



Iron Gate 2.0 Yearbook
2009

In 1936, Jack Kriendler and Charlie Berns published the *Iron Gate*, a yearbook of sorts with articles and tributes to '21' Club written by some of its best-loved and most recognizable guests, including Damon Runyon, Ed Sullivan, Bill Tilden, Robert Benchley, Charles MacArthur, and Ben Hecht.

In 1950, upon Jack's passing, and the 20th anniversary of '21', an updated *Iron Gate* was issued with newly added entries by the likes of Robert Ruark, William Saroyan, Walt Disney, and Louella Parsons.

In honor of our approaching 80th anniversary on December 31, 2009, we hope you enjoy Iron Gate 2.0, a web yearbook. This idea came about after seeing Susan Lucci's recollection in the *NY Post* of her favorite NYC spots that included the first time she visited our wine cellar. Then a few days later during our Breakfast at '21' series, Suzy Welch shared an anecdote about her first visit with now-husband Jack, that it started with a drink at '21.'

This is an evolving project which will be updated when new favorite memories are submitted by our guests. Submissions are listed in the order received.

I really considered '21' as almost a second home and I still do...I first went with Toots Shor when I was a rookie with the Giants in 1952. I have been a regular ever since and proud of my close and affectionate relationship with so many of the people who work there and have worked there. The photo below was taken on the occasion of Pete Rozelle's (the late and great NFL commissioner) birthday...it includes the late David Mahoney (chairman of Norton Corp.); the late Bob Tisch (founder of the Loews hotel and resort chain); Herb Siegel, chairman of the Chris Kraft Industries; the late Jack Landry who started one of the most famous of all ad campaigns, the "Marlboro Man" ...and then there is Walter and me...



Frank Gifford

One of the most memorable of the many great times I've had at '21' occurred when Bob Dole and I gave a fund raising luncheon for the World War II memorial. The money was coming in slowly so Bob hoped some wealthy New Yorkers might give it a kick start. I persuaded Tom Hanks to fly in from Hollywood to help us and I also invited three Medal of Honor recipients from the New York area to join us.

We had an excellent turn out and as the luncheon got underway former Governor Hugh Carey presented the combat infantryman's badge to Walter Weiss, a favorite '21' waiter. He had served heroically in the war and no one was aware of that. The Wall Street guests sat up a little straighter and before the lunch was over we had raised nearly two million dollars. Dole quipped to me on the way out, "Not a bad hour's work!"

Tom Brokaw

I have many wonderful memories of times spent at '21'. Two that stand out involve a couple of my sons. In April of 1998 we had a wonderful time at '21' the night before Peyton was chosen as the # 1 pick in the NFL draft by the Indianapolis Colts.

The second time would be six years later the night of the NFL draft when Eli was the 1st pick in the draft and became a New York Giant.

These were special nights for our family.

Archie Manning

After winning Miss America in my early twenties, I moved to New York City from Denton, Texas. After co-hosting Candid Camera, I was hired as a sportscaster at CBS, and was becoming somewhat recognizable. Luckily, one benefit of that was getting 'good' tables at the city's hot spots, quite the big deal for someone hailing from a small town and new to New York.

My first date with my former husband, John Y. Brown, Jr. (later elected Governor of Kentucky) was at '21'. We just walked in without him having made a dinner reservation, and were seated in the middle section along the back wall.

I was thinking, "Can't this guy get a better table?"

He then confessed he was considering buying '21' and it really didn't matter to him where we sat! We laughed!

Phyllis George

I know the noted author, David McCulloch, from the Yale Club.

I was talking to him one evening at the '21' Club shortly after he wrote "John Adams," whereupon he was approached by a rather obnoxious character who wanted to impress David with his knowledge of John Adams. During his dissertation, he mentioned the "ABC" affair to which McCulloch gently responded, "I think you're referring to the "XYZ" affair and then added, "By the way, ABC is a television network."

It was the most precious put down I've ever witnessed.

James F. Gill

During the 29 years I served as President/Chairman of CARTIER - with my office just up the block at 52nd Street and Fifth Avenue - '21' became my personal neighborhood "cafeteria" where I lunched several times per week. In time, Sheldon Tannen and Bruce Snyder invited me to add to the collection of icons suspended from the ceiling by hanging something from CARTIER.

Their idea: "How about a big CARTIER diamond?"

My reply: "I don't think so."

In the end, we settled on hanging a giant-size replica of the CARTIER "Must" perfume case...which proudly remains suspended there to this day.

Ralph Destino

In the late 1960's, Lew Rudin took me to lunch at '21' Club – my first time ever through those hallowed doors. I was nervous. Was my tie straight? Was my hair combed? How will they really treat me? I met Jack Kriendler and Charlie Berns, and they were warm and gracious and they told me that I was welcome any time. I was from Brooklyn, and the restaurants I was used to were a long way from '21' Club. And I must say, I've had some wonderful meals with great friends and clients and always received gracious greetings by the owners and staff all these years.

Howard J. Rubenstein

I went in with my friends Shirley and Dick Clurman. We weren't expected and '21' set us up at a tiny table about the size of a dish plate near the bar. Pretty soon I realized why. The main room was rocking and crowded. Frank and Barbra Sinatra had a large round table in the center of the room with Tom Selleck and other biggies.

I never thought another thing about it and became engrossed talking to the Clurmans. They were a couple who knew everything including who'd done what to whom, and why. I often joked that they'd known Ghengis Khan when he was young. Then I became aware of a presence at my elbow and of Shirley, uncharacteristically silent, looking up with awe. I turned. My new "best friend," Sinatra, stunning in immaculate black-tie, was standing there. He said quietly, "Why didn't you come over to my table to say hello? Aren't you going to introduce me to your friends?" I stammered about how I hadn't wanted to intrude. I did introduce him and he chatted with us for a few moments. Then he bent down, kissed me and took off.

Everybody in '21' had a comment on this encounter. Walter, the famous headwaiter, said, "Well, I've seen a lot Miss Smith, but I never saw Sinatra go to anybody else's table before." I discovered I had a new cachet for being in the right place at the right place at the right time. I shuddered to imagine what would have happened if Sinatra and I had turned up in the same confined space during the years when we were *not* friendly. I thanked my lucky stars.

The Clurmans simply never got over it. They dined out on it for months. "We were with Liz and Frank Sinatra at '21' and Frank said such and such..." It's no wonder I love '21'. That night alone erased all the times I had tried, in my poverty-stricken youth in the fifties, to gain access through the bronze front doors and had been told to, "Beat it, kid." Or words to that effect.

Liz Smith – excerpted with permission from "*Natural Blonde*"

During the '70's and '80's, '21' had an annual Super Bowl party in the bar and on the second floor. Televisions were placed throughout the restaurant for patrons to watch the game. My parents, Leah Ray and Sonny Werblin would attend when they weren't at the game themselves.

In January of 1986, the colorful Chicago Bears were playing the New England Patriots. My parents invited my fiancée Pat and me to the '21' party along with the venerable sportscaster, one Mr. Howard Cosell. Now, Pat and I had a plan, at halftime we were going to announce to my parents that we were going to get married in the spring. Two things precluded us from making the announcement: gin and Mr. Howard Cosell! There was no way we were getting in a word, not about our impending marriage, the game, the weather or any other subject unless Howard stopped his stream of consciousness dribble, which he did not, even as the third quarter resumed.

After the game, we all repaired to the downstairs bar where the likes of Charlie Berns, Mr. Bruce, Walter, Shaker, and many of the "regulars" were there including Vonnie and Jack O'Brien, Anna Moffo and Bob Sarnoff, as well as David Susskind. Pat and I finally had the

opportunity to slip our plans to my parents. Word got out and before long, the room was toasting our impending marriage in true '21' style.

'21' has been home to three generations of Werblins on many special occasions and we wish the Club another 80 years of great times and fond memories.

Tom Werblin

Ever since my Dad would return from business trips to New York with tales of the former speakeasy with the ten dollar hamburger I have been under the spell of '21'. For many years now '21' has been the place I choose to celebrate my special occasions, none more special than my wedding to Anne Hearst in November, 2006. We were married in the Orchid Room in the company of our four kids, Maisie, Barrett, Randy and Amanda. Former Mayor Rudy Giuliani performed the service, with his wife Judith as our official witness. Turns out that former mayors maintain the right to perform marriages within the city limits and Rudy does a great service. Afterwards we all had lunch downstairs in the front room. I had the burger, in honor of my father, who's no longer with us, and while it cost a good deal more than ten dollars I think he would have approved.

Jay McInerney

I was standing at the bar early one evening, talking to my friend, Alan King, the great comedian. Not far from the bar, just a few steps actually, a gentleman was dining alone. When the waiter brought the main course, he slipped and the Sterno fell on the floor and flared up. It caught the trouser leg of the diner and set it on fire. I walked over and threw my drink on the flame and quickly put it out. The man went into a major rage and screamed at the poor waiter. He finally calmed down, came over to me, gave me his card and told me to call him if I ever needed a lawyer. He stormed out.

Alan King turned to me and said, "Kid, you hit the jackpot: if you're ever in trouble, he's a good man to know." I looked at the card which read, "Roy Cohn, Attorney-at-Law." Fortunately, I was never in that much trouble. I still have the card, though Roy is no longer with us. The waiter may still be in therapy.

Chuck Whittingham

My list of best restaurants in New York starts and stops with '21' but my fondest memory is the night my Honky Tonk band played a party there. The best part was the look on Shaker's face. Nothing fazes the pros who greet you and take care of you at '21' but his jaw dropped when he saw me stroll in wearing my cowboy clothes and realized I was part of the band!

Bob Schieffer

My First Visit

Having just completed four years in the U. S. Marine Corps. (1963 - 1967), my first paycheck as a civilian for two weeks work (after tax) was \$230.15. I had heard that '21' was a U.S. Marine "friendly place". I took the check to the bank and cashed it on April 4, 1967 and went to '21' for dinner. I met Bob Kriendler at the door and was warmly greeted as a fellow Marine. I had such a great time that I walked out after dinner with \$25.00 remaining! A paycheck well spent!

I have been going back ever since celebrating many happy occasions. Never had a bad meal, poor service, or an unsatisfactory martini. And they hang the Marine Corps flag in my honor each visit.

Semper Fi!

Dick Torykian

Knowing that the most stylish place in any town for any meeting is '21', I scheduled an interview for a Board of Director's appointment to The Children's Health Fund founded by songwriter Paul Simon and world-renowned Dr. Irwin Redlener. My interview was to be with Jane Pauley and Mayor David Dinkins.

No sooner did we sit down than Mayor Dinkins reminded me that our first meeting, after introducing myself to him, I said, "What do you do?" and he said, "Well, actually I'm the Mayor." In spite of his remembering of that fifteen year old event, Jane and Mayor Dinkins were kind enough to overlook my shortcomings, probably because of our mutual respect for and enjoyment at '21'.

Thanks to our friends at 21 for "making me look good."

Happy 80th Anniversary! Best wishes for continued success.

Samuel "Skip" A. Keesal, Jr

I was a young single woman living in New York City struggling to make it as an actress. I sold my first book "New York on \$5 a Day" and actually got a job as a writer for a major ad agency. To celebrate my bosses took me to the '21' Club downstairs. At first I thought they made a mistake taking me to the bar but then I learned. I was on my way. Later John A. Gambling and family invited our family to join them for the annual '21' Club Christmas celebration with the Salvation Army performing. That was the beginning of the 80s and we have been coming back for many Christmases ever since.

Joan Hamburg

Aside from home, my two favorite places in the galaxy are Fordham University and the '21' Club. As a former history major, I have always enjoyed research and nothing pleased me more than to learn that Jack Kriendler dropped out of Fordham's Pharmacy School to open "Jack and Charlie's" in or around 1930. Needless to say, Jack probably decided it was more profitable to mix Southsides and Sidecars versus flu medicine and thus the greatest saloon was opened with a Fordham influence.

Fast forward to 2007, the Fordham football Rams won the Patriot League Championship in their 150th season playing pigskin. I had the clever idea of asking Bryan and Roger if they minded a little local college color by hanging a Fordham football helmet from the ceiling. Well, I should have known that Bryan has some Maroon blood in him (and Roger is no less a gentleman!) and faster than you can say "Vince Lombardi and the Seven Blocks of Granite," the helmet was hung over my favorite table!

Now, whenever I take my wife to "the numbers" and we are seated near the helmet of my choice, Susan does everything in her power to stop me from singing Fordham's Fight Song!

Go Rams!

John J. Pettenati

Without question '21' Club is a first class house of communication and is my kind of place. There is always someone at the next table, across the room or among those coming or going that you know or know of. The entire scene echoes images of the great *New Yorker* cartoonist Peter Arno, a '21' regular who drew on the flavor of the diners and imbibers who enriched the scene and who felt so comfortable in the "numbers" ambiance.

Of the many drawings and paintings I've done of '21' over the years, I'd like to cite a favorite of mine: an autumn mid-afternoon, a post lunch exterior with a flushed faced President Richard Nixon departing the Club for his purring limo curbside. Due to the alphabetical storage system

in the celebrated '21' Club wine cellar, my personal selection of wines are reclining in the bin next to Nixon's.



LeRoy Neiman

The '21' Club has held a special place in Meigher family traditions for several generations. I well remember my first visit to '21', when my dad and my uncle Bill Connor "toasted" (with Manhattans and a Mickey Mouse) my 8th birthday after a Yankee game. We'd only been seated for a few minutes when my boyhood hero, Mickey Mantle, walked in for dinner with Whitey Ford. Wow – even at 8 years old, I knew this was a pretty cool place to be.

Years later, while I was a publisher at the old Time Inc., I became a "regular" at '21'. I would

purposefully arrive earlier than my luncheon companions, just so I could chew-the-fat with Pete Kriendler and listen carefully to his sound life advice, and his marvelous tales of past generations. Pete was the real deal – a genuine man’s man. He had huge mits, with a smile to match and they immediately enveloped you into his legendary “family saloon”. One day, totally out of the blue, Pete asked me how my mother, Denise Todd, was doing. I reeled as Pete recalled playing tennis in the 1930s with my mom, “Denny”, and Bud Abbott (of Abbott and Costello!), Pete looked me dead in the eye and said, “She had great gams, kid.” I can’t say if I was more embarrassed or shocked, but I sure was thrilled that he’d even remembered. Go Mom!

More recently, both of our daughters, Elizabeth and Amanda, celebrated (and then some!) their 21st birthdays respectively with parties for their friends from school and college. So they, too, are now happily a part of the ever inclusive ‘21’ family. And all of us sing along (sort of) every Christmas Eve with the Salvation Army Band, embracing yet another slice of ‘21’s rich tradition and heritage. As Pete, or Charlie, or Jack probably said once or twice back in the beginning: “It’s a pretty swell saloon.” Little did they know.

Christopher Meigher

Pete Kriendler was a guest of my wife, Mickie, and me during a ten day trip to Europe in 1984. Several members of the international Coca-Cola system’s leadership were part of the traveling group. After a few days at the Ritz in Paris, we attended the Opening Ceremony of the Winter Olympic Games in Sarajevo.

A few weeks after we returned to the U.S., Pete gave a party for the group in an upstairs dining room at ‘21’. We were all having a good time, and during the course of the meal, Charles Millard, who was the head of the Coca-Cola Bottling Company of New York, said to Pete (who was charging \$2.00 for a 6 ½ ounce bottle of Coca-Cola): “That’s an outrageous price, Pete.”

Pete responded: “Charlie, we consider Coca-Cola to be so dear and so special, we did not want to demean the brand by selling it too cheaply.” We applauded Pete ... and had a great evening!

As I look back over the last 60 years, Mickie and I, and now our grown children and grandchildren, can count many happy milestones which were celebrated – and continue to be celebrated -- in that special place.

Don Keough

If ‘21’ were open only for dinner-- not lunch, there is a real possibility NFL games (including Giants and Jets) would still be carried only on radio. Well, that might be a slight exaggeration but the late Pete Rozelle negotiated many of our early League-wide TV contracts with sports network heads such as CBS’s Bill MacPhail and Roone Arledge of ABC over long (did I stay “long?”) lunches at ‘21’ in the 60s and 70s. After they made their handshake deals, Pete would graciously offer to charge those meals (both food AND drink in those days) to his house account

which only was appropriate since he had just taken millions in TV fees from the Big Shots at the networks. I know he was not the only one but... Pete often referred to '21' as his "back office" for all the business he did there. Some back office!

Joe Browne, Executive Vice President, NFL

First let me tell you how I have always felt at home in that classy house named '21'. Many a pleasant night spent there with my wife and my good friend Peter Kriendler, that wonderful New York gentleman. I miss that fellow very much.

Now for an unforgettable story-at least for me:

One night at 21's upstairs room we were there to celebrate Pete's birthday (I forget which – might've been his 75th.)

Anyway, there were many fine people there – all of them regarded as a friend of Pete's. Pete sat me in between Earl Wilson, the columnist for the *Post* (on my right) and Victor Potamkin, the famed car salesman (on my left).

Well, here's the scene and how it unfolded: Potamkin, ever the trickster, took a one dollar bill out of his pocket and asked Wilson to examine it...he said to Wilson, "Take a good look – it's just one dollar, right?"

"Right," said Wilson.

Now Potamkin takes the dollar in his two hands and wrinkles it while saying the magician's words – "Abra Ka Dabra."

Potamkin then opens his hands where you see a round crinkly ball, supposedly the dollar. He (Potamkin) takes real slow steps in straightening out the dollar. He hands it over to Wilson to finish taking all the wrinkles out.

Wilson looks at the "dollar" and is amazed at what happened to the dollar – he shows it to all – and by golly, it's not a dollar but a big, fat lusty \$ 100 bill.

After the oohs and ahs, Wilson puts the hundred in his pocket without any thought of giving it back. He kept it and the trickster, Potamkin was out a hundred bucks!

Bill Gallo

A few years ago, following the sale of our family firm, Lebenthal & Company, my siblings and I decided to have a roast for our father. Jim Lebenthal has been known to New Yorkers for decades and loves '21' so it was the obvious choice to hold the event. The only trouble was that it was a surprise. We had to somehow get Dad up to a private room with a ruse. He had been speaking at a municipal bond trade association event earlier that day so the head of the organization agreed to invite him to a "special speakers dinner" on the 3rd floor. When Dad came into the room he recognized all of his friends but was confused because it wasn't the group he expected. He stood there and said "I think I am in the wrong room," not connecting the fact that all these people he knew wouldn't have been there for anything else but him. We all laughed and then moved into the room for dinner. Everyone prepared wonderful, hysterical tributes to him and it was the perfect evening to celebrate him. Over the years I've been to '21' so many times it feels like home. My annual December "ladies who don't -lunch" in the wine cellar, the breakfast series, lunches, dinners and cocktails, but the roast for Dad was the most memorable.

Alexandra Lebenthal

It happened back in 1965 when I, a rather callow young fellow from Columbus relatively new to New York, was invited to attend a meeting at the restaurant of the now-defunct Ohio Society. Although there were scores of VIPs on hand that evening, Jerry personally took time out to introduce me to a number of the greats and near-greats on hand -- luminaries like Walter Cronkite, Cassius Clay, Jimmy Connors, and many others. Needless to add, the experience left a deep impression on that dazzled young man.

It was a most gracious and generous gesture on his part as I was launching my career in the Big Apple and a moment I will never forget.

Bob Dilenschneider

Back in the 1960s, the New York Jets used to have an annual outing for the news media at Monmouth Park race track. But it began--glamorously, to me--with Breakfast at '21'. One of the Jets' owners was Sonny Werblin, the impresario, who was a '21' regular. So we'd have our bloody Mary's and caviar and a three-piece band would play Broadway classics. Then, one of '21's white jacketed waiters would join us on the bus and mix drinks all the way down to the Jersey Shore while the band played on.

But it was that one-hour start at the restaurant that set the tone, and I remember it as a part of a vanished New York.

Gerald Eskenazi

While this is the story as to how I got “my table”, it is more about the warmth and atmosphere created by the owners of ‘21’ (the family) that set it apart from other restaurants in the city.

I had become a regular patron of ‘21’ by the mid 70”s. Unlike other regulars, I liked to sit in “Siberia”. The captains and waiters rapidly became friends.

In October of 1981, New York magazine did a feature article on ‘21’ with Pete, Jerry and Sheldon on the cover. In the body of the story, they had a diagram of the bar room and titled it “the power positions in the bar” There were customer names listed on both sides of the diagram. The names on the left largely occupied tables in the first bay and arrows pointed to their tables. The names listed on the right, however, mostly had arrows pointing to preferred tables in the center bay. The one exception was my name next to my regular table, #53.

The next time I was in for lunch, I kidded Pete, Jerry and Sheldon that I was their aesthetic balance as in the diagram they needed someone who actually sat in “Siberia”

Having forgotten the whole thing, I was in for lunch a few weeks later. I was at my table awaiting my guest when Pete, Jerry and Sheldon came over. One of them said, “Frank, we want you to know that you are more than an aesthetic balance here at ‘21’ “. As he said this, Sheldon reached over and removed a napkin that I had not noticed on the banquet behind me. He unveiled a bronze plaque stating “Frank Polk – his table.”

To this day the plaque remains at table #53. It is the kind of touch that makes ‘21’ special.

Frank L Polk, Jr

The blackout that took New York by surprise, one night between five and seven o’clock...that is the lights went out as we were sipping our gin and tonic’s in the Tycoon horseshoe at ‘21’. I was with a p.r executive from a giant company. We met for a drink at ‘21’ to gossip and catch up from time to time. During one early evening, the city’s electric power went out, and one by one, lighted candles were brought to each table. The room got merrier and more talkative, as we sat in the shadows with the vast collection of miniatures suspended from the ceiling. We were all in this together. ‘21’ by candlelight was lovely, and an adventure to add to my memory book.

Terry Mayer

Ruthi and often enjoy an early dinner at ‘21’ after a Saturday matinee at the theater. We both enjoy a lobster salad but her tastes tend to be more eclectic and you can count on her to try anything.

I have been coming to '21' since the 60's and enjoy being made a fuss over. That what it's all about. Maybe that's what life is about.

Governor Brendan T. Byrne

I've been to the '21' Club so often in the last quarter century that it's difficult to select one or even a few most memorable moments. What I do know is that I never had a meal I didn't enjoy, with the possible exception of the two or three at which I was called upon to address audiences during the '21' Breakfast Series. That's a daunting experience because most of the people you're talking to know more about your subject than you do.

It's a very distinguished Club.

Governor Mario M. Cuomo

My attachment to '21' goes back more than fifty years when I was in college. My Dad and Charlie Berns were good friends and I, as recipient of that relationship, was the only freshman at Dartmouth with a room decorated with giant dummy bottles of Ballentine Scotch courtesy of '21' Brands. My first "official" visit to '21' during those years was very brief. Chuck Andersen took one look at our rag-tag bunch of college boys and ushered us right out the door.

I began the long journey from the bar to "my" table in 1961. After graduate school, I began my career at Revlon, then around the corner at 666 Fifth. My boss would occasionally take me for a drink after work and we would stand at his favorite spot at the end of the bar by the entrance. Lots of pretzels, cigarette smoke, Scotch & branch water, and a brass bell that hung there, that he would ring to call for another round.

Over the years I "graduated" from drinks to table and counted among my acquaintances, Chuck, Monte, Peter (maitre d'), Walter, Henry, Terry, Bruce and, of course, Jerry and Pete. Bob Kriendler, at a Christmas gathering, requested, in no uncertain terms that we depart, as one of the group rested his weary head on the table.

I remember New Year Eves, resplendent in white tie and tails, courting various lovelies, my son's and daughter's coming-of-age parties in the Winchester and Jack Rooms, attending my childhood friend's wedding in the Puncheon Room during which he announced his bride's pregnancy, my on-going monthly lunches with my dear friend Tom Werblin, and most of all the lunches, dinners and special occasions with my lovely Debbie for over three decades.

I manufactured *Parfum '21'* for a number of years, not one of the major items at the cigar stand as it turned out, but much fun. Bruce's son got my son's electric trains when my son Marc grew out of them. He and my daughter-in-law joined us for dinner for my birthday in December 1990 and just barely missed delivering our granddaughter in the bar room.

Although today's dress code has changed, *Sheldon must be appalled*, the menu still runs to the classic, old friends gone and newer, Bryan and Roger, continuing the special ambiance, '21' is our very special place.

It has nearly been a life-long love affair and will continue to be in the years ahead. "Thanks for the Memories."

Bob Jaffe

My favorite '21' Club memory would have to be when I sold my advertising agency, Font & Vaamonde, to Grey Advertising in 1993. We had a party for all our employees to celebrate this accomplishment and it was a very special day for everyone. Year after year I return to the '21' Club because the minute I walk through the doors I feel at home. The staff is without a doubt the best in New York. The memories are many, but this would have to be one of the most memorable for me.

Pedro Font

'21' Club holds a special place for me. Some 30 years ago, I was telling my godfather, Joe Hagerty, that I was disappointed in him as a godfather, never receiving gifts or a card. The next day I received two gifts from him. In his note he said I would appreciate one more then and the other more in the future. The first was a check that was the equivalent of one week's salary. The second was an "S" taken from a truck from his company "***The Sicilian Asphalt Paving Co.***" and he told me there were on a few of them left. His children and sister had one each, and I had one and the last one was hanging above the bar at '21'. I did love the check at the time but when Bruce Snyder pointed out the "***S***" to me many years later and every time I see in the Bar Room I think of my godfather and what a great friend he really was.

John F. Hennessy III

In my world '21' is synonymous with the most august of organizations – the "Skeeters". For over 57 years the Skeeters have watered and dined at '21'. The Skeeters are an invitation only collection of gentlemen of achievement whose only ostensible reason for being members is to enjoy life in each other's company at various race tracks, sporting events and banquets. Such luminaries as football great Paul Hornung, baseball legend Rusty Staub, the great writer Gay Talese, the Cummins boys – President Jerry and Dick, Governors Carey and Byrne, our esteemed scrivener John Hennessey, the great Joe Cohen, Knight of the British Empire Bill Flynn, Sportsman Tim Rooney, raconteur Marty McLaughlin, et al. epitomize the spirit of 21 particularly at our annual black tie dinner in the Remington Room. Class, style, great stories and jokes plus a wonderful joie de vivre characterize these gatherings. One can easily imagine a

similar gathering over 50 years ago with Damon Runyon, Bill Tilden, Ed Sullivan, Robert Benchley, and Ben Hecht in attendance. The spirit of those early days of 21 survives very well to this day and there is no better example than our contemporary "Skeeters" continued attachment to 21.

William F. Plunkett Jr

We live in an era of fancy clubs with velvet ropes and V.I.P rooms that separate anybody of importance from the common man. The '21' Club was different. Throughout its history, '21' was a meeting place where celebrities stood toe to toe with your average New Yorkers who got to rub elbows with the special people at '21'.

One of my fondest memories at '21' was the night my wife, Dickie, and I were having dinner with Mayor Wagner and an unaccompanied Frank Sinatra. Mayor Wagner and I were deep into a long (and probably boring) political discussion. Frank Sinatra was left to entertain my wife for an hour or so. I looked over at one point and Frank is spoon-feeding rice pudding to my starry-eyed wife. Frank turns to me and says "Don't worry Gerry, it's the best rice pudding in the world."...And it was.

Over the years, if I ever needed to find someone in a hurry, there was a good chance I would find them at the end of the bar at '21' at 5:30. This was the place where business was conducted; good friends met and enjoyed each other's company; where special nights began.

'21' Club was also the spiritual home of one of the great do nothing organizations of all time – the Skeeters. Founded in 1951 by Ted Husing, its charter states:

"Following a course opposite to custom, there are no by-laws, rules and regulations or formal declaration...no causes or good intentions, no politics, no competitive jealousies or credos.

It is an organization which exists because of the affection each member holds for all other members. It feeds on enjoyment of exclusive companionship during visits to various race tracks, sports events and at banquets."

To honor the Skeeters who have passed on, we hope to continue this illustrious tradition of doing nothing but enjoy each other's company. These members include: Toots Shor, Ed McMahon, Bob Considine, Sonny Werblin, Paul Screvane, General Jimmy Doolittle, Pete Rozelle and Humphrey Bogart. They have moved on to another watering hole.

Gerald Cummins

My family and I have been regulars at the '21' club for more than thirty-five years. We have had many enjoyable experiences at '21' and I offer one family reflection that might possibly be of interest.

One evening in the early 1980's my family and I were having dinner at '21' with my associate Laurance S. Rockefeller and his wife Mary. My young daughters were very impressed with the Remington art and particularly with the ceiling in the Bar Room.

Peter Kriendler was talking with us when my very young daughter said, "we really like your house Mr. Rockefeller." Peter, who was a great friend, laughed and agreed. He said, "Mr. Rockefeller has a nice house and many good friends."

Clayton W. Frye, Jr.

One of my fondness memories of being at '21', was an evening having dinner upstairs.

Bob Hope walked into the room! Everyone in the room turned and looked at him and immediately broke into applause! We all felt like we knew him. Certainly we all knew who he was and the tremendous joy he bestowed on our troops for many years.

I have seen many, many famous people at '21', but this encounter was special and certainly memorable.

Gwen Widell

Groucho comes to '21'

One evening in early winter of 1975, I was sitting upstairs in the dining room at '21', enjoying the company of several out of town clients. Suddenly, there was a flurry of activity marked by a small but apparently familiar group arriving for dinner. With that, the adjacent table was blessed with, among others, the unmistakable presence of a certain Groucho Marx. After the usual pleasantries etc. Groucho started in on the menu. He appeared slightly flustered and began delivering assorted comments about the Sunset Salad, Chicken Hash and a variety of other traditional items on the menu that did not appear to be of his liking that particular evening.

The waiter approached and with a sudden change of attitude, Groucho asked him if he had frogs' legs. The waiter replied that of course they had frogs' legs. Groucho took a pause and then looked at the waiter again. He took a shallow breathe and indicated that the waiter did not seem to understand his question. The waiter couldn't figure out what the problem could be and restated his original response that, in fact, '21' could find an order of frogs' legs in the kitchen for Groucho. With his signature smirk and slouch, he looked at the poor waiter and indicated that he didn't think he had to go that far to get the frogs' legs. With that, Groucho

asked the waiter to come a bit closer. He pointed at the waiter's trousers saying that he wanted to know if the waiter had frogs' legs. The waiter continued to be overly proper yet quite dumbfounded. With that Groucho leaned over, grabbed the cuffs of the waiter's trousers, raised them to his calf and stated that the waiter appeared to have frogs' legs although they were the first set he had ever seen with garters attached. By this time, the majority of the tables in the room were being thoroughly entertained. Finally, even the waiter cracked a smile. Needless to say, and true to form, Groucho loved an audience and he certainly had one that evening.

Peter B. Dott

Does consummating a pseudo-marital event on the banquette along the west wall qualify? The girl was Academy Awardee Joan Fontaine of "Rebecca" and "Suspicion" fame. But from that day at lunch 30 years ago, Joan Fontaine would be Joan Lebenthal. Let me explain. Do you remember the Lebenthal municipal bond ad campaign in which celebrities changed their last name to Lebenthal? Joan was the first to splash it across the business pages of the New York Times, "I'm Joan Lebenthal. You may know me as Joan Fontaine, but to Lebenthal I'm one of the family." Nobody in Hollywood quite caught on that the ad was about treating the customer like family and not just an overblown social note. But Joan decided that if she was going to be mistaken for Joan Lebenthal, and I her fourth husband, we'd better learn how to use a knife and fork, and off we went to '21.' "Darling, you are to think of '21' from now on as our club. Now try to keep the martini in the glass." My hand still shakes with excitement. And I live in a delusion of grandeur. I think I'm Jim Lebenthal. But I'm seated like Mister Fontaine.

Jim Lebenthal

While I can't say I am one of those generational regulars '21' has been serving since the 1930s, it was with a great deal of paternal pride that I took my two sons to the restaurant the first time. My older son was of drinking age, my younger son not quite (at least by NY State standards), and they dressed well for the occasion, escorting their mother through the iron gates and bronze doors to be greeted by Oreste Carnevale like young royalty. Dazzled by the corporate toys on the ceiling and ravenous for the basket of bread, the bay scallops, the Dover sole, the pommes soufflées, and the venison we were served, they ate like veterans and took in everything around them in the whirl of guests arriving and departing, the captains and waiters pivoting between tables, and the trip down to the secret wine cellar. By the end of the evening, they were as smitten by the same wonderful idiosyncrasies and eccentricities of the place as I had been at their age. Years later, just last week, I mentioned '21' to my older son, and he smiled and said, "I love that place! I haven't been back there for a while," spoken as if he'd been prodigal in not being more a regular, giddy with the thought of returning.

John Mariani

It has been close to 50 years since I had my first lunch at '21'. I was a guest of my boss, a very colorful p.r. genius who patiently explained to me the nuances of why we had the best table in the house despite the fact it was smack by the kitchen door. Over the ensuing years I estimate I've been there 500 times, celebrating a birth or engagement, discussing business, mourning a loss, wooing a dame or just laughing with pals. I've often drank too many fine bottles of wine and always eaten very well at '21'. I've been hugged and welcomed by Pete, Sheldon, and Jerry (always "Mr. Peter," "Mr. Sheldon," and "Mr. Jerry"), and Bruce and always treated like a returning prince. There has not been one time I did not feel honored to enter '21' as those doors were swung open for me. And I cannot remember any time I did not leave '21' feeling much better because of it.

Bill Tomicki

I am told that my mother was catered in the hospital by '21' – so I started early in 1967. Later – I remember sitting on two phone books, then 1 then 0 to be able to sit the table and see the plate! My only regret is that I can no longer sing Dixie at Christmas!

George Brokaw

And the love affair with 21 continues!

Dickson and I started our CIA 45th reunion week in NYC with a lavish Park Avenue party with lots of our old friends, then lunch with Jacques Pepin at the French Culinary Institute, followed by a Bacchanalian feast at '21' with artist and friend of '21', LeRoy Neiman and his wife Janet, friends from Oklahoma City, of course, Robert Dickson, and a surprise visitor from Oklahoma City bearing a 6 liter 1985 Chateau Haut Brion; we closed the restaurant with lingering memories of another great pairing of friends, food, wine, and now my friends at '21'.

Chef John Bennett

For me, the '21' Club means safe harbor, great food and good company. As an adventurous little girl I enjoyed running away from my babysitter-du-jour at top speeds on a regular basis near '21's engaging entrance.

My father decided something had to be done. He took me to '21' Club and made a point of marking out the jockeys, giving me his club number to memorize and telling me to see Mr. Dinan if I ever got lost. He would make sure I was fed, Shirley-Templed and sent home.

Many years later, my homing pigeon sensor still goes up just in time to arrange drinks or dinner with friends and the world's business leaders.

Camilla Webster

Purchase of '21' Club by Orient-Express Hotels

Back in June of 1995 I was contacted by the New York investment banking firm of Furman Selz who said that the owner of '21' Club, Marshall Cogan, had decided to sell the property and they felt Orient-Express Hotels would be the ideal buyer.

Marshall Cogan was a delightful New Yorker who had suffered some difficulty in his auto body manufacturing business so had decided to sell off some of his other activities like '21' Club, which he had acquired in 1986, to compensate.

Discussions continued through the summer and on August 14th I met with Cogan and the Furman Selz people in Cogan's office in Manhattan and agreed to buy '21' for \$23 million. Marshall claimed that he had a higher offer from Las Vegas interests but preferred to sell to us. I was very pleased with the deal because it gave Orient-Express Hotels a prestigious presence in New York City.

This iconic business became part of Orient-Express Hotels once a new liquor license was granted on November 29 1995.

James B. Sherwood, Founder and Director of Orient-Express Hotels