



THE OCEANSIDE MEDIA CLUB

BY DAVID MORRISON

Like me, do you ever participate in the popular pastime of people-watching? If so, it's feasible you've been someplace when your attention switched to a steady parade of folks entering an unobvious building, curiosity consequently aroused as to why they might be assembling. Take the Arrowsmith Golf & Country Club close to Qualicum Beach, for example, at 5:00pm on the third Friday of every month. There on those days at that time, more than forty men and women will show up separately and head inside. Not one of them will be carrying clubs or sporting snazzy golf apparel. So why are they there?

The basic answer is not really so earth-shattering. Simply put, they meet to socialize, to enjoy dinner together. Nonetheless, this is definitely no ordinary pow-wow. Convening here, you see, is a group of talented individuals collectively boasting almost one thousand years service to their professions. This is the Oceanside Media Club.

Merely scraping the surface of their experiences by including radio and television broadcasting, journalism, photography, filmmaking, publishing, writing and acting, this award-laden cast of Hall of Famers has been getting together since May 2007. The vision of former broadcaster Verne Prior, the club is a big hit with its expanding membership, word-of-mouth attracting active and retired media professionals to the fold.

"We're a "loosey-goosey" kind of club with 100 per cent emphasis on socializing and engaging in Bacchanalian pursuits... within limits, of course!" Prior cheekily informs me. "We do not have a membership fee and we have no charter or bylaws. The members have no commitment to the club other than what's reflected in their own desire to participate in our monthly soirees," he explains. Personally finding the pervasive business networking culture of this island somewhat stifling, I welcome the refreshing attitude to membership offered by the Oceanside Media Club.

"In organizing the club," the affable Prior continues, "I had one basic assumption: there were enough people around who would enjoy the opportunity to connect or reconnect with others of similar backgrounds in a totally informal setting, to exchange stories, reminisce about their experiences...and maybe even discuss the medications they're taking!" It appears evident that if Prior maintains such waggish form at each soiree as displayed to me in his answers to my questions, those third Fridays are unmissable social occasions for apposite persons - if only for his gags!

Prior set up the club upon finding approval for his idea from local journalist Neil Horner and radio personalities Dave Graham and Patrick Nicholson. Others quickly followed after a flurry of enthusiastic exposure, any need for an active recruitment campaign soon redundant. Member Robert Arnold took on the responsibility of creating an

Internet presence, the resultant mini-site of member profiles amply illustrating the extraordinary heights of achievement attained by many who've flocked to the club.

But what exactly do this media mob and their blithe leader get up to on a typical evening at Arrowsmith Golf & Country Club? Are there secret handshakes, hidden agendas and furtive trysts involved? Are coups of repressive tin-pot governments planned? Or is it really all as simple as tucking into a nosebag and larking about?

I'm part relieved and part disappointed to be informed that the club is indeed solely concerned with simple social pleasures. "The first hour is spent chatting and laughing with others present while quenching their individual thirsts with a beverage of their choice," Prior tells me. He goes on in a jocular tone most attuned to my sense of humour: "Then, we sit down for dinner and continue the informalities over whatever particular menu items the members have selected. At this time, I might introduce new members or request some feedback on a particular item. Overall, it's just a time for informal conversation and laughter."

Doesn't it sound marvellous? In such increasingly difficult times for our world, when we are relentlessly assaulted by wince-inducing headlines from morning coffee through supertime, the importance of such an ordinary act as regularly gathering to have a little fun with like-minded souls cannot be overstated. We all need and should find such an outlet. And while professional ties may bond this particular association's members, I feel this delightfully uncomplicated template for carefree socializing should be applauded and encouraged wherever it can blossom. No commercial motivation, no political crosscurrents, no shackling membership conditions; just fine food and frivolity in stimulating company. There's a lot to be said for the loosey-goosey approach, it seems. ~

For further information about the Oceanside Media Club, contact Verne Prior at laprior@shaw.ca

On the Internet: <http://www.warbaby.com/mediacub/bios.html>