



Discovering DOWNTOWN BUFFALO

SOME BUSINESS AND FAMILY

OBLIGATIONS brought us back to my hometown last December. Make no mistake—the timing couldn't have been worse to return to Buffalo for a long weekend. Blizzard conditions, a travel advisory and white-knuckle driving in our rental car through the snow and ice covered streets.

I grew up in Buffalo but moved away after college. For the past 30 years, I think I've stayed at most hotel chains and eaten at most of the nice restaurants in the city. But this time we wanted to try something different—and we succeeded on both counts:

I've been hearing about an upscale boutique hotel in one of the mansions on prestigious Delaware Avenue, and decided to learn more. The name certainly caused no confusion, "The

Mansion on Delaware Avenue."

It was built in the 1860's and after many reincarnations over the decades, it has become the talk of the town. The Mansion on Delaware Avenue has been featured in everything from "Architectural Digest" to The New York Times. Awards include the Zagat highest rating for service, Trip Advisor



'Certificate of Excellence' Hall of Fame, and Conde Nast Traveler 'Best Hotels' in NY State & the Mid-Atlantic region.

Besides the beautiful architecture, The Mansion prides itself on service. The staff offers 24-hour butler service as well as transportation with a certain area.

We stayed in a spacious 2nd floor room with vaulted ceilings and a bird'-eye view of Delaware Avenue. The bathrooms are state-of the art—including a shower that offers five adjustable shower heads. Luxury!

When we came down for breakfast the next morning, there were no donuts in sight but rather a a





complimentary European style meal. It's laid out on a table in the front room where we had a chance to meet some other interesting travelers. You can tell a lot about a place by the quality of other guests.

Diana and Geno Principe are celebrating their 15th year running the hotel that is Buffalo's first and only AAA 4 Diamond Hotel.

Later in the day, we met some dear friends at a new high-end steakhouse named "SEAR" that they've been wanting to sample. Since it was a Thursday night in a blizzard, I thought the restaurant would be closed—or we'd be the only ones keeping it open. It was a few blocks down the street at 200 Delaware Avenue. Valet parking came in handy that night.

I couldn't believe my eyes when we went in and saw every table taken and a warm fun energy in the room that belied the arctic mood outside. It was



like a scene from "Cocoon 2," except these weren't senior citizens and there was no swimming pool.

We shared a perfect sized u-shaped booth near the bar area that lent it self to a group, or two separate conversations. Managing partner David Schutte checked on us often and even brought over some appetizers I wouldn't have thought of ordering, but they were good. (Erin enjoyed the rich bone marrow spread on warm French bread, while I sampled the beef tartar with fried sage, fresh tuna tartar and tender fried calamari.)

For our entree, Erin had the bone-in-filet while I had the boneless

filet, both prepared to perfection. We shared roasted asparagus and "millionaire mashed potatoes" which were whipped, creamy and the perfect amount of salt and fresh-cracked pepper. For dessert, we enjoyed homemade gelato that tasted great with fresh hot coffee.

Great service, too. The manager came over and checked on us several times, and the waitress was attentive despite the amount of people she was serving.

"SEAR" is a welcome addition to downtown Buffalo. Combine that with "The Mansion on Delaware Avenue" and it's clear to see why people say Buffalo is on the rise! – Ray Collins