

Liz Smith



More than friends

LOVE... is the only passion that includes in its dreams the happiness of someone else," said J.P. Kerr.

A somewhat seminal event took place recently in the upper dining room of Le Cirque when the couture designer **Arnold Scaasi** and the bookworm TV host **Parker Ladd** tossed a black-tie get-together for 80 of their most brilliant friends to celebrate 40 years together.

I say it was "seminal" in that, along with the Stonewall Riots, which became a rebellious political and epic event of gay life back in 1969, this fete for Arnold and Parker signaled a more civic and social recognition that two people of the same sex may actually love one another, prove it by living and working together and find the mayor of the greatest city on earth — New York — handing down a proclamation declaring it *their* day. This is what Mayor **Mike Bloomberg** did and his proclamation was marvelous in that it told us everything we had assumed, thought we knew and had imagined about the couple called simply "Arnold 'n' Parker." They turn out to be effective, energetic public citizens as well as loyal and charming friends.

THE TOASTS were imaginative with **Ahmet Ertegun**, the Atlantic record tycoon and an international sophisticate of first water, telling his remembrances mostly in French — the kind of French even **George Bush** might understand. **Joan Rivers** was raunchy and funny, poking fun at everyone including herself and looking very glam indeed as she informed us that the new Botoxed generation can no longer even purse its lips to blow out a birthday candle. (I noticed that the master plastic surgeon of New York, **Dr. Dan Baker**, was laughing at a nearby table and he was mentioned by several toasters. People are a little self-conscious, I guess, about facelifts and some of them forget that Dr. Baker is also one of the leading serious microsurgeons of the world, doing good works for those who can't afford it. He was the man who reattached **Bridget Gerney's** legs in 1985 after a crane fell on her!)

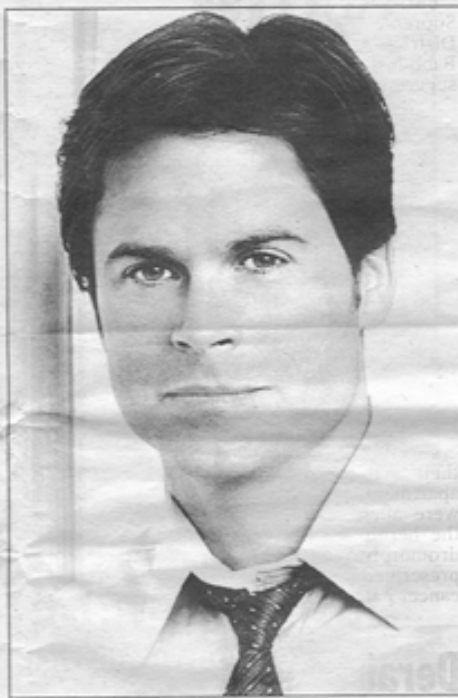
Dominick Dunne lifted his Diet Coke to the guys and recalled a long charming friendship. Their longtime pal, **Gillis McGill Addison** of modeling fame, gave an intellectual toast and finally, the Times guy **Billy Norwich** insisted we raise our glasses to the music of **Bob Hardwick** and wish A 'n' P many more happy years.

The crème de la crème of NYC was there, and those who were out of town missed a fabulous event. The stairs of Le Cirque were adorned with blow-ups of the happy couple in kilts, in Arab dress, in Capri-esque bloom, in ascot gray with top hats, in Russian astrakhans, in Literacy Partners promos, and in black tie all over the world. Missing was the photo of a gang of us in Acapulco wearing big sombreros over our margaritas. Well, you

cher, **Wolfgang Flottl** and **Anne Eisenhower**, **Blaine** and **Robert Trump**, **Saul** and **Gayfryd Steinberg**, and on and on.

MARTIN SHEEN was interviewed on TV just a couple of days after it was announced that **Rob Lowe** would be leaving "The West Wing," not returning for another season. (Rob will complete 16 episodes this season and then, goodbye.) Sheen seemed genuinely upset, referred to Rob as being as close to him as one of his own sons, and said, "A lot can happen before next March. I hope things can be ironed out."

Me too. Even though "The West Wing" is an ensemble piece, I feel Lowe is as vital to the show as Sheen. (Remember when the president, played by Sheen, tells his aide that someday Rob's character, will be president? They didn't write that scene expecting Rob to quit.)



Reuters

ROB LOWE

He'll be missed on "West Wing."

The show won't be the same without Rob. Surely there is a halfway point agreeable to everybody? Money can always be found — just ask the cast of "Friends." Writers can beef up his role a bit if Rob actually feels his character has been slighted of late.

The comeback of a really good actor, Rob Lowe, after youthful mishaps, has been one of the happiest aspects of this TV hit. As far as I know, Rob is well-liked by cast and crew. So, have another go at negotiations, guys.

OOH! Where are "they" all going now? I do mean **Pepe** and **Lourdes Fanjul**, **Leonardo DiCaprio**, **Tobey Maguire**, **Owen Wilson**, **Paris Hilton** with **Jason Shaw**, plus **Nicky Hilton**, et al.