

Birthday bash served up with friends, chefs surprise

Sometimes special occasions call for the company of special people. I am blessed to have many opportunities to blend the two. I kinda know that, but sometimes even the most fortunate people can forget just how blessed they are, to the point of naivete.

For instance, we recently shared a special evening with Marty and Gail Allen at one of our favorite hang-outs, which would of course be the formal dining room of the Prestonwood Country Club.

The four of us had been trying to coordinate our schedules for a dinner date for some time, and since I thought this was to be my 40th birthday celebration, I was especially pleased that they would be sharing the evening with us.

As it turns out, the formal dining room was having the unique experience of serving dinner to five individuals who were celebrating birthdays on this particular evening. Acquaintances Bob Lucas (we share a June 30 birthday) and his wife, Rose Mary, whose birthday is June 20, and Anna Lackey-Medlin, with a June 11 birthday, and her husband P. Tracy Medlin with a June 17 birthday, were celebrating at birthday tables.

We hope these other celebrators of

birthdays will forgive us for having indulged in about 10 minutes of juvenile behavior while we posed for candid shots taken by Marty.

All this playing caused us to work up some hearty appetites, and it's a good thing, for the menu was full of enticements. So much so, in fact, that if you're one of those people who are offended by bite-swapping in the formal dining room, you might not want to read on.

Gail opened the menu of the season with the Ricotta filled tortelloni with prosciutto and parmigiano reggiano. Marty was real proud of his herb-crusted sea scallops with a sundried tomato relish, but because he is even more proud of his photography, it wasn't terribly difficult to wrest a bite from his plate. What does one have to do with the other? Easy. All I had to do was threaten to turn over some of my photography to The Progress, and give him credit for them; for as I sweetly point out, so far as I know, copyright laws only protect people from having others steal their credit...not from giving it to them.

Truth be told, he was actually generous with tasteful offers this particular evening, and while I'm one of those people who prefer the smaller bay scallops over sea scallops, I



have to admit these were nice.

I guess if Marty got too upset with me for blackmailing him, he got over it when I, in turn, offered him one of my soft-shell crabs with a lemon buerre blanc. Certainly, this appetizer seemed to be the evening's favorite, though James' chilled shrimp cocktail with remoulade and a spicy tomato sauce offered some stiff competition.

Warm Vichyssoise was on the menu again; but this time I wasn't confused, (on this issue anyway) for I now know that Vichyssoise refers less to the temperature than to the potatoes in which it looked

delicious, I'm guessing that Marty was relieved that this time, no one asked him to share, because Gail and I were too busy talking and eating our pub cheese soup with panacetta, and James was busy nibbling at the white cheddar topping on his onion soup.

There was a time when my husband would get put out with me for being so predictable in my menu choices. (It seems to me that most restaurants have one or two menu choices they do *wonderfully*, and everything else on the menu is just so-so in comparison.) If those days weren't already gone, they would be now, because I've noticed a suspicious pattern with third courses; James almost always has the Caesar salad he enjoys so much, or the V.I.P. feeling he gets from tableside service, but now that I'm on to him, he can't pick on me anymore.

Gail's salad was so pretty with the combination of wild chicory, Mache, curly escarole, dandelion and rocket lettuce topped with a citrus vinaigrette, that I tried to convince her that it wasn't any good, but, unfortunately, she's not as innocent as she looks, so I just commenced to enjoying my curly spinach with toasted pumpkin seeds and a raspberry vinaigrette. I

enjoyed all but the pumpkin seeds, but James offered to recycle them in Gordon Rimmers' field so I could enjoy them this fall, so I let them roll around on my plate awhile longer.

Just as we were finishing our salads, I noticed some black crosses skirting the edge of the golf course right outside the formal dining room window. Try as he might, Edward Simpkins couldn't convince me that this wasn't his macabre way of trying to tell me something about turning 40. (He claims that they are squirrel proof bird feeders.)

For our main course, I had the lobster, which was good, but in retrospect, I wonder why I didn't follow the crowd and have the flambéed tenderloin of beef au poivre with a tawny port reduction, because I don't think I've ever met a reduction I didn't like. (Hmmm, I wonder if there's a little psychological play on words going on here.)

A few evenings later, James informed me that we were going back to the formal dining room for dinner. I didn't really want to go out again so soon, but he said that he wanted my real birthday dinner to be a romantic dinner with just the two of us, and that Chef Ed Kaminski had agreed to prepare a dinner of some of our favorite foods.

I gently scolded James for having asked that of Chef. I said, "James, he's not the Chef de cuisine, he's the Executive Chef. He's not even supposed to be here at that time."

James just answered nonchalantly, "Well, he said he didn't mind." Naively, I just shook my head at my husband's chutzpah, and thought to myself, "Wow! I can't believe Chef Kaminski would do this for me!"

Several hours later, when we entered the Club through the main entrance, and my ever-curious husband proceeded to step into the formal dining room bar where it was obvious a private party was being held, I whispered scoldingly, "James, don't go in there! Someone's having a private party in there!" James stepped back, and taking my arm, said, "It's okay, I'm just looking for Edward."

Reluctantly, I followed, and briefly glanced up as we stood just inside the door. Then, I did a double-take. These were all people I knew and loved, and, of course, this was the moment they shouted, "Surprise!"

Had I not still been so full from our dinner of a few nights before, I'm sure I would have caught on much sooner.



SUMMER LANDSCAPING—Participants in the 4-H "Summer of Service" program planted flowers near the Morrisville sign in the Shiloh community along N.C. 54 recently. The grant by IBM to the Wake County Cooperative Extension Services (of which 4-H is an arm) provided experiences for about 50 middle school students per day who worked on projects across the county. The youth who worked in the hot sun to beautify our area were, left to right, Brandon Hawkins, Kendra Addison, Charisse Jacobs, Matthew Swan, Nicole Weatherford, Laura Phillips, Robert Kaplan, David Wright and Tansley Lawrence.

Board okays vacation for Speicher

BY KATHY HIGGINS
A proposed contract to hire Carl Speicher and Speicher's Inspection Service, Inc. to assist the town engineer with infrastructure inspections brought on heated debate...the July 14 meeting of the Morrisville Town Board.

Town Manager David Hodgkins presented the contract, which included a salary of \$32 per hour, and provisions that Speicher would be paid \$48 per hour for every hour worked over thirty hours per week or worked on a Saturday or Sunday. The contract specified that Speicher would be paid a \$64-per-hour holiday rate and would get two weeks of paid vacation per year. He would also receive the same cost of living increase as permanent town employees.

Commissioner Silver-Smith argued that the town already had an "expensive" engineer. Hiring a person to do many of the same duties would be too expensive, he said. Silver-Smith objected to the provision in the contract that would give

Speicher two weeks of vacation "out of taxpayer money" when he is not a full-time town employee. Speicher is an independent contractor who will retain other part-time time jobs on the side.

Commissioner C.T. Moore objected, maintaining that the town would still come out ahead financially.

Commissioner Billy Sauls said the town engineer will continue to be overloaded with work as the town grows, and that another position would be necessary in the future anyway.

Commissioner Leavy Barbee said, "If you continue to overload a horse, he'll either lie down or walk off. We need someone with experience for this position, and you've got to pay for experience."

Silver-Smith replied, "We have an obligation to make the best deal for the town monetarily."

Hodgkins assured the board that most of Speicher's salary would come from collected inspection fees.

"We are bringing in over and

what will pay his salary in fees," he said.

Commissioner approved the contract with revisions, allowing for a \$32-per-hour salary with cost of living adjustments as necessary, and two weeks paid vacation.

Silver-Smith cast the lone dissenting vote.

Chamber dues to increase, Moseley next speaker

Chamber dues will increase this year, partly due to the decrease in funding from the Town of Morrisville. The new dues will go into effect after Oct. 1.

The chamber had requested \$24,000 from the Town of Morrisville, but received \$12,000 in its fiscal year 1997-98 allocation.

The new rate of \$165 per year plus \$1 per full-time employee and \$1 per unit of hotel, motel or apartment is an increase of \$9 from the \$156 base membership fee last year. Individuals will remain at \$75 per year, and nonprofits will stay at \$120 per year plus \$1 per employee.

N.C. Rep. Jane Moseley will be the speaker for the next Issues & Eggs breakfast Friday, Aug. 15 from 7:45 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. at Sorrento's.

Chamber Corner

Business After Hours will be held at Plain Paper Solutions the previous evening, Thursday, Aug. 14 from 5:30 to 7 p.m.

The chamber office will be closed Monday, Sept. 1 for the Labor Day holiday. Chamber Director Ray Lech will be on vacation from Sept. 2 through 5.

The Chamber Board of Directors meets the second Tuesday of each month at 7:30 a.m.

New members for the month of July are AAA Travel Agency, Ace Vending, American Institute for Financial Research, Bill's Barbecue and Chicken, Campbell

University—Raleigh Branch, David N. Williams, D.D.S., Duane K. Stewart & Associates, Morgan & Co., Inc., Sage Technical Services, Screenprint DOW, SMA Microsystems, LLC, and the Stephens Center.

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Coming Up at Wellington's

August 7 7:30 pm	Tim McLaurin reads from his new novel, <i>The Last Great Snake Show</i>
August 14 7:30 pm	<i>The Artist's Way</i> seminar with facilitators Jane Cook, MSW, CCSW and Jean Costa, MSW
August 19 7:30 pm	Dan Gearino reads from his new novel, <i>Counting Coup</i>
August 21 7:30 pm	Wellington's Readers Circle discusses <i>Independence Day</i> by Richard Ford

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