



Title 306

The Cosmos Club in Massachusetts Avenue



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The **Cosmos Club** in Washington DC, of which the Author was elected a member in 1986. The Exterior of the Club as seen from across Massachusetts Avenue and one of the beautifully decorated and furnished public rooms. *Courtesy Cosmos Club.*

## The Cosmos Club—Election

Title 306

I was elected a Member of the Savile Club, London, in 1958 [see Title 335] and therefore enjoyed the reciprocal privileges of the Cosmos Club in Washington during my frequent visits from the 1960s onwards. I was always able to stay at the Cosmos while I was working in the Nation's Capital and soon felt as much 'at home' there as in my London Club. When the chance came to be proposed for full membership by my two sponsors, Frederick I. Ordway III and Michael Michaelis, I was delighted, although I did not then realise that the procedure for election was more onerous than in London.

For the Cosmos Club, the nominee has to be proposed under one of the following categories: Meritorious original work; Well known to be cultivated; or Recognised as distinguished. My sponsors decided that my eligibility rested upon the fact that I was "Distinguished in Exchange of Scientific Information" and to support their case to the Admission Committee, I was asked to provide a list of my scientific publications. Not having striven for any academic position, I had never compiled such a list; but as I had kept copies of most of my published articles, I was soon able to send a list to Washington. I was surprised how long it was. [See Appendix 2, Authors Bibliography, Title 428]

In addition, my sponsors wanted to support their case by a list of Club Members who were personally acquainted with me, and there were eleven of these. I imagine they were asked to give their opinion about my eligibility, and as at least some of them must have written affirmatively, I was elected on 1 April 1986 as a non-resident Member. Election to the Savile Club had been much easier. There, my sponsor placed my name in a large book kept for this purpose and other members signed, if they approved.

Founded in 1878 by John Wesley Powell, distinguished explorer, scientist and public servant, the Cosmos Club has been described—rightly in my opinion—as "the home of Washington's intellectual élite". Enter the Club, and the visitor is confronted on the left by a wall of more than 51 framed photographs of Pulitzer Prize winners and on the right by more than 30 pictures of Nobel Prize winners, all members, past or present (Numbers as of 1997). No doubt that figure has increased since then and will continue to grow in years to come.

I was very proud when I was elected and particularly so when I learnt about the qualities of its Founder John Wesley Powell. [see *National Geographic* April 1994] He was the first white man to explore the Grand Canyon, the first Director of the US Geological Survey and the first Director of the Bureau of Ethnology of the Smithsonian Institution in 1879.