

Humble Pie with a Side of Crow

There was writing on the wall. I should have seen it. I should have read it. Especially since the words on the wall were in my handwriting! Allow me to explain.

The Date: Saturday, October 25, 2003

The Time: 7:00 pm

The Location: Rio Suites Hotel

The Event: Scholarship Awards Gala

There we were (myself, my wife and two friends) at the reception table at the entrance to the Scholarship Awards Gala. As we provided our names and were checked off the reservation list, a gentleman approached me and said “hello”. He looked familiar – I definitely knew him – but what was his name? I could have simply said “how are you?” or “how have you been?”, but no, I had to take a chance. We are in Vegas, after all. “John, right?” I said confidently. “Steve”, he replied matter-of-factly. “Dammit”, I thought.

If that were the end of the story, I probably wouldn’t have given it a second thought. But that event constituted the proverbial writing on the wall. Had I read my own writing, I would have known that it was not my night. I was not “on”. Unfortunately, that event was merely the appetizer. The main course was comprised of Mistaken Identity with a side of Embarrassment along with Humble Pie and Crow for dessert. Allow me to continue.

As another gentleman passed by me later that evening, I called over to him and said hello. We started talking casually about how things were going. I mentioned that I had an interest in running for political office and had sent him an e-mail the previous week and looked forward to meeting with him now that he was back in town. I was surprised to learn that he was never out of town but that didn’t deter me from keeping the conversation alive. I reminded him that I had sent him an e-mail and that we were supposed to have a meeting some time the following week and that perhaps the e-mail hadn’t gone through. We spoke about a mutual friend that had introduced us in the past and had recently gotten us reacquainted. He said he thought he could help me work through the reality of my political aspirations and that I should contact him as I got more serious. I said I would contact him through his assistant. At that point, things get hazy. I believe the hostess of the Scholarship Awards Gala, Karen Dorsey, came over and said hello. I’m pretty certain I did the polite thing and made sure my conversant knew Ms. Dorsey – I’m usually quite considerate that way. I ended the conversation politely and caught up with my wife, whom I hoped wasn’t squandering our life savings on the bounty that presented itself in the form of a silent auction.

The rest of the evening went splendidly, with few, if any, minor gaffes. The food was fun and the entertainment was excellent...until just after dessert. That’s when everything went wrong – horribly wrong.

Ms. Dorsey came over to me again and pulled me away from my table and guests to ask me a question, “Who did you think my husband was?”. I believe that, at that precise moment, the world stopped. Oh my God. That wasn’t who I thought it was. What did I say? Did I embarrass myself? Was there no mutual friend? Did I really introduce Karen Dorsey to her husband Joe Dorsey? This can’t be happening – I know Joe Dorsey and that was *not* Joe Dor-....Dammit.

Together, Ms. Dorsey and I went over to explain the situation to Mr. Dorsey. It was all a case of mistaken identity. I clearly mistook Mr. Dorsey for someone else. And now that I think about it, I don't even know how I could have made the mistake. They don't really look alike, sound alike or dress alike. Was I drunk? I wish that were my excuse, but no.

The Dorsey's totally let me off the hook and laughed with me about the whole misunderstanding, although I was still very embarrassed. In fact, the entire misunderstanding has since turned into a funny inside joke. The whole affair, however, leads me to an interesting thought about management styles.

In a restaurant, the customer is not always right. They may be rude, crude, obnoxious and downright wrong, but they are still the lifeblood of any restaurant. Therefore, we must deal with them through thick and thin. When confronted with a customer relations issue, be it a case of mistaken identity, a complaint or any of a myriad of other problems, some managers are not willing (or trained) to let the customer off easily and gracefully. Fortunately, neither of the Dorsey's possesses that personality flaw. They are more enlightened. They realize that they can address an embarrassing situation without making anyone feel bad. They can rectify the matter without admitting or assigning blame. They realize that, quite often, more loyalty is built by responding positively to an adversity than had there never been an adversity in the first place. Being graceful, courteous and respectful should be a goal in any confrontation in any setting. Enlightened managers get that.

For the record, Mr. Dorsey *did* look up when I called him "Mr. Rogich".