

Cottonwood Spring

City Club Dinner

Danny's fine-dining experience is somewhat limited causing a bit of trouble at the City Club.

ONCE AGAIN WE STOPPED at the car, this time to deposit our albums. When we arrived at the City Club, Governor Dewey's guests were waiting for us just inside the door.

"Sorry we're late, gentlemen. Felix surprised the boys with a gift of an autographed Jefferson nickel album. So we stayed a few minutes longer than planned to inspect the gift and give him our thanks. Didn't we, boys?"

He introduced us to Mayor J. Edwin Ellis and Foreign Service Officer Alvin Bentley. While I was reminded of Danny's *foreign sewer officer* faux pas, I decided not to mention it in such distinguished company.

The headwaiter led us to our table. After we were seated, Governor Dewey summarized all that Danny and I had accomplished and the resultant recognition we'd received over the past year. I was impressed by the elegant terms the Governor used to describe our achievements. Danny was impressed by the enormous pat of butter he managed to bury in a dinner roll before popping the whole thing into his mouth.

When our waiter handed each of us a huge menu, I opened mine and was dismayed. It read like Greek to me. Danny seemed to be experiencing the same trouble. He was evidently annoyed by not being able to order quickly, which was necessary to meet his need for frequent refueling.

"Boys, this menu is a bit confusing. If you like, I'll order for you. Do you both like beefsteak?"

We thankfully accepted Governor Dewey's assistance.

Within minutes, the waiter arrived with our soup course. As he placed it before us, he announced, "Vichyssoise, gentlemen."

Neither Danny nor I knew what that meant. By the sound of the word, I assumed it was some kind of *fishy* soup. To be honest, it looked more like the potato soup Mom made for us at home.

Naturally Danny was the first person to sample the soup. He deposited a giant spoonful into his mouth. Then he made an immediate withdrawal. That is to say, he redeposited the soup back into his spoon.

Frowning at Governor Dewey, he complained, "Hey! Somebody forgot to cook this soup."

Despite a valiant effort, the three men couldn't convince Danny that Vichyssoise was meant to be served cold. Danny turned to me and whispered, "It's just not safe to eat uncooked fish."

By this time, I had eaten about a third of my Vichyssoise and found it to be quite good. But not even my opinion mattered. The waiter came to Danny's rescue by suggesting an alternative, onion soup with a thick cheese-covered crouton floating on its surface. Danny's only condition was that it had to be fully cooked.

Fortunately Governor Dewey had inherited his mother's funny bone. Generally he found Danny's antics to be quite humorous. Frankly I was not always amused.

While Danny concentrated on licking every last molecule of melted cheese from his spoon, I decided to be sociable. Mayor Ellis was a likeable man and an old friend of Governor Dewey. The two of them chatted about the state of the city while I focused my attention on Mr. Bentley. This worked well, because once our dinner arrived, Danny was focused elsewhere.

During our conversation, I discovered that in 1940 at the age of 20, Mr. Bentley had received his bachelor's degree from Michigan. When the war broke out, he enrolled in the Turner Diplomatic School in Washington, D.C., after which he joined the diplomatic service at the State Department.

As a member of the Foreign Service, he had been posted in Mexico for two years prior to his current posting in Columbia. He regaled Danny and me with odd tales about Nazi Germany's forays into South America to stir up trouble for the Allies there.

Later I would learn that Alvin Bentley resigned from the State Department in 1950 and moved back to Owosso to prepare himself to run for Congress on the Republican ticket. In 1952, he was elected to represent Michigan's Eighth Congressional District in the U.S. House of Representatives.

In 1954, while on the House floor, Bentley was among five Congressmen who were shot by four Puerto Rican nationalists. Before being subdued by police, the four sprayed the chamber with 30 rounds from automatic pistols. Having taken a bullet in the chest, Bentley's wounds were by far the most serious, requiring months of recovery before he was able to resume his duties. At their request, the attackers were convicted of capital crimes and sentenced to death by electrocution. However, rather than allow them to become martyrs, President Dwight D. Eisenhower commuted their death sentences and the four were resentenced to a minimum of 70 years in prison.

We made it through the delicious meal without further incident. But, just before we were preparing to leave, Danny requested a doggy bag for the leftover bread. That may have worked out if Danny had been content with bagging only the bread remaining in the basket on *our* table.

Danny informed the headwaiter that his motto was *Waste not, why not?*

As he escorted Danny outside to avoid further disturbance to those at other tables, the headwaiter foolishly suggested Danny correct his wording of the old proverb. Danny took his revenge by helping himself to about two hundred *City Club* matchbooks from the huge fish bowl on the front desk.

As he begrudgingly dumped all but a dozen back into the bowl, he explained to the headwaiter, "For gosh sakes, they're just souvenirs for Grandma Compton."

Just after we had said good night to Mayor Ellis and Mr. Bentley and retrieved our items from Governor Dewey's car, Mr. Lund pulled up at the City Club. We shook Governor Dewey's hand and thanked him over and over for all he had done for us. After he gave us a big hug, we got into Mr. Lund's car.

We waved one last time and both of us withdrew into our thoughts to review all that had happened that day. Mr. Lund was busy negotiating Owosso's Saturday evening traffic. He didn't say anything until we had gotten out on the highway. "Tell me, boys. What did you do today?"

"Nothing much," Danny answered him. "How about you?"

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