

Backstage after the gig, Salaam talked about Native Deen's continuing popularity in the capital. "The State Department called us again, and they have somebody who's interested in taking us overseas to someplace where there's an American Ambassador, because they saw that we're touring the U.K., and they think this would be a good presentation of Muslims in America, to show that—well, maybe it's a little political—Muslims are living well in America."

Salaam and Muhammad discussed their musical influences, which range from the Beatles to Cat Stevens (a.k.a. Yusuf Islam) and Michael Jackson, and on up to more or less contemporary hip-hop acts such as De La Soul, Mos Def (who happens to be Muslim), and even Eminem. "He has skills. Anybody in the rap world knows that he's a very good lyricist," Salaam said.

"He's definitely taking the rap world by storm," Muhammad said. "But what we have a problem with is the subject matter, the content, the image, you know."

Soon afterward, they went downstairs to pray.

—Ben McGrath

SAY CHEESE DEPT. CHINESE WEDDING



Right now the most likely place in New York City to see a young Chinese woman in a wedding dress—her lips painted the shiny red of a toy fire engine, her shoulders bare and quivering in the cold—is Central Park. This is the Chinese-American wedding season. By the Chinese calendar, only certain days are favorable for weddings. Which ones are congenial for a particular couple are determined by the days the bride and the groom were born, and the hours of their births. The Chinese in Chinatown call pure-blood Chinese born in America "ABC's"—American-born Chinese. They tend to get married on Fridays or Saturdays. First-generation immigrants, whom the Chinese call Newcomers, tend to get married on Sundays, Mondays, or Tuesdays. Many of them work six days a week in restaurants, and they

use their day off to get married. The most popular wedding days are Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's.

Approximately two hundred wedding photographers work in Chinatown. Nearly all of them spend part of the day with the bride and groom in Central Park, usually at the sailboat pond, the Bethesda Fountain, and Belvedere Castle. (Couples who live in Brooklyn or Queens or New Jersey sometimes prefer being photographed closer to their homes. In such cases, the photographers go to Grand Army Plaza, Prospect Park, or Flushing Meadows—Corona Park, in Queens, or Liberty State Park, in New Jersey, which can be very cold if the wind is coming off the river. Couples in Queens who can afford a bigger budget sometimes like to go to the botanic garden, which charges admission.) A photo session in Manhattan also includes a visit, usually at the end of the day, to a pier on the Brooklyn side of the Brooklyn Bridge, so that the photographer can take a picture of the couple with the Manhattan skyline in the background. On a busy day, it is not uncommon to see brides in these places backed up like golfers waiting for a tee.

Typically, the bride and groom arrive at the photographer's studio in Chinatown at around nine in the morning. They change into their wedding clothes, and the bride puts on her makeup. Around eleven-thirty, they and their party and the photographer drive up to the Park in a limousine, which lets them out at Fifth Avenue and Seventy-second Street. The other day, it was about forty-five degrees when a young Chinese woman and her fiancé arrived in the Park. They work at the same restaurant, and they were being married that evening on Mott Street. They were having their portraits taken by a photographer from the Faga Wedding Studio, on East Broadway. The bride wore a brown canvas jacket over her gown. With a best man and a bridesmaid and four friends, the couple walked down the hill toward the pond. Along the way, the photographer stopped them and told the bride that he was very sorry, but the time had come for her to take off her coat. The straps of her gown were about the width of a strand of ribbon on the wrapping of a Christmas package. The photographer had the couple stand on the pavement beside the water. To show the bride how he wanted her to

pose, he stood with one foot forward and held her bouquet above his head like a torch. The bouquet pointed at the windows of apartments on Fifth Avenue. In one of them, a woman in a dark-red dress stood looking down at the Park. The sky was pale blue, and there were thin shadows of tree branches on the pavement.

The bride's hair was piled on top of her head, and there were little red silk roses worked into it. She wore long white gloves that had white bows at the wrist and along her forearms. When she raised her train to walk, she exposed her legs—she was wearing bluejeans and big rubber-soled shoes. While she posed, the petals in her bouquet trembled, as if getting married took all the nerve she could gather.

From the pavement, the photographer moved the couple to the concrete bank of the pond. They sat beside each other and looked at an old man prodding a model ship with a tree branch. The ship had been made from two-by-fours and was stalled among the leaves and some ducks that weren't going anywhere, either. To move the bride's chin, the photographer put his fingers on her cheeks. Then he spread crumbs from a doughnut to gather a flock of pigeons. Following the crumbs, the pigeons strutted to the hem of the bride's train. Her expression changed only twice. Once, when the photographer said something that sounded like "Chindew, hindew," she smiled. The second time, her mouth fell open and her eyes widened when the photographer stamped his feet and the pigeons took flight, their wingbeats sounding like shuffling cards.

—Alec Wilkinson

MOM AND POP DEPT. THE HUNDRED CLUB



Fanelli's Café, at the southwest corner of Prince and Mercer Streets, is probably the second- or third- or fourth-oldest drinking-and-eating establishment in New York. It opened for business in eighteen-something-or-other—with a different name (or, more likely, with no name at all), and in a somewhat different form—and has been providing Manhattanites with alcohol and food in

varying ratios ever since. It acquired its current name from Michael Fanelli, a retired boxer, who ran the place from the early nineteen-twenties until the early nineteen-eighties. A cupboard behind the bar leads to a secret room, where Fanelli, during Prohibition, stashed illegal booze, some of which had been distilled on the premises. If you ask to see the secret room today, the current owner, whose name is Noë, will say no.

A darkly inviting painting of the exterior of Fanelli's is reproduced in miniature on the cover of "The Historic Shops & Restaurants of New York: A Guide to Century-Old Establishments in the City," a new book by Ellen Williams and Steve Radlauer. The book is filled with the sorts of facts that make New York such a challenging city to take for granted: the salesman at Brooks Brothers addressed J. P. Morgan throughout his life as Jack; Salvador Dali bought leeches (for use as models) at J. Leon Lascoff & Son Apothecary, on Lexington Avenue, which has been open since 1899; Jay Vanderbilt, Joseph Pulitzer, Helen Keller, and Sammy Davis, Jr., all shopped at Mager & Gougelman, on East Thirty-seventh, for artificial eyes.

One recent Monday evening, representatives of some forty century-old establishments gathered at Fanelli's to celebrate the book's publication. Most of the

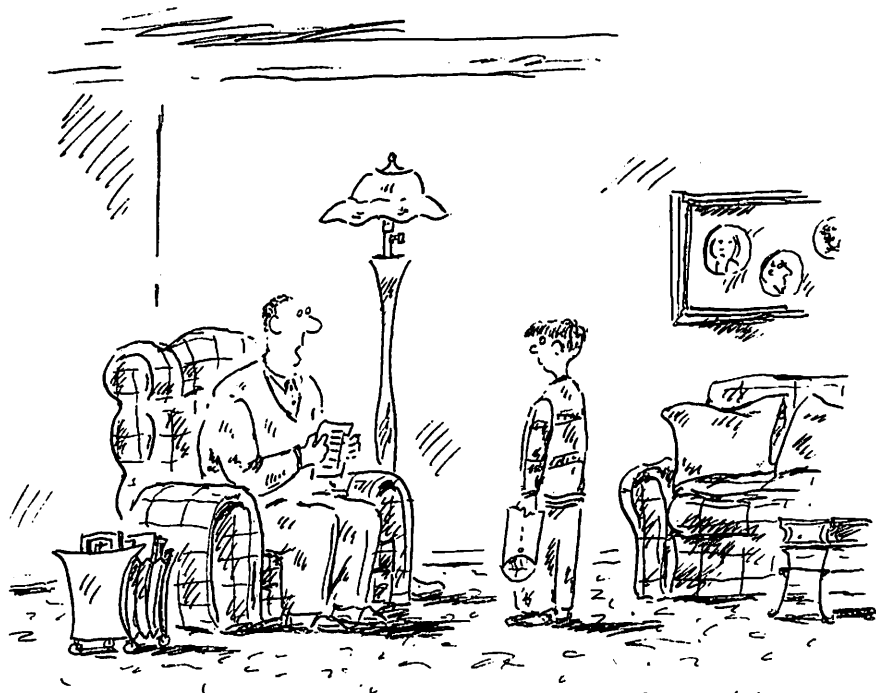
guests wore nametags, and many sipped historically appropriate cocktails, called gin daisies. Herbert Weitz, a second-generation rare-book dealer and book-binder, invited the other guests to autograph their entries in his copy of the book, and served as an unofficial facilitator and matchmaker. "Hey, Floor Coverings!" he hollered at one point, to two sisters who run a hundred-and-thirty-five-year-old flooring business called Aronson's. "Have you met Wholesale Marble?"

Many of the city's oldest businesses were founded by Italians or Eastern European Jews who arrived here shortly before the turn of the twentieth century; subsisted at first by peddling merchandise from pushcarts or horse-drawn wagons; eventually saved enough money to acquire storefronts; and passed their growing businesses to their children. "It's always the same story," Mark Federman, the third-generation proprietor of Russ & Daughters, a fish specialty store on Houston Street, said. "The only difference is that the Italians talk like this"—hands moving up and down. "And the Jews talk like this"—hands moving side to side. Federman practiced law for a decade, but as his parents approached retirement he realized that he couldn't bear to let their business close. He took over in 1978, and is now hoping to hand the store down to his twenty-five-year-old daughter and

her cousin, both of whom were pursuing careers far outside the fish business before September 11, 2001, when they independently decided that the thing they cared most about was family. Federman smiled in their direction. "They get it," he said.

The hands-moving-up-and-down version of this story was told by Lou DiPalo, who runs DiPalo Dairy, a fourth-generation cheese and specialty-foods shop on Grand Street. He is fifty-one years old and likes to say that he has worked behind the counter at DiPalo's for fifty-two years. (His mother stayed at her post at the cash register until shortly before giving birth to him.) He has always worked in the store, though he did moonlight for several years as a licensed real-estate broker. "I made a ton of money in real estate, but I was never happy, so I quit," he said. DiPalo hopes that his son, who is twenty years old, will want to take his place someday. "We talk about it," DiPalo said. "I take him to Italy with me when we're shopping. I show him how to select the cheese, I show him how to select olive oil, and he does those things well. But when I say, 'Sam, you've got to be here at nine o'clock,' he'll show up at ten-thirty. So we've got some things to work on."

The city's oldest business that is still run by its founding family and still situated at its original address is probably Garber Hardware, on Eighth Avenue between Jane and Horatio Streets. It was founded in 1884 by Joseph Garber, a Russian Jew, whose initial inventory consisted solely of ingredients for paint. As the store descended through the generations, it expanded into neighboring properties and dramatically broadened its offerings. "I'd say the biggest thing we offer today is advice," Nathaniel Garber Schoen, who is twenty-five years old and is a grandson of one of Joseph Garber's grandsons, said. "People buy something at Ikea, then can't figure out what to do with it. They don't want to make a horrible mess putting it together, so they come and talk to us." Nathaniel has an art degree, and he still thinks of himself as an artist—one of the store's front windows features a shifting selection of his work—but he has always known that he would be unable to disentangle his personal destiny from that of the family business. "I grew up in the store, and I love it," he said. "I wasn't going to be the one to make it go away."



B. Smaller

"They may be your grades, but they're the return on my investment."

—David Owen