

The Magazine of the Mizzou Alumni Association

MIZZOU

Hotel Histrionics

Mizzou alumnus remembers Daniel Boone Hotel
circa 1950s.



The Daniel Boone Hotel was built in 1917. Today the historic Daniel Boone Building, after a major addition and restoration, functions as the Columbia City Hall. Image courtesy of the City of Columbia.

Story by Charles Moore, BS BA '57

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Sundays were best. Once or twice a month, a mother and father would drive in from Kansas City or St. Louis to visit their daughter at Stephens College. That meant Sunday luncheon at one of the nicer restaurants in Columbia, and in 1955, that included the coffee shop at the Daniel Boone Hotel where I was a waiter.

With his wife, daughter and a few of her friends together at the dining table, Father could turn on his charm and entertain the ladies. I made it my job to enhance his efforts. No lady moved her chair without me there to assist, and should someone reach for a cigarette, I was there with my Zippo. I was quick to suggest an entrée, should one of the young ladies be indecisive, and the food was served quickly and quietly while it was still hot. No one ever had an empty glass of water or tea nor did a coffee cup ever go dry. To the best of my ability, I made the luncheon an occasion to be remembered by all of the guests, and I especially wanted the father to think the time went well.

For my attention to details, Father usually left a very generous tip, and, on occasion, I would find a few folded dollars under the plate of Mother. Perhaps it



Charlie Moore put himself through school by waiting on tables at the Daniel Boone Hotel. Photo courtesy of Charles Moore.

was one of the most important life lessons I have ever learned: No matter what your job, be one of the best at performing the duties and never forget who ultimately pays your salary.

Like many merchants in Columbia, the hotel management would hire several young men and women every semester to help them through the University of Missouri. It was good for both parties. For a minimum amount of money, they got intelligent, hardworking young people who needed the money. Today with a minimum wage, I wonder how many businesses still offer entry-level jobs to students.

The hotel was a fun place to work. Although we scrambled to keep up during the peak periods of lunch and dinner, there were hours of waiting for a customer to come to the restaurant late in the evening before closing. Idle time encouraged practical jokes. One time we had one of the older waitresses call the front desk from an outside line and ask for Mr. Roberts in Room 605. The hotel had five floors, and the room clerk, a fellow student, told the caller there was no Room 605 and no Mr. Roberts was registered. Then the caller would repeat the call two or three more times until the room clerk became frustrated. Finally, one of us would call and say, “This is Mr. Roberts Room 605. Do I have any messages?” We would watch as the room clerk began to scream.

I saw a fair number of celebrities pass through the hotel. I recall Missouri Sen. Stuart Symington refusing a complimentary stay, and I saw University of Kansas basketball star Wilt Chamberlain signing autographs. His hands were so large he could hardly hold the pen. One night a chauffeur-driven limousine brought millionaire Andrew Jergens to the hotel. Next morning after breakfast he left a bottle of Jergens lotion for a tip.

Thanks to Jim Nance, manager of the Daniel Boone Hotel, in 1955 I had this job waiting tables for 35 cents an hour, plus tips. My small paycheck, the tips and the help of the GI Bill allowed me to earn my business degree. I graduated with honors in August 1957. The hotel was built in 1917, and in 1972, it was acquired by the city of Columbia and Boone County and is now used for city business.

After Charles Moore, BS BA '57, graduated from Mizzou, he got a job in Houston with the insurance brokerage and risk management firm Marsh & McLennan. He retired as senior vice president in 1994. Moore now resides in Henderson, Nevada. He spends his time traveling — Spain is one of his favorite countries — and writing essays. So far, he's written about 350 pages of stories about his life, including this one. He intends to one day give the collection to his children and grandchildren.

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