

Broadening horizons over lunch



SUZY FLEMING LEONARD

Dave Sinton was polite about it, but he took exception to a list of my favorite restaurants published a few weeks ago. "I enjoyed Suzy Leonard's list of restaurants and was happy to find that we had already visited most of them," he said via email. But, he went on to say, it was lacking in places south of Eau Gallie and west of U.S. 1.

While it would be easy to make excuses and get defensive, here's the thing: Dave's right.

I live and work in Central Brevard, so many of my go-to places are near where I spend the most time. I need to broaden my culinary horizons. So I invited Dave to lunch.

We met at Harbor City Diner on South Wickham Road, a place he describes as "always fun and their large portions feed us for several days." Dave and his wife Brigitte moved to Melbourne Village about the same time the diner opened in May 2004.

"It's the last place we ate before the hurricanes and the first place we ate after," he said. Dave said he eats everything on the menu, from the meatloaf to the spinach pie. "If we're feeling lazy, we'll order the meatloaf dinner," he said. "We can eat that for three or four days. I consider this one of the premiere meatloaf spots in Brevard."

I've heard about the burger with shoestring fries. Dave had the spinach pie with fries and a Greek salad.



DAVE SINTON OF MELBOURNE VILLAGE PREPARES TO TUCK INTO A PLATE OF SPINACH PIE, SHOESTRING FRENCH FRIES AND GREEK SALAD AT HARBOR CITY DINER IN MELBOURNE.

While we waited for our food, I learned a little more about Dave. A native of Northern Ireland, he came to the United States to attend Harvard, but got a job working for the Army Corps of Engineers. "That keeps us going to a lot of meetings," he said. They also enjoy taking advantage of Florida's natural beauty. They've visited 144 of Florida's state parks, and Dave said they're looking forward to the 18th annual Space Coast Birding and Wildlife Festival, which runs Jan. 21-26.

Dave is a fascinating man. We talked about places to bird-watch in Brevard. We discussed recent causes of social upheaval, like the United States becoming a no-smoking country. "There was a tipping point when we decided as a society that smoking was bad," he said. We talked about states approving gay marriage and gun control. And we talked food. "That's one of the real disappointments of getting old," he said, "not being able to eat as much as I used to." Some of his favorite places in Brevard include Long Point Cafe in Melbourne Beach near Sebastian Inlet. "It's bright and airy, and I've never been disappointed with the food," he said. He and Brigitte also enjoy Pane E Vino next to the Oaks Theater in Melbourne, Yellow Dog Cafe on the river in Malabar, Matt's Casbah in downtown Melbourne and appetizers at the bar at the Chart House on the Indian River Lagoon in Melbourne. "Bonetish Willy's is definitely high on my favorites list," he said, of the river-front restaurant on Pineapple Avenue near Eau Gallie. And then there are the breakfast places. Blueberry Muffin in Indiantan and That Little Restaurant on North Wickham Road. One thing Brevard is a good missing, he said, is a good southern buffet with fried chicken. That's something easier to find on trips to North Carolina. All too soon, we were finished eating, and both of us had half our lunches in to-go boxes. Dave didn't steer me wrong on Harbor City Diner. The burger was tasty, a nice-sized patty on a buttery toasted roll. I'm glad he and Brigitte decided to make Florida their home. Now I can't wait to check out his bird-watching recommendations.