

Miss Manners has been swamped with enquiries, during the pre-festive season (is this an oxymoron?) from persons wanting to know more about the Groucho Club, Darwin Uninc.,

As with most things in the Law, there is a procedure which aspirants to membership should observe:

1. Telephone or fax Miss Manners QC's literary agent
2. Arrange to meet Club's First Lady - the Groucho Club eschews "Chairperson" - at a point to be agreed, bearing large quantities of first quality fizz.
3. Sit in pool for the purpose of canvassing the applicant's suitability for membership over the aforesaid fizz; this could take time. The initial meeting proceeds on the Dionysian anti-anorexia Mikey Robbins principle of more is less and oiled tongues spill the beans on the rest of the profession more readily to the greater glory of the Groucho Club.
4. The self-nominating, self-excluding nature of the Groucho Club means that aspiring members do not have to come recommended by others ("Croneyism"), but are expected to conform to certain standards and are expected to resign on the first breach of Manners. (Burn-out and Nervous Breakdown do not rank as a Breach of Manners but eating peas off your knife and its advocatorial equivalent, sledging your opponent at the Bar table to the judge in open court, do.)

The First Lady does, however, look for certain social accomplishments, the better to adorn the existing cultural lustre of the club. These might include the Egon Kisch factors: passing fluency in ancient Aramaic or ability to correspond in the Cyrillic script: or:

- a demonstrated familiarity with all

varieties of Twinings Teas or their equivalent - Columbian coffee;

- a commitment to study the judgments of the following late Justices of the High Court of Australia: Gavan Duffy, Piddington, Rich, Knox, Latham, Evatt, Webb, Alan Taylor, Douglas Menzies and Owen, and a clear understanding of why these are significant;
- proficiency or past proficiency in at least 3 of the following:
 - hang-gliding
 - Mongolian yurt construction
 - pig-shooting
 - the English language (alt. The Wit of Paul Keating/The Genius of John Howard)
 - stage-lighting or cosmetic surgery
 - tobacco-growing or its equivalent
 - embroidery (loosely construed)
 - statutory interpretation
- evidence of at least two of the following:
 - racial catholicism - this is not a Father Frank Brennan SJ qualification - Fr Brennan has not sought membership in the Groucho;
 - inter-generational philanthropy: how many (overseas) students have been invited to your abode in the past 12 months? (this is a trick question);
 - respect for elders and betters: this is the most difficult criterion for most lawyers, partly because it is not satisfied by hypocritical obsequiousness or bald flattery;
 - the above requirement may be waived upon donation of several cases of magnums of *Petaluma* fizz to the First Lady of the Groucho;
 - demonstrated aversion to barbeques, dinner parties, farewells, conferences and running marathons.

There is more but Miss Manners is constrained by time and space and offers the foregoing as guidelines. Those who will fit will know it after reading the guidelines; if, having done so, one remains uncertain, then the Groucho is not for you.

Next issue, Miss Manners intends to address the child-ego problem demonstrated by so many counsel who have been deprived by the Christening Fairy (includes Naming Ceremonies of all creeds) of a spirit of generosity, let alone grace, and who feel unable to control the impulse at the Bar table to tell tales to the Judge on other counsel, usually with the intention of gaining some non-specific advantage for themselves in the eyes of the decision-maker, at the expense of the client of the sledged lawyer.

Miss Manners was recently not edified to hear of the semi-retirement from another Bar of a talented commercial advocate, who, having been an academic, was insufficiently robust to stand up to the sledging of an ambitious and desperate barrister, fast-tracking his reputation by repeatedly reinforcing a weak judge's indecisiveness, at the expense of his better. Instead of blowing the whistle and hanging the bastard out by his balls, the quite adequate barrister went to pieces and has since, virtually, abandoned practice. In this way good minds are lost to legal practice and ill-behaved barbarians prosper and are elevated.

Miss Manners wishes her readers a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. And every possible multi-cultural variation on that greeting.

Manners, QC

Miss Manners may be contacted through her literary agent on tel: 8948 4260