

# East Side Explorers Spin Yarns and Antique Globes

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Published September 7, 2004

*Columbia Daily Spectator*

At the annual Explorers Club dinner last year, Club President Richard Hies had a few questions for the audience:

(Who has been to the North Pole? (The tall, long-haired president asked) (Who has been to the South Pole? Who has been to Mount Everest? Who has been to the deepest point in the ocean? Who has been to the moon?)

Each question received a positive response from at least one member. Excitement was hardly the highlight of the evening. Just minutes before, Hies had ridden into the room on a white horse, which subsequently descended on an audience member's dinner plate. Immediately after the speech, a helicopter from the crowd ran onto the stage and bit Hies.

But a little ordinary to Hies, such spectacles are common currently in this crowd, especially at formal events.

(He always has eagles and hawks flying in there, snakes and all sorts of things, Hies said) (The evening had people come rappelling from the ceiling before.)

The club's headquarters at E 70th Street has become a well-known establishment of the East Side, but the interior is another country entirely, a blend of old-school ashbury-lin and modern science. Researchers meet to discuss their cutting-edge work against a backdrop of antique maps and a stuffed polar bear. Field drawings of tiger hunts in India line the wooden walls of the assembly room, where public lectures from leading scientists and writers are held throughout the year.

The club would seem to be exclusively for salty sea dogs and feathered bushwhackers, but Hies, who has been a member since 1965, disagrees.

(The lectures have changed in complexion since I joined, he said) (They've become much younger) (It's really a mixed bag group.)

With all its old-world charm and intellectual appeal, the club seems like an impressive place to take a date. A student and 89 pays for a seat at the evening lecture plus ample wine, cheese, and fruit beforehand. Hies claims there is a subtle singles scene at the headquarters events, but warns that it is not for landlubbers or the lily-livered.

(A lot of our male members think they're alpha males. I've had 60-year-old guys try to pick up my date.)

The self-dubbed explorers are likewise notorious for tall tales and even taller egos. (In the bar downstairs, some guest will come in and talk about an island of reindeer, and someone else will say, I was the first to go there.)

This month, the Explorers Club picks up its yearly public lectures where it left off before its summer break. Tomorrow night features a photo documentary of a chimpanzee, and next Wednesday continues the apish theme with a report on the effects of guerilla warfare on the Andean orillas. But the notable event of this month, (Around the World in 60 Minutes, happens on Sept. 20, when student members of the Explorers Club present their research.

The research of the club's student members would look good on any scientist's resume. I understand

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2he !lub o\$\$ers student memberships to men and %omen bet%een 4A and 24 %ho are enrolled in hi+h s!hool or !olle+e' # hile students must o\$\$i!ially apply and \$ind an adult member to sponsor them, # iese says the re&uirements \$or a!!eptan!e aren!t too strin+ent'

A!!ordin+ to the #eb site, (a primary ob7e!ti.e o\$ the Club is to identi\$y the next Henson, Hillary, or Heyerdahl,( three explorers %hose le+ends no% inspire more s!ien!e than \$ortune,huntin+, and %hose in!arnations !ould appear in any !orner o\$ the +lobe'

Bor the non,tra .ellers, there are the o!!asional (Bio,blit;es( in Central Par-, %here parti!ipants ta-e a 24,hour in .entory o\$ the lo!al \$lora and \$auna' /n this !ase, the point is less about ma-in+ dis!o .eries than !reatin+ a%areness about the urban en .ironment'

(Biodi .ersity exists in e .en the most urbani;ed !ity in the <nited States,( # iese said'