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Weekend Edition

# TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL

## Dining for a cause under the shadow of Martello Tower

A lot of ingredients go into fine dining; there's the food, of course, and its preparation. Then there's the presentation, the atmosphere and the company in which you're dining.

Last week, we were invited to a benefit dinner at the Dufferin Inn's San Martello Dining Room in West Saint John. This is an ace place; they got everything right.

For starters, it's an historic home, the former residence of John B. M. Baxter, a Conservative politician who made a lasting imprint on the community. It has been dutifully restored by the current proprietors, Axel and Margret Begner, who live there with their young son Mario. They run it as a cosy inn and stunning dining experience. It's a hidden jewel, I guess the comparison that springs to mind would be Rothesay's popular Shadow Lawn.

The occasion was a benefit dinner for the Canadian Liver Foundation. We have a personal interest in this because



FRED  
HAZEL

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Helen Quinlan, sister of my wife Alma, succumbed to liver disease a few years ago. So there we were, hanging our coats in the old-fashioned cloakroom of San Martello and mingling with the likes of New Brunswick's Lieutenant-Governor Marilyn Trenholm Counsell, who had driven through one of the season's last snowstorms (we hope) to be there.

She, by the way, is an extremely classy lady. New Brunswick is fortunate. I've been in her presence a few times and she never fails to impress. A medical doctor, a former elected member of the Legislature, she always knows

the right things to say in her many appearances as the Queen's representative. I couldn't help comparing her to a recent Maclean's Magazine article which described Canada's Governor-General Adrienne Clarkson as "Simply The Best." I believe our New Brunswick representative stands out as our very own "Simply The Best."

She spoke briefly of her "great respect and enormous appreciation" of the work of the Liver Foundation, adding that "we need to work hard to educate people to the many causes of liver disease and promote the message of organ donations. Your cause is a wonderful thing and anything I can do as lieutenant-governor to support you, you can count on me. That's why I'm here tonight."

Not empty words from a woman who had risked a drive from Fredericton in one of the season's last and most treacherous snowstorms and much appreciated. I guess that's why she got serenaded with a

chorus of *When Irish Eyes Are Smiling*.

Yeah, it was that kind of an evening, warm, friendly, in a good cause, and in the superb dining ambience of the West Side's San Martello.

We started out with a splash of Champagne in kirsh, a popular German cherry brandy. Then it was in to a seven-course meal, which, as I remember, went like this: Honey-mustard-marinated duck breast with garden greens, followed by saffron-flavoured velvet Champagne soup, pan-seared smoked salmon with jasmine rice, passion fruit menthe sherbet and then the main course - milk-fed lamb in a thin crepe coat with burgundy demi-glace and sweet potato - followed by "New Brunswick's best cheese and abstract French Can-Can dessert variation."

Every bit as good as it sounds. Our hosts Axel and Margret did everything impeccably right. Our waitress was Natalie Meier, a charming young Canadian of German

descent, our table-mate was Debbi Blizzard, a friend of the proprietors.

Among the guests were Les Stoodly, from Dieppe, New Brunswick and Newfoundland regional co-ordinator of the Canadian Liver Foundation and his wife Michlenne; and Antoine Gaber, an Egyptian-born former New Brunswick civil servant now headquartered in Toronto, whose striking impressionist paintings are on centerpiece sale to support the Liver Foundation. Each of the seven courses was named to reflect his paintings - like *Normandy Scenery*, or *New Brunswick Countryside*. Very neat. They'll remain on exhibition and sale at the inn until Aug. 30.

Therese Quinlan, a Regional Hospital nurse, is the Saint John Chapter president of the Liver Foundation and she can be reached at 635-2996. Donations are used to provide support and transplant services for sufferers from liver disease and to maintain research and education projects. Memorial

cards are their usual ways of raising funds. This dinner and art sale represented a special effort.

Ms. Quinlan notes that there are more than 100 known liver diseases, ranging from gallstones to cancer, and they can affect anyone. It's a misconception that liver disease is solely a result of alcoholism. In fact, all of the sufferers whom I have known were teetotallers.

As for the San Martello, it's a superb dining experience, excellent food with creative presentation, a place that would shine anywhere. There's the warm ambience of old wood, shelves of library books, the cosy nooks and crannies of a gorgeous old house, friendly hosts and exquisite food preparation.

When you're in the mood for something special, bring your wallet and a few friends. This is a remarkably good place to break bread.

**Fred Hazel is a retired editor-in-chief of this newspaper. His column appears on Friday.**