

***Embedded In The
Hampton's . . .
With The Clintons!***



By J. A. Patrina

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My favorite August activities most certainly include dining at the Palm Restaurant in Easthampton, Long Island. Every Tom, Dick (and I mean *Dick*), and Harry from Manhattan is there, battling for a table, and this bistro brawl keeps everyone from suffering pangs of homesickness for The City.

The Palm is food to die for, a great wine list, and Senor Romano, the fixture Maître d', who wholeheartedly keeps everything moving. Plus, they *always* have a lobster special for less than \$100. But *Hamptons' Attitude* makes it tick.



We lodged 30 minutes away in Southampton, and so, harboring big plans for the wine list, I hired a limo to get my family to and from The Palm. As we pulled in, I told my driver to wait in the restaurant parking lot. The valet said "No," informing us "*only valet-serviced cars can enter.*" I said I would pay

for valet service and that my driver could play the part of wallpaper; we could pretend that I drove. The valet still insisted, "*No. Sorry sir, I don't make the rules.*"

Stepping into the restaurant foyer, I was greeted by the madding crowd, each guy trying to secure a table that they had already reserved. One fellow turned to me and cracked, "*Welcome to the worst economic downturn since the Great Depression.*" I muscled my way up to the reservation desk and checked in.

A stylish young manager crossed my name off the main list and wrote it down on a separate piece of paper. "*Table for six?*" he mused, suggesting that would dull my chances.

All around me, numerous testosterone-tinged millionaires hung about, looking - whenever they got a chance - at the "special" list. But when Senor Romano, the Latin maitre 'd, walked in from the dinning room to glance at the "special list", I made my move.

"*Senor Romano,*" I insisted, "*this*", pointing to my name, "*is the most important guy on the list other than, say De Niro.*"



But that's only IF De Niro shows up." Romano seriously studied my Latin-looking mustache (that's my mustache)) for more than a moment...then said he would "*work on it.*"

We soon got our table, and the place swirled and whirled around us with laser-focused, work-ethic-driven waiters running and gunning all around us. Our waiter, a Cuban hombre named "John", appeared instantaneously. He presented me with the wine list first, and then passed menus around the table. He quickly returned with bar drinks; I placed the wine order. He returned instantly with a Cakebread Chardonnay and a big time Cab; we began placing our dinner order.

While decanting the red he suggested, *"If you want the surf and turf, then you should order whatever steak you want and then add the lobster special to the order."* He pointed to the lobster special on the menu for \$98 and change.

"Fine," I agreed. *"Good"* he confirmed, *"I'll put it in the middle of the table."*

I went back out to find the men's room and some of the people who previously had been in the lobby waiting with me WERE STILL THERE!

Trying to be funny, I pointed to the dining room and proclaimed, *"It's a war zone in there, but it's worth it."* One chap chuckles, six other guys without tables give me glances filled with potential bodily harm -- mine.

Later on, during the dinner, my son looks around and asks, *"Are these 'FOB' people?"*

This question came about because Bill and Hillary were currently in the neighborhood enjoying the Hampton's. Their secret service contingent stayed at our hotel; I knew because we ate breakfast and joked with the secret service contingent each morning. I noticed how happy the agents all seemed. At some point earlier in the week I must have defined "FOB" as "Friends of Bill" to my son.

Apparently weeks prior, Bill appeared in town with Joe "just kidding" Biden on a fund-raising campaign. During that trip, 25 secret service agents floated about, each one staying in a \$500-per-night room, with a \$200-per-day meal ticket, plus \$1,000 per day in salary, plus \$500 per day in benefits, plus \$2,000 per day in long-term pension accruals, plus transport, plus gear, plus head office overhead – for a fundraiser! Who *wouldn't* be happy tapping into those budgets?

Bill and Biden had finally left, but then a week later (my week) Bill returned with Hillary, staying at a \$40-million-dollar mansion with friends in the Estate section of Southampton.



With Biden absent, and the Secretary Of State here in his place, the Secret Service contingent numbered but 15. Someone commented that former N.Y. Governor Mario Cuomo had just been in town and didn't even enjoy the protection of a single state trooper.

I explained the difference by pointing out that we lived in *Winner-Take-All* America. Lady Gaga, who broke through to stardom, gets it all, and the 50 "would-be starlets" just below her -- who *want* to get it all -- get nothing. Similarly, Hillary Clinton, by hook or by crook, or worse ... made it to The One Percent, Mario not.

Let's not forget, Mario had his shot at the Presidency, and I remember him lecturing us.

All in all, I did find it very exciting. Even the hotel people had photos of themselves taken with, yes, Joe Biden. Limitless federal government spending was in the air, and the whole community was so proud to be supporting Obama.

I told my son that after the Obama years of economic decline in America, that everyone, including Republicans, could probably be counted on as FOB's by now.

John, our waiter, informed me that after September 5th, The Hamptons would be dead.

"What happens to you?" I asked.

"There is a 'Palm' (restaurant) down in Florida. I get sent there. A lot of the customers here go there, too".

"Go figure," I thought, *"The party lives on".*

"And what about the hurricanes?" I inquired.

"You mean 'Irene,' the one that's coming here?" he assumed.

"No, the ones down there" I clarified.

"We're used to them there," he said confidently, *"don't make as big a deal about them".*

The check came, we settled, and I called my driver. Standing outside as the car pulled up, the valet strode over and apologized for not being able to secure my car in the lot.

"It didn't really matter to me," I pointed out, *"but now is when I would've given you the big tip. Ya see",* I noted, *"everyone could have gone home happy tonight."* And we left.