

TRAVEL TALES

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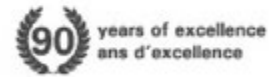
By **MIKE COHEN**

NEW YORK HOTEL WITH A JEWISH HISTORY: My family and I recently experienced a wonderful five days in New York City and stayed at a hotel with a storied Jewish history. We liked the experience so much that we will back there again in the summer. The famous Algonquin Hotel ([\[nquinhotel.com\]\(http://www.algoquinhotel.com\)\) is located in the heart of Midtown Manhattan, close to the bustling heart of Times Square and Fifth Avenue. The Algonquin first opened its doors in 1902. Today it is part of the Marriott chain's Autograph Collection, an evolving ensemble of strikingly independent hotels. *\(Please turn to page 17\)*](http://www.algo</p></div>
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Each destination has been selected for its quality, bold originality, rich character and uncommon details. From near to far, iconic to historic, the result is an array of properties that is nothing less than unique. The Algonquin Hotel is the first New York City property to become a part of the collection.

For 100 years, the Algonquin has been greeting and lodging the country's most prominent writers and literary personalities, as well as the leading figures of the American stage. The hotel is best known, perhaps, for the members of the Round Table, a group of luminaries who had in common both the ability to fire blazing witticisms and to withstand being on the receiving end of them. The tone they set during their daily meetings set the literary style of the 1920s. After World War I, Vanity Fair writers and Algonquin regulars Dorothy Parker, Robert Benchley and Robert E. Sherwood began lunching at the Algonquin. Though society columns referred to them as the Algonquin Round Table,

they called themselves the Vicious Circle. "By force of character," observed drama critic Brooks Atkinson, "they changed the nature of American comedy and established the tastes of a new period in the arts and theatre."

Each of the 181 rooms and 25 suites features a comfortable well-lit work desk, as well as complimentary Wi-Fi. Always one step ahead of everyone else, the hotel was the first to offer accommodations to actors and single women travellers. We stayed in a very comfortable one bedroom suite named the Robert Sherwood Suite.

I received a copy of a book about the hotel when I checked in called the *Algonquin Kid: Adventures Growing Up In New York's Legendary Hotel*. The author is Librettist/Lyricist Michael Colby, whose grandparents Mary and Ben Bodne, Southern Jews, owned the hotel from 1946 to 1987. As a kid, Colby and siblings visited their grandparents every weekend. Colby took up permanent residence in the hotel at the

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(Continued from preceding page)

age of 18 and made his way into the theater world as a librettist, composer and lyricist. His musical, *Charlotte Sweet*, an all-sung, all-rhymed original musical with libretto by Colby and music by Gerald Jay Markoe, received three Drama Desk Award nominations and was critically lauded as "adorable, strange and delectable" by the *New York Times*.

I could not put the book down and finished it before checking out. Colby is an excellent storyteller. He grew up on Long Island. Colby, his parents, and two younger brothers, Douglas and David, looked forward to those weekends with the Bodnes who made room for them in their huge suite on the 10th floor.

The Bodnes made a fortune in the oil business in South Carolina. In 1946 they bought the Algonquin for \$1 million, pouring \$300,000 into renovations. Michael's dad, Sidney Cohen, wanted a career as a broadcaster and changed his last name to Colby. That career never panned out and he reluctantly accepted the post of general manager of the hotel. He was an unhappy man and Michael pulls no punches in telling

his dad's sad story, which ended tragically with his passing away at the age of 43 after falling down the stairs at home.

Michael had an extraordinarily close relationship with his grandparents, who owned and lived at the hotel for more than 50 years. If you have never stayed at the Algonquin before, this book will make you want to. It is available at www.amazon.com and www.michaelcolby.com.

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historic Jewish neighborhood, the Lower East Side, was once home to the world's largest Jewish community. Covering the area between Houston and Canal Streets east of the Bowery, this neighborhood is where New York's garment industry began. Today it is a bargain hunter's paradise, with great deals to be found on everything from souvenir t-shirts to menorahs, espe-

cially along Orchard Street in the neighborhood's center. The overall New York Jewish community in the metropolitan area has remained stable at 1.4 million people; the population of New York City is just below a million. Congregation Kehilath Jeshuran, located on Manhattan's Upper East Side, has 1,100 members. Its new senior rabbi is Chaim Steinmetz, who for two decades was the spiritual leader of Tifereth Beth David Jerusalem Congregation in Montreal.

Mike Cohen can be reached at info@mikecohen.ca. See his travel advice column at www.sandboxworld.com/travel.

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TO HECK WITH STANDARDS

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alone is cause for alarm at a research university where students pay to be taught by Ph.Ds, though they are often forced to settle for doctoral students. It is extremely unusual for an undergraduate to be allowed to teach any course, let alone one where they have no proven expertise.

This course was not simply a creation of an industrious undergraduate, it was sponsored by a member of the faculty who is an outspoken supporter of the boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) campaign. That alone should disqualify David Lloyd from having any say in the creation of a Middle East related course, but he also has no credentials in that field; he is an English professor.

Given his background, it is not surprising that Lloyd picked one of his English students to teach the course. Once again, her lack of expertise was bad enough, but she also served as president of Riverside's chapter of Students for

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