

Liz Smith



It's time to party

FIDDLE-dee-dee. War, war, war. This war talk's spoiling all the fun at every party this spring. I get so bored, I could scream. Besides, there isn't going to be any war!" says Scarlett O'Hara in "Gone With the Wind."

SO, IN SPITE OF the wars (Scarlett's and ours) and that wars seem to happen, no matter what, I went to a marvelous party this week, to paraphrase the great Noël Coward. It was hosted by the serenely blond **Anne Bass**, philanthropist extraordinaire of the New York City Ballet. Mrs. Bass was feting a guest who had just flown from London to New York in an April snowstorm of all things.

The honoree was **Natasha Fraser-Cavassoni**, author of the new biography of famous moviemaker Sam Spiegel. The book comes from Simon & Schuster. Natasha is also the daughter of a famous mother, English author **Antonia Fraser** and the stepdaughter of playwright **Harold Pinter**.

A goodly crowd rushed into the showplace living room of Mrs. Bass, admiring and greedily coveting her wonderful paintings. Some people in the dining room later seemed hardly able to concentrate on dinner, so great was their wish to abscond with some of Anne's collection. I was seated between stock broker **Doug Schoninger** and literary agent **Lucas Janklow**, so I know.

Noted among the three tables were TV's **Charlie Rose**, city Planning Commission chairwoman **Amanda Burden**, Lincoln Center's **Linda Janklow** with agent-hubby **Mort**, son Lucas and daughter-in-law musician **Julie Daniels**, editor **Kate Betts**, Vogue's **Andre Leon Talley**, The New York Times' **Ben Brantley** and **Billy Norwich**, playwright **Wendy Wasserstein**, ballet's **Heather Watts**, designer **Diane von Furstenberg**, gallery man **Earl McGrath**, artist **Marina Karrella**, literary agent **Ed Victor**, socialite **Lee Radziwill**, just to name a few.

Mrs. Bass had asked the Kennedy Center's leader, **George Stevens**, who was with his divine wife, **Liz**, to speak to us about Spiegel. He was quite a character in his time and produced at least two great films — "Lawrence of Arabia" and "On the Waterfront." The dining room was appropriately convivial, and most of us were busy being blown away by the dinner. Glorious Foods had replicated a menu devised for Queen Elizabeth when she had visited Hollywood in the good old days at Chasen's. (This watering spot of La-La Land ladies and their knights, such as Clark Gable and **Ronald Reagan**, is gone now, but the memory lingers on.)

We were served a beautiful split mango filled with seafood and fruit. Then came a perfect, flaky pastry star onto which we ladled chicken a la king. So great! On our same plate, we received a small portion of shiny green arugula, so we could eat "against" the main course instead of struggling with a big salad. Dessert was a bombshell sensation! Ice cream rolled in coconut with chocolate sauce optional. I didn't see anyone of the wraith-like slim there, opting not to have it or hanging back.

Nobody can resist a "snowball," especially on a rare day in April when it had just snowed 2 full inches over Manhattan.

WHEN YOU'RE 75, you have to split your britches to celebrate. So, the 75-year-old Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theatre is doing that May 17. They'll perform "theAtrainplays" in the Sylvia and Danny Kaye Playhouse at Hunter College.

These are musicals, written, rehearsed, performed and produced within a 24-hour period. Three librettists join producer **Lawrence Feeney** at the 207th Street and Broadway station and take the A train. They select head shots of actors and write their musicals on the train from Inwood to Far Rockaway. Don't ask me how, but it all culminates in meeting the actors, assembling teams and then performing only hours later. Call (212) 772-4448 and get in on this!

YOU REMEMBER actress **Kristin Scott Thomas** (she was in "The English Patient" and "The Horse Whisperer"). Well, she lives in Paris and wants to get a few things off her chest. The French don't hate Americans, Kristin says: "The notion



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KRISTIN SCOTT THOMAS

Her next project is set in Vietnam.

that you can't speak English in Paris for fear of abuse is total bulls ---!" She says her next project is apt. "It's set in Vietnam, and let's just say that in the current climate, it might just set the cat among the pigeons."

PEOPLE WRITE ME the oddest things. Anti-war writer **John Berger** of Harper's won't let anyone quote from his work unless they add, "With millions of Americans, Mr. Berger is totally opposed to the unjustified war against Iraq — a land of drought." This is fascinating literary blackmail in a lost cause, if ever I heard of such ... THE QUEST magazine listing of its annual "New York 400" brought out a dazzling crowd, and since the party had no agenda other than pleasure, everyone had a grand time at Doubles this week. Publisher **Chris Meigher** and editor **David Patrick Columbia** stood around accepting kudos from many guests, who just happened to have delightfully found themselves on the list.