appointments through August 1998 were made to the Planning and Zoning Board, the Board of Adjustment, and the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee.

Named to the Planning Board were Ray Ballentine, Scott

Berman (chairman), Janet Faulkner, Bill Hicks, Ralph Watkins, Eric Thompson was named alternate member.

Appointed to the Board of Adjustment were Raymond Broadwell, Henry Hooks (chairman), James Kochuk, Jack Walton and Richard White. Preston Edmonston and Kevin Skeen were named alternate members.

Nootley Jumonville was named to replace Chris Lawson on the Parks and Recreation Committee.

Action on other recreational subjects gave Stretch-n-Grow of America approval to start a Preschool Fitness Program at the Morrisville Community Center. The program encourages positive attitudes toward physical fitness for preschoolers.

"Art & Music Around the World" classes designed for children 3 to 5 were approved to be held at the Morrisville Community Center. It encourages children to explore different cultures through art and music.

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