

Boy Crazy Adventures in New York City

by Melodee K. Currier



People meeting me today could never imagine the teeny bopper I was in the mid-1960s in New York City. Fifty years have passed and my life today as wife, mother and paralegal, is a million miles away from those surreal days in the city. Don't get me wrong, I enjoy my tranquil life in the Midwest, but it couldn't be more different.

Tears streamed down my face as my plane departed Fort Lauderdale for New York City. Under normal circumstances, I would be thrilled, but I was leaving my fiancé to attend secretarial school in The Big Apple. The decision was final. I would live at The Barbizon Hotel for Women and attend The Wood School following graduation from high school. The Barbizon was a women's hotel with famous guests like Grace Kelly, Ali McGraw and Liza Minnelli. In the 1960s, parents felt safe sending their daughters to live there because men were not allowed past the lobby. It was a false sense of security. My parents should have known I would find many other ways to have fun and be mischievous—despite having an engagement ring on my left hand.

The day I registered at The Barbizon, I met two other girls whose parents were also registering them. As we stood in the lobby talking, my mind was trying to figure out how to get our parents to leave. Donna, Marie and I had an enormous city to explore for the first time in our lives and we wanted to start NOW! The Beatles were arriving at The Astor Hotel that day so we decided to catch a glimpse of them. After arriving at the Astor, we stood on the street along with thousands of other screaming fans all waiting to see the Beatles. We waited until we were tired of standing and left before they made their appearance. At least we could say we were there!

It was only a matter of days before we found Malachy's—a no frills neighborhood bar—the very first singles bar—just around the corner from the Barbizon. Unlike some staying at the Barbizon and going to other schools, we didn't have a curfew. One of my friends who didn't go to Malachy's was Ellen Smith. You know her now as Jaclyn Smith. Prior to becoming the "Breck Girl" or a "Charlie's Angel" Ellen moved to the city from Texas. She wanted to model and was taking dancing lessons. I would often stop by her room and we would talk—mostly about her high school boyfriend and her close-knit family. She was as nice as she was beautiful.

Meanwhile back in Fort Lauderdale, where the boys are, someone was waiting for me. What you've heard about long distance romances is true, they usually don't last. It wasn't long before I was meeting guys, lots of them, and broke off my engagement.

Dating while at the Barbizon was a challenge, but I quickly learned a trick or two. When my date would arrive to pick me up, he would call my room from the lobby. If it was someone I hadn't dated before, I would ask a friend to answer my phone and tell him I was away from my room for a minute. Then I would race to the mezzanine and carefully peek over the railing so I could see him, but he couldn't see me. If I liked what I saw, I would race back to my room, grab my purse and meet him in the lobby. If I changed my mind, I would go back to my room or leave the hotel through the coffee shop.

One evening I fixed up a friend and we doubled with two guys who wanted to cook dinner for us. We met them at their four story walk up. While we were sitting in the living room, the guys were in the kitchen making our drinks. I turned to my friend and whispered, "Are you having a good time?"

She shook her head no.

I replied, "Then let's GO!"

Before you could say "Jack Robinson" we jumped out of our seats and flew down four flights of stairs. We raced down the street laughing hard until we were out of view.

Another time I wanted to check out the Sigma Alpha Mu fraternity at Columbia University and talked a friend of mine into going with me. We just appeared at their door. When one of the guys opened the door, we smiled sweetly and said, "Hi!" as we were invited inside. We stayed long enough to meet the guys and gave a couple of them our phone numbers.

As we were leaving the fraternity, we couldn't believe our ears—there was a loud band playing Louie, Louie and a huge dance in progress! We pretended we were students at the university and joined the party, entering

our names in a drawing at the door. After about an hour, the band stopped playing and I couldn't believe my ears as my name was being announced as a winner of one of the prizes!

Obsessed with finding "Mr. Right," I decided to try computer dating. After sending in my five dollars, I waited for the names of three men to arrive in the mail. The day I received them, I called each one and set up times to meet. The first was a Columbia University law student. He met me at the Barbizon and we found a section of the mezzanine where we could talk. We quickly realized we had no rapport and the date ended awkwardly.

My second match picked me up on his motorcycle. I wore a trendy black leather pant suit as we rode forty blocks to Chinatown in 9° weather. The dinner was the only pleasant part of the date. He spent the night bragging about his drug use. I couldn't wait to get back to my room, and the ride back seemed like an eternity.

Not wanting to waste any more time on dates that didn't work out, I spoke on the telephone to the last match for over two hours. We had a good rapport and his voice was sexy. We decided to meet that night at a bar around the corner from The Barbizon. I took a girlfriend along for moral support. We sat at the bar and waited until we heard someone say, "Melodee?" I turned around expecting to see Prince Charming. Instead I saw a man that looked like Clarabelle the Clown with two clumps of red hair on each side of his head one clump on top—the rest was bald. Disappointed, I turned to my girlfriend and we talked until we were sure he left.

What could be more exciting than going to West Point or Annapolis for the weekend? I dated a few cadets at West Point and midshipmen at Annapolis, but the most important one was the Captain of West Point's tennis team. We met one evening at Malachy's. When he walked in wearing his uniform, I was completely infatuated. He asked me if I believed in love at first sight and before he left to go back to West Point he gave me the gold pin off his hat in exchange for my phone number. My first date with him was a weekend at his parents' home on Governor's Island. His father was a Brigadier General. We dated for quite a while after that. I recently Googled him and was amazed to see he had been President and CEO of two Fortune 100 companies.

Some friends who lived at the Barbizon had homes in Connecticut or within an hour from the city. On weekends they often went home and would ask me to join them. Sometimes they would fix me up with someone they knew. On one date, as I met the fellow's mother, she grabbed a tape measure to see how short my mini-skirt was. It measured eight inches from my knee! On another date with him, I feigned a cold, so he would take me back to my girlfriend's house just in time to be picked up by another date five minutes later!

I was so carefree and spontaneous in those days. During the transit strike, when taxis were nearly impossible to find, my girlfriend and I, for the first and last time in our lives, hitchhiked to the bar. As soon as we put our thumbs out, a car stopped with two guys inside. We fearlessly hopped in and (thankfully) got out a few blocks later.

During the New York City Blackout of 1965, I was working on the 28th floor of a large advertising agency. When the power went out, we were unable to use the elevator. Two people ignited newspapers in the stairwell so we could see. When we got outside, a few people from work who couldn't go home because the trains weren't running. They walked home with me. Once there, we put a red and white checked tablecloth on my living room floor and had a picnic. Then we went outside, drinks in hand, talking to strangers. A few hours later the power was restored and my co-workers were able to go home.

Many of my friends were Catholic and wanted me to go to church with them. The first time I went, I noticed an area with candles and a sign that read "10¢ each". I was told after you pay 10¢ for a candle, you light it and say a prayer. My Jewishness and sense of humor revealed itself when I asked if I could get three for a quarter!

Upon graduation from The Wood School, the school's placement office helped me get my first secretarial position as secretary to five oil company executives at Rockefeller Center. I replaced a woman who worked there for

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everyone was here." I popped my head out the kitchen door. I saw a red cap peeking out over a mass of decorated boxes. Then, I heard Dolly's voice.

"Dolly." I ran out of the kitchen and tried to hug my best friend, only to be obstructed by the presents she was carrying. Andy came to her aid and placed the boxes under our now ever-shrinking tree. The presents were taking over the entire living room.

"This is frigging amazing, Maxi. I never would've thought."

"Why aren't you with your family tonight?"

"Hell, and miss a Jewish Christmas with my best friend. Are you kidding me? No way. Besides, it's a zoo over there."

"Not much better here. Come in." Dolly and I looked in on the festivities. The kids were under the tree, shaking boxes and trying to guess what was in them. Uncle Albert and Grandpa were arguing about something or other. Marilyn peered into the silver serving tray, looking at her perfect complexion, pouting her Botox lips. Mirror, Mirror, on the wall, who's the phoniest one of all?

My cousin, Toby, chased little Jacob around the tree. Aunt Gladys and Aunt Mattie both got sauced on wine, giggling like schoolgirls. Uncle Herbert tried to talk my husband into buying life insurance. No doubt, he talked of nothing else.

I looked at Dolly. "See, nothing unusual here. Just a typical family gathering." Dolly nodded. "Hey, can we get some of that wine before your aunts finish it off?"

"Absolutely."

As we headed toward the bar, we heard a loud thump, followed by a clap...clap...clap...The entire family looked at the ceiling. "What was that?" Uncle Albert asked.

"Sounds like that Santa Claus fellow," Grandpa said. "There's not such a thing," Larry argued.

"There is such a thing for Christians. Maybe he forgot we're Jewish. It's an easy thing to forget. We got a Betsy Wetsy in a manger, after all."

While Uncle Larry and Grandpa argued about the existence of Santa Claus, the doorbell played Jingle Bells.

Since I had been standing closest to the door, I opened it.

"Holy moly!" I exclaimed.

"Cool beans," Dolly said.

We stepped aside and in walked four small men dressed like elves. The first bowed in front of me, and in a small squeaky voice, said, "Is this the residence of the Steins?"

In unison, the entire family nodded their heads, mouths agape. Even Marilyn broke free from her looking glass to observe our unusual guests.

"We are Santa's representatives and we are here to present the Stein family with their first Christmas," said the second elf. "Hit it, boys."

The four elves started singing We Wish You a Merry Christmas, while six more elves, carrying tons of packages, entered the house and "What is going on out here?" My mother came out of the kitchen, drying her hands on a dish towel. She stopped then she turned to Dolly and me. "Are those elves? What's going on?"

We both shrugged, and the three of us turned our attention back to our latest arrivals.

"Ho, Ho, Ho, Merry Christmas!"

There he was, Santa Claus, in person. He smiled broadly and headed straight toward Clara, Sara and little Jacob.

"Well, well, what good little girls and a wonderful little boy, we have here," he said.

"He should live with them." I heard Toby tell Marilyn.

The kids lit up brighter than our tree. I looked out the door to see if any more surprises lurked, but the evening was quiet. I closed the door and looked around for Andy, but didn't see him. Then, as if on cue, he popped up behind me and kissed my neck.

"You did this, didn't you?" I said.

"Did what?"

"I don't know, Andy, but Santa looks an awful lot like our doorman, Bill."

"Hey, I said I would take care of it, didn't I?"

I looked back at my family. Everyone was having such a wonderful time. I turned to Andy. "I love you, Andre Moullini. Merry Christmas."

"Happy Hanukkah, Maxi."

Heidi Tassone grew up in the Bronx, New York and currently resides in Florida with her husband, Joe. She's won several writing contests for her short works, including Star of Wonder, Deadly Dating, Our Little Secret and Maxine's Valentines Surprise, and has five tales published in an anthology called, Mosaic, A Collection of Short Stories.

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ten years and was demoted to receptionist. One day after work a friend and I went to happy hour in the Pan Am building where we met the Vice President of a large advertising agency. He gave us his business card and suggested we apply at his agency. I decided to apply and told the agency that the Vice President was a good friend of mine -- and got the job. On my first day at work I stopped by his office and reminded him who I was. I told him I said he was a good friend of mine when I applied for the job. He remembered me immediately and was amused by my chutzpah. Years later I learned that he was a founder of that agency. No wonder I got the job!

At yet another job for a large corporation, I was asked to hand deliver a document to another floor at 5:00 PM. I took the stairs, but didn't know the stairwell doors automatically locked at 5:00 PM. I was claustrophobic and anxiety set in when I couldn't open the door, so I pounded loudly so someone would hear me. Finally, one of the executives opened the door. I thanked him for helping me and he asked if he could take me to dinner. After that night we dated exclusively, but kept it a secret from our co-workers. After a short courtship, we were married by a rabbi in a small chapel in Carnegie Hall. Two years later we were living in a New Jersey suburb, the parents of a beautiful baby boy.

The turning point of my life -- the moment my carefree days officially ended--was the instant my future husband opened the door to the stairwell. Unknown to me at the time, my world would never be the same. Marriage and motherhood will do that! As in the movie, Sliding Doors, I cannot help but wonder how my life would be today if I had taken the elevator, instead of the stairs.

Melodee Currier lives in Dublin, Ohio with her husband, Doug, an IT Project Manager, and their Siamese cats, Suki and Seiko. Besides Ohio, she has lived in Southeast Florida and New York City. She left corporate America in 2008 where she worked as an intellectual property paralegal. Most recently she owned a virtual trademark paralegal service. She began writing poetry and personal essays in her teens. In the past couple years, she has devoted more time to writing and has had articles published on a variety of topics. This article, "Boy Crazy Adventures in New York City" reveals her exciting life in NYC in the mid-1960's while living at The Barbizon Hotel for Women.

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