

Marian Langhus
Lang House BnB
July 17, 2019

Marina Room

Reluctant Host

2019 has been a peculiar season with June being the best on record but essentially no reservations for the rest of July and August. Despite that we have had a good business with people dropping in and looking for a room. We have been plenty busy but it keeps us close to home in anticipation of guests without phoned-in reservations. On Monday we had lovely guests from Denmark who saw my advertisement in the New Brunswick tourism magazine and drove to Gaagetown without phoning ahead. Last Saturday a couple came to the door at 10 pm looking for a good night's sleep without breakfast and paid me a \$25 tip!

Like I said we stay close to home. Three times already we have been out on the street nearby visiting with neighbors when we see a vehicle stopping by Lang House and we hurried home. This Tuesday I saw a brown F150 with a cab drive down to the end of the wharf, turn around and stop in front of Lang House. An old, somewhat decrepit man smoking a cigarette got out. He wasn't our usual guest by any means, pretty rough looking, needing a shave and wearing a ball cap and sun glasses so I could not see his eyes. He had some difficulty walking up to talk with me as I was standing on the porch by the front door. I thought he might be a workman looking for some place in need of an old handyman. He didn't look at all like the good-looking, positive energy fellows that we have here in the village with their kept beards and straight demeanor. One of the first things he told me was that

he was 79. Seventy-nine I thought, you look like death compared to my 77 year old brother John and, oh, my god, only 4 to 5 years older than Bruce!

He asked if I was the manager of this place and I told him that, yes, I was the owner. He said that he had seen me plenty on TV. He stood up against the railing by the front door and proceeded to tell me that when he was four, his father brought him to Gagetown to buy some property for a business but there is nothing to show for it now. He said that they stayed in one of three little cabins between our house and the river. I have only seen a barn in old photographs but I didn't care.

He asked me the price of my rooms and when I said, it's \$110 and I charge HST so it is \$125. Then in a most demeaning voice he said that the price was pretty steep "FOR GAGETOWN!" I was insulted and I repeated for the second time that that was my price. I did not like the man at all but I continued with him going on about how his parents were buried in the Anglican cemetery and he was going to be as well. That softened me a little as we need all the cemetery money that we can at the Anglican Church where I am a warden.

Of course I had to tell him that I was born in the front room and that I lived in Gagetown only 9 months and then we moved to South Bay. He zeroed right in on that and asked where and said by the Gault Road and he said that is where his parents lived and then an even creepier feeling went through me. He asked my name then and when he said "Howard and Becky!" I thought, great, now he knows my family and will expect a discount.

He interjected that my price was too high and that he had come up to Gagetown to see the water and spend the night for \$50 - \$100. I let this slide and he continued to tell me that his father was Rube Hobin and his mother was ____.

He said, "My father put the cross on that steeple over there at the Anglican church." All I could picture was that poor cross how it had no paint left, it was cracked and covered with moss, and was leaning to the north pretty badly these

days. I had just gazed upon it on Sunday wondering how the heck it was ever put up there and how we were going to get it fixed. So I broke down and said \$100 and he could spend the night but I was not happy about it. We haven't changed our price in 5 years and it seems that lately people think that we should lower our price. The Fair in particular really bothered me with asking me to reduce my price.

We came in and Bruce had been carving and popped out to say a friendly hello. I gave him a very dark look and he said "OH!" and went back in. We visited him a while and then took him upstairs to choose a guest room in the ghost wing. He had serious difficulty with the stairs fussing all the way and telling me that he had had a fall in the winter and broke ribs and sustained other injuries. He said that a single room would be fine to which I responded that all of the rooms are the same price. He did not seem at all impressed with any of the rooms and said that he wanted a room with a view of the river where he could sit and look out. I explained that I had a single-bed room in front of the house but that we rarely rented it out and it wasn't made up (meaning Bruce's bathroom would need "de-Brucing"). He said that he did not care. He wanted to see it.

When we came down to the living room and he saw the river, he loved it and said, now this is what I want and added "but you don't rent this, right?" I said no but let's go see the room up above. When he walked in the Marina room with its view of the river he said that he could stay there. I could see that he wanted to sit in the chair and see the water so I said that would be fine and we went downstairs for a visit in the living room. He told me more about what he remembered about my parents and the lumber yard.

We had not yet agreed on the price and I said willingly that he could go to Steamers Bed and Breakfast and he told me how he had worked for one of the owners I said that we were competitors but we also helped each other. I said they had rooms looking out over the water but they would not accept a lower price. He

said no, he wanted to stay here now that he “knew me.” I agreed that he could have the room for \$100 and he handed me \$100 bill.

I did not have a good feeling for this man, I clearly disliked him. I snuck into Bruce’s studio when our guest was lumbering down the stairs and told Bruce that I did not like this guy and that I resented him beating me down in price with the insult. He did say that he had never stayed “in a place like this” and that was the closest he came to a compliment.

I knew his parents and his sister and I remembered that he was a bad man in the way he treated them. Twice when he took his sunglasses off and I could see his eyes, I would see his family resemblance but the eyes looked like the devil. My mother recently said that the devil was coming to get her. Seriously, this man’s eyes looked like what I would expect those of the devil to look like.

I called my sister to tell her about the situation. She remembered some of the family. They lived across the road from our parents. She asked our mom (99) about him and they did not offer more than I already knew.

He asked if we fed supper and, no we did not. He had two naps and for some reason had to tell us that he stripped off and laid on the bed. Not something I needed to picture.

On the way out for another foray of the village, he popped back into the kitchen to say that he had bought the forklift that my father used and that now it was at the Ketepec Marina. Hearing about Dad and his forklift was a bit touching. After he left I remembered how our fathers had played checkers together. One time I came home for a visit. I was probably around 40 and I saw, first hand, why my father would never teach me how to play checkers even though he was a master player. He would show his neighbor what moves he should make (in the kindest fashion) and then just clean up on him. I was embarrassed that he was such a con about checkers and thought our neighbor was a bit too simple in falling for it. From

then on I thought that Dad did not want me to be so conniving so he never taught me to play checkers.

We spoke to our guest when we went out for a walk. He was sitting in the truck on the wharf by the river. Bruce went over and told him that the house was open. I would have locked it and made him wait. He was smoking and I had told him he could only smoke on the south veranda.

When he went up to bed, we reminded him that breakfast was at 8 and he said that if he wasn't down by then to knock on his door. I was seething at him as I learned more about him. I called my sister back and my mother had kicked into gear and remembered more about him. He had beat his father and his mother was deathly afraid of him. He cheated his sister who took care of them and drank his inheritance money (that should have gone to her).

I really did not know how I could possibly sleep in the room next to him and I suggested to Bruce that we try out a room in the ghost wing. Later on in the evening Bruce said that he liked my suggestion and said that we could try the Writers' Room! I was so thrilled! We did so and we loved it!

I was dreading the thought of seeing those evil eyes in the morning and I hung back in the ghost wing while Bruce started breakfast. I didn't want Bruce to face him alone so I came down and... no guest!

He left in before we got up!

Maybe seeing the river and visiting the family grave site gave him some much needed peace.