

First, a personal story about the famed hotel. Called back for active Navy duty in the Korean War in 1951, and before shipping out to the Pacific, I managed to get myself into a six-week training course at a facility near New York City. On weekend nights, our gang of Navy guys hit the streets of Manhattan.

We were junior officers and CPOs, all with WWII service, so we thought we were hot stuff in our dress blues and chests full of campaign ribbons. Our mission was to find young ladies, and we knew where the most likely candidates would hang out. The Waldorf-Astoria, of course. We couldn't afford the astronomical room rates of \$25 a night, but we'd try to look as if we could.



"I have returned", and can't wait until I can get back to my suite at the Waldorf!

Memory is a bit hazy, but I believe the bar was the hotel's Bull and Bear. Our theory was that only the best ladies would patronize the ritzy Waldorf: fashion models, executive secretaries, society debs, shop managers and wealthy divorcees. We chose not to go to bars on the Lower East Side or in Brooklyn, where the lady customers would be clerks, movie cashiers, salesgirls and such. Not that they would be bad prospects, but we thought we'd go for the top of the line.

Was our theory correct? Did we do well at the Waldorf? All I can say is that one of our LTJGs met the daughter of a Wall Street tycoon, and he's been wealthily married for decades. They recently had their 50th anniversary celebration at ... where else? ... the Waldorf-Astoria.

The Waldorf-Astoria these days is still an imposing 47-story landmark at 301 Park Avenue, between 49th and 50th. One of the poshest hostelries in the world, the \$500 and up a night room prices keep riffraff like this now-long-retired ex-Navy guy away.

However, if you're on an expense account, someone else is paying or want to shell out your own dough to experience a memorable night in the historic W-A, just maybe you'll decide it's worth the investment. How many of us can casually drop a sentence into a conversation, such as, "When I stayed at the Waldorf-Astoria recently, I"

You can also toss into the bragging routine, "I was booked into the Douglas MacArthur (or Dwight Eisenhower or FDR) suite in the Waldorf Towers. The suite was OK, but the room service lobster bisque soup was served a bit too cool."

Seriously, if you're in the neighborhood, and don't quite have the means to stay overnight, stroll through the hotel. It has just completed a \$200 million restoration, and all the Art Deco features are as bright and shiny as they were back in the 1930s, when the Waldorf was brand new.