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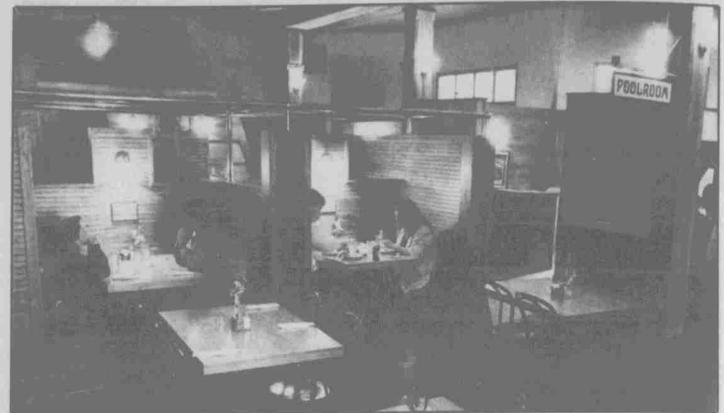
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Taste"



Paul Vonderlage/Diversions

My luncheon with Scott at Buchanans

By Charles Lieurance Diversions

hadn't seen Scott Harrah in over 24 hours and, I have to admit, I was a little apprehensive about the whole thing. I remembered how he was, but I wasn't fond of considering how he might be. There's nothing worse than seeing an old friend after so long and finding out he's driving a Volvo or preaching Amway. And Scott was susceptible.

I suggested over the phone that we meet for lunch at Buchanans in the Haymarket. For one, it was out of the way since money for rejuvenation has moved from this historic area to down (or is it updown?) town. Secondly, if any major change had occurred in Scott Harrah over the past day walking in the footsteps of Oscar Wilde in the Haymarket should jolt him back to his former glamorous self.

And I'd never eaten at Buchanans. I was seated in one of the booths you see above. The one to the right with the woman, the man and the bottle of ketchup. I came in and sat there about a half an hour after they left. Even the bottle of ketchup was gone when I got there.

Those women at the table on the left were still there. They must've ordered the Peking Duck.

I had some time to look around. There were two other people in the restaurant besides myself and the two women who ordered the duck. One was wearing a jump suit that had "Lincoln Dart Association" embroidered on the back. The other was a human legume. He was tapping his foot wildly to Lulu's "To Sir with Love."

Scott appeared in the doorway. He stopped to check his hair in one of several pioneer yoke mirrors that hung on the walls. The owners must know someone who wedges pieces of glass into the neck holes in antique yokes as a hobby. Scott must have thought he looked OK because he smiled at himself, licked his lips and joined me at the table.

Mr. Legume propped one leg up on the other knee and played his tibia like a set of congas to some old Stevie Wonder chestnut.

"I just had this dream" Harrah said. "I dreamt that a bunch of women ran up to me on the street dressed as unicorns and spread guacamole all over my body."

Twenty-four hours hadn't changed this man a bit. I'm glad some things in this universe are dependable.

"Good dream" I said. His teal-blue contacts glimmered the way a wood sprite's eyes might glimmer, if there were such things as wood sprites. Which there aren't. "I was reading where Jacqueline Susann had a lesbian affair with Ethel Merman," he tinued. (If you can call that co ...nuing.) "Picture that in your mind."

pictured i. It wasn't pretty. Well, there was one part that was

Then ' dreamed of blue turtles. Then I efocused on Harrah who sipped a Coke demurely.

The waitress came with two luncheon menus. There was nothing spectacular about them. Burgers. Some Mexican delights. Your usual sandwiches. Really reasonable prices.

I ordered a Swiss cheese and mushroom burger. Scott ordered a French dip, presumably because there were no flaming blueberry waffles on the menu.

Scott once told me how this performance artist in New York City named Karen Finley takes these blueberry waffles and other foodstuffs and, um, well, sticks them into...we're eating. Probably some kind of Freudian backlash.

Mr. Darts' foot is moving to Peggy March's "I Will Follow Him." Mr. Legume's head is bouncing back and forth.

"I wanna put on an orange fright wig, a feather boa, watch bad Joan Crawford movies, eat a spinach souffle, walk Afghan hounds wearing sequined gypsy vests down Broadway and just plain make a spectacle of myself!" Scott yawned.

The food came. It was a Swiss cheese and mushroom burger and a French dip sandwich. The waitress brought back the ketchup bottle you see in the photograph.

The hamburger was the best I've ever had. No joke. It was handmolded and charbroiled. Plenty of condiments, too. And there was that big pickle I never know what to do with.

Scott said his French dip was really good, too.

There was a commercial on the radio for a mail-order compilation album of Carpenters hits.

I sang along to the little bit of "Can't We Stop Hurting Each Other" the radio played. Mr. Legume shook

his foot. "I grew up on Sidney Sheldon books," Scott said, chewing quietly on his sandwich. He looked down, nodding and meditating.

"Any good?"

"Pretty trashy," Scott giggled. "My parents are real suburban," he continued.

"Like 'Bless This House' macrame and stuff?"

"And basset hounds."

The booth we sat in was quiet and secluded. I never could tell if the two women got their duck or not.

As we left, Scott said, "The only thing I regret about my past is the length of it."

He was quoting Tallulah Bankhead. My editor just told me to say something about the price range. It's hard to think of things so pragmatic when you're mulling over a Bankhead gem like the one Scott left me with, but here goes. The burger was \$3.75 and wonderful. The prices hung right around the \$4 area. That puts it generally under Chesterfield's and the hamburger beat Chesty's by a mile.

Sorry, Chesty's.

I gave myself one last look-see in the yoke mirror and left, wondering if I'd ever see Scott again.

I did, later that day. He told me his favorite country was Patagonia.