

NEW YORK'S TAVERN ON THE GREEN SELLS OFF A STORIED PAST AS IT LOOKS HOPEFULLY TOWARD THE FUTURE

By Nancy Lazarus

“Tavern” doesn’t usually bring to mind images of Tiffany stained glass, crystal chandeliers, or topiaries, but this was no ordinary tavern. The restaurant and event venue Tavern on the Green, located in New York City’s Central Park, served its last guests on New Year’s Eve and all the contents were recently auctioned off.

The city awarded the new lease to the operator of Central Park’s Boathouse Cafe, while the legal rights to the name Tavern on the Green are being fought over in court. The restaurant will soon undergo a major renovation.

As I entered on the final night of the auction preview, the well-worn green rugs with Tavern on the Green’s logo signaled the restaurant’s fate. During



Tavern on the Green’s over-the-top decor was sold piecemeal to high bidders at auction

years, and it is so sad that era had to end.” She has not yet settled on a venue for future client parties.

The New York City Marathon also had a long association with Tavern on the Green, and Charlie McCabe was one of the original founders and corporate sponsors of the race. When he was executive vice president of corporate marketing and communications at Manufacturers Hanover bank, now JPMorgan Chase, McCabe rode in the Marathon’s pace car, just ahead of the lead runners, and the race ended at Tavern on the Green.

McCabe recalled that in 1977, the year after the bank became involved in the Marathon, the pasta party was moved to Tavern on the Green and thousands of runners carbo-loaded there the night before the race.

AUCTION ON THE GREEN

my prior visits the rooms were abuzz with diners and waiters, but on this night the tagged furniture and decorations were the main highlights as auction bidders wandered around.

Tavern on the Green hosted countless events over the years, and those that I recall attending were during New York City Marathon weekend and the annual winter Mediamark Research & Intelligence (MRI) reception.

MRI held its client party there from 1979-2009, on the fourth Thursday of January. The event served as a thank you to clients and it helped beat the winter blues that hit after the busy

holiday party season ended.

Ana McKeever, executive administrative assistant to the president, CEO, and chairman of MRI, planned the parties and remembers them well. “The dress code was business attire for our clients, but for MRI employees it was an evening affair, and we wore suits and our best finery. For the music they played everything from Etta James to Beyonce, but no special arrangements for decorations were needed.”

In summing up her feelings about the restaurant’s recent closing, McKeever said, “MRI was part of Tavern on the Green’s history for 30

As the Marathon grew in size, special luxury lunches were sold to corporate clients, and the meals became so popular that they were expanded to a tent in the parking lot. These events have continued through last year under new corporate sponsorship.

In looking back, McCabe said, “The restaurant is synonymous with the finish line of the New York City Marathon. It will be interesting to see if the new restaurant retains the rights to the name, and if it is no longer called Tavern on the Green, how the endpoint of the race will be referred to in the future.”

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