

A glass of wine by Martin E. Dodge

An older gentleman wanders into a country inn and wants to have a glass of wine at the bar. Walk-in guests are unusual at the inn as most people are guests in one of the fourteen overnight rooms or have reservations for dinner in the 60-seat restaurant. The reception experience for a guest at the inn is different than a typical restaurant or hotel. The inn is a historic residential house, and I stress the word house to dispel any vision of a grand manor with a showstopping foyer.

The front door opens to reveal a sparsely furnished hall. Two narrow doorways are just inside the hall to the left and right, and a double door entrance to the restaurant dining room and stairs to the second floor are at the end. The reception room is around the corner of the left doorway and has two small desks which are not visible upon entry. The receptionists, while exceptionally vigilant, might be on the phone or showing overnight guests to a room. Restaurant staff covers any gaps in the guest greeting process.

I do not know how long the gentleman waited before being noticed and seated at the bar. The bar room is a pass-through space between the reception desk area and the main dining room. The bar seats four on stools, and there are two cocktail tables along the opposite wall. A doorway to one side of the bar opens to a stairway landing and the kitchen entrance. I exit the kitchen and walk behind the bar's counter to serve the gentleman.

“Hello, sir! Welcome to the Inn!” I speak.

“This place could use more people at the front door,” he says.

“Oh, yes. There are a lot of folks arriving to check in to rooms this afternoon - big wedding this weekend. Are you a wedding guest?” I respond.

“No, I am a local. I just want a glass of wine before I go home,” he says.

“Ok. I can help you with that. Would you like to see a wine list?” I ask.

“No, just give me a glass of wine,” he says.

“Would you like red, white, pink, or bubbly?” I ask.

He says, “Red.”

“Full-bodied, medium, or light?” I ask.

He says, “Full-bodied.”

“Dry or not so dry?” I ask.

He says, “Not so dry.”

I pour a glass of one of our twelve by-glass red wines and place it in front of him on a beverage napkin. We meet eyes as he lifts the glass and takes a sip of the wine.

“How did I do?” I ask.

“Finally! Someone gets it!” he exclaims.

“You like the wine?” I ask, surprised by his reaction.

“The wine is good. I am happier that you served me a glass of wine without telling me about all of the wines you have! I came here after a bad experience at the fancy hotel down the road. I have heard good things about this place, but I have never been,” he says.

“I am sorry to hear you had a bad experience there. You are welcome to relax as long as you like here. Some of the check-ins may be noisy, though,” I respond.

The two of us have a wonderful conversation. We discuss the area and the history and operation of the inn. The gentleman orders a second glass of wine before stepping away to explore the restaurant. He strolls through the main dining room and exits to take in the view beyond the building-length covered back porch. I go about my tasks of preparing the restaurant for service. The gentleman returns to the bar to settle his tab after checking out the chef table in the kitchen. We shake hands, and he thanks me for my hospitality before going home.