



Join the Club!

The word 'tradition' seems to be popping up more and more frequently during our annual family gatherings in Vancouver, and we seem to be accumulating more and more 'family traditions' as time goes by, without even noticing it. Of course, each year we have at least one major meal where everybody is in attendance (and we make sure to get a group photograph), but we are accumulating any number of other traditions too.

For example, some years ago, my father happened to go out for lunch one day together with a young guitar player and my brother Simon. (I was perhaps busy with my own children and didn't go with them). The three of them enjoyed a good curry somewhere, and a year later, remembering this, made arrangements for a repeat. And now, some years on, this three-man 'curry lunch' has become a 'tradition' - they eagerly discuss where to search out the best place to find this year's best - and hottest! - curry.

Although I seem to be 'left out' of that particular tradition (which is just as well, because I think all they talk about is their music!), I have my own collection of traditions, and the routine of having an evening out with my two daughters is certainly something that I don't want to miss. This year though, I got a bit of a surprise when the three of us walked into a restaurant, because when my daughters tried to order their drinks, the waitress demanded that they show ID. The two girls though - who are now 26 and 24 - were not upset at all about being mistaken for teenagers! But now that I think of it, perhaps that waitress simply knows how to get clients in the proper mood for leaving good tips. Telling people how young they look isn't going to upset anybody, I'm sure!

Another get-together that seems to have become a very firm tradition is the 'good-bye brunch'. Most of our clan lives there in the Vancouver area, but my brother and I of course fly in from overseas. When the day comes for the flight home, whichever family members are available meet at a restaurant for a meal before all heading to the airport for the farewell. In recent years one particular family restaurant - with good access to airport transportation - has been the venue for this. This meeting was cause for some merriment a few years back; the menu contained an extensive selection of 'Senior Items' which was titled 'For our guests 55 and older'. That day everybody in our group took great pleasure in letting me know that I was expected to order something from that page.

Here in Japan, Sadako and I qualify for a slightly reduced price when we go to a movie, but this was the first time I had found myself truly included in a 'Senior' designation. So did I order something from that page? Well, yes I did, and still usually do; the photos of the menu items on all the other pages show huge heaps of food, and I just can't eat such large volumes. The senior items do actually suit me perfectly ... Sigh ...

So for the past few years we have headed back to that same place for our final meal together, but this year, the tradition was broken. On the day that my brother was to return to Germany, he 'suddenly remembered' some other restaurant that he used to visit when he lived in Vancouver years ago, and he asked that we go there instead.

At first, the rest of us didn't think anything particular about this, and we had a pleasant meal. It was only later, after he had flown out, that we realized what he had done. The restaurant he chose had no '55 and older' designation in their menu, and after a bit of counting on my fingers, I understood why he had avoided our normal place.

Yes, he's been catching up to me ... he too, is now officially (at least in that restaurant) a senior!

Simon, you tricked us this time, but next year, there'll be no avoiding it - we're heading back to the 'traditional' place, and whether you like it or not, you are going to choose something from the Senior Menu!

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