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Insiders Reveal The Craziest Stories From The Waldorf Astoria New York

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The Waldorf Astoria New York turned 90 October 1.

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The Waldorf Astoria New York is one of the most iconic hotels in the world. And incredibly, it's celebrating its 90th anniversary this year, just ahead of the hotel's reopening and new residences. To celebrate this monumental milestone, the property launched the "Waldorf Stories" campaign and contest to continue the oral history of the legendary hotel into a new generation. The project brought forward incredible witnesses to events at the hotel who openly shared their wild memories. Here are some of the craziest.

An Original Employee Saw A Prototype For The First TV

Teresa Klarfield, whose grandmother was one of the first employees of the Waldorf Astoria in 1931, has been surrounded by Waldorf Stories her entire life. Her grandmother, and namesake, Theresa "Teddy" Schalow, was one of the first employees at the Waldorf Astoria in 1931 and their oldest living employee before she passed in 2012 at age 104.

Teddy was an original "porter" at The Towers. She would deliver telephone messages in person to famous and influential guests and residents, including Cole Porter, who she described as "very private, but very warm." One time, she delivered a message to the CEO of RCA Records, where she saw a prototype of an early model of a television in his room showing a live feed of ice skaters in Rockefeller Center.

Then, she went back to visit the Waldorf Astoria for her 100th birthday, where GM Eric Long would come and speak with her every day. He brought her on a tour of the Grand Ballroom, and she asked how often they clean the big chandelier, to which he replied that they don't often clean it because it's hard to get up there. Then, to his surprise and delight, she revealed a button they used to lower the chandelier, which apparently had been hidden in a closet for years.

Kathy Hilton Was Neighbors With Michael Jackson

"[Some of my favorite memories are] just hosting parties and many charity balls here and then the after-parties with Pavarotti and Frank Sinatra and Barbra [Streisand]," shared Hilton. "They lived on the 33rd floor. Michael Jackson lived on the 30th floor opposite us — we were 30H, and he was 30A. He was there for about six months. We had gone to school together when we were younger, so we had a lot of fun spending time together."

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The Bar Manager Escorted Chuck Berry To His Gig

It was a typical early Friday evening for Beverage Director Frank Caiafa at Peacock Alley in 2007 when there was a knock at his office door. The restaurant hostess explained Chuck Berry was looking for him. He rushed into the restaurant to find "the one and only Chuck Berry, the 'Father of Rock and Roll,' standing at the podium with nothing more than a small bag and a guitar case," said Caiafa. His assistant's flight was delayed, and Berry was told to find Caiafa by the hotel's Director of Food and Beverage to help him. And the unsuspecting bar manager did. Not only did he escort the legend to his hotel room, but he was tasked with escorting Berry to his show too. "This came as quite a surprise," he added. "The next thing I know, we are at Chuck Berry's room, and I am carrying his guitar down to the parking garage and the waiting limousine. And we were off."

Nicky Hilton Broke Into The Ballroom

"My Waldorf Story is just living here and the excitement," shared Hilton. "You would go up in the elevator one day with the President and the next day with the Rolling Stones. There was always someone or something interesting going on here. I would say one of our [Nicky and Paris] favorite past times was breaking into the ballroom after an event and peeking and sneaking around. We weren't called the 'Eloise's of the Waldorf' for no reason."

The "Waldorf Stories" will live on in the online history gallery and an onsite museum when the hotel reopens.

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/jordilippemcgraw/2021/10/04/insiders-reveal-the-craziest-stories-from-the-waldorf-astoria-new-york/?sh=6257ce3d576e>