

A Mercy Gift Surprise

Food is not a really big deal to me. There are a few things I absolutely dislike — curry, cole slaw, Taco Bell and Waffle House.

And there are a few things I enjoy more than others like my own granola.

But basically, gourmet feasts are almost wasted on me. I remember the conversation more than the cuisine after an expensive dinner out. Although I have eaten some pretty expensive meals (at someone else's expense) in sundry places around the world, only three delectable meals stand out from the rest: an extraordinary bowl of French vanilla ice cream in New Jersey, a wonderful piece of lamb at the world's best Italian restaurant outside of Italy (the sign on the wall said so) in Lagos, Nigeria (definitely outside of Italy!!!), and a prime rib dinner in Minneapolis.

Slim pickin's for all the fine restaurants people have taken me to over the years.

When I am providing for myself, my eating habits are quite plebian: meat and potatoes, with some veggies and a glass of water (no ice, no lemon). A nice piece of bread is a lovely addition. There are two or three things I regularly eat for breakfast and never tire of. I have a boring diet and it does not bore me. Food is just not a big deal to me.

However, there is one restaurant in the world that draws me. I go there if I am ever in that city, even if I have to go alone. It is clearly a Mercy restaurant, but this is no Starbucks with teensey round tables and exotic jazz playing in the background. This is a MALE Mercy restaurant. I love the large, exposed wood beams, the substantial tables and chairs and flatware that is big enough to handle plus portions that are man-sized.

Whoever manages this restaurant also does an exceptional job training their staff. Most waiters and waitresses are either emotionally disengaged or are mechanical rabbits going through each step of the plastic relationship building ritual they have been taught.

The staff here is hugely alert, and each one tests the water skillfully and engages with their customer at whatever level the customer is interested in. I love that, since I am not always in the same mood when I go there. If I am contemplative, they will be nearly invisible and serve me with silence. If I am in a social mood, I can query them about the local events and get an earful.

Last night I got a seat by the fireplace and studied the menu a long time before



ordering a fancy meal. It has to be decades since I have ordered appetizers at a restaurant. I consider them overpriced nonsense, but this time I ordered a spinach and artichoke spread with pita chips.

Moi?!

Yes indeed.

And then, I ordered some goat cheese and Portobello mushrooms on flat bread.

And a big steak with sides.

Amazing. Not my usual order.

I sat back pondering that while waiting for the food to come, wondering what that was all about. What makes it even more odd is that in this city, I find it hard to eat. For whatever reason, when I am here, I just don't get around to eating. I know I should. I feel a little hungry, but I don't make time for food, except to go to this restaurant.

So here I was, in the city where food means less to me than at any other place in the world, drawn to the only restaurant in the world that I like enough to go back to and pay high prices for food, and I am ordering like a gourmand. What is up with this?

I developed a theory out of that. Definitely a half-baked potato, but still . . .

The Mercy gift desires a complete ecosystem in whatever they do. Whether it is interior decorating or music or software or clothing, they like the whole to fit together impeccably with nothing left out. That is old news.

But I wonder whether the Mercy gift in its maturity has the capacity to wake up in someone's spirit the portions of their design that are there, but have not been an active part of the ecosystem yet.

Did the Mercy gift of the restaurant cause me to order something that is natural and appropriate for me because of my design, or was this simply exceptional wordsmithing on the menu that used soulful manipulation to pull me into something that is NOT me?

I don't know, but I will certainly be on the watch for this dynamic with other Mercy gifts. I wonder whether this is a blessing of presence that is operant in the mature Mercy gift and it awakens latent portions of someone else's design. If so, we ought to be able to see it because I know a handful of people who have grown their Mercy gift to a high level of functionality.

We will watch and see.

Copyright November 2010 by Arthur Burk

