

The New York Times

October 25, 2007

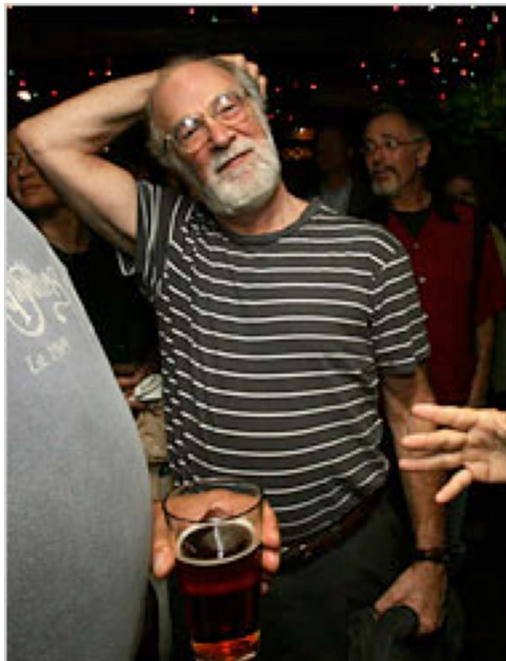
One More Storied Bar Falls Victim to Rising Rents

By WINTER MILLER



It seems to happen every day, a bar, a cafe, a mom-and-pop store linking New York to its past closes for the last time, usually swallowed up by rising rents. That's the final chapter for the All State Café, where the last pint was poured in the early hours yesterday.

But this closing signifies the end of a bar whose history is darker than most — one with its own niche in the annals of New York crime.



On the night of New Year's Day in 1973, Roseann Quinn, a schoolteacher and a regular, walked in for a drink at the bar, then called W. M. Tweeds. The man she left with raped her and stabbed her to death, a gruesome murder that became the inspiration for the book and movie "Looking for Mr. Goodbar" with Diane Keaton as the doomed teacher.

Glenn Johnson, a bar regular, said he was there that night. "I knew the real Roseann Quinn," said Mr. Johnson, a retired city police detective who did not

work on the case. “She wasn’t like they made her out to be.

“She didn’t pick up the guy here. He was her boyfriend’s friend and she was showing him around N.Y.C. They went to a couple of places that night before going back to her apartment. He decided he wanted her to be his girlfriend, and she didn’t want that. He went nuts and he killed her. It had nothing to do with her picking up guys.”

Still, like many bars with a long shelf life, its history now includes a murder.

Mr. Johnson said the bar was full of “salt and pepper and riffraff,” referring to the diverse customers, but he said the bartenders always looked out for the women who came in alone.

In April 1968, Stephen L. Resnick opened W. M. Tweeds, named for the 19th century political boss William M. (Boss) Tweed. After the Quinn murder, Mr. Resnick closed the bar and restaurant for a few months and reopened it as the All State Café, at 250 West 72nd Street between West End Avenue and Broadway.

Customers went four steps down to enter the All State Café, and once inside passed a telephone booth with a working pay phone (beside which, lore has it, John F. Kennedy Jr. and Daryl Hannah used to argue) and a jukebox. Beneath plaques of Little League teams that the bar had sponsored sat rows of wooden tables covered with carved initials. A small TV in the corner was the spot for nightly “Jeopardy!” viewing.

None of the regulars or employees seemed surprised that the bar was closing. The bar’s lease was set to expire in January, and Mr. Resnick, 64, said he and the landlord could not agree on terms for a renewal. But after a fire last week in the exhaust system above the kitchen, Mr. Resnick decided to shut down sooner. Still, no one believed it would actually happen. Workers could not name a single colleague who had lined up a job.

“It cannot be true; this is terrible,” said one longtime customer, Maya Sharma Purcell, 66, echoing an oft-expressed sentiment. “My child learned to be an adult in this place. I had my after-wedding breakfast in this place.”

Katie Adrian’s mother, Vanessa Drake, worked at the bar for 17 years. And Katie, 15, was herself newly hired as a hostess. “They’re my brothers and sisters, and the older staff I’ve known all my life, they’re like my uncles and aunts,” said Katie, wiping tears away.

On Tuesday night, people nibbled from a plate of cold cuts some customers had brought. The more pragmatic passed a clipboard to collect e-mail addresses to come up with a new place to convene. The problem was no one could suggest an alternative. Mr. Resnick, who described the closing of his bar as “the end of a lifetime,” listened



to a toast in his honor and ducked out into the humid October evening.

“I once tried to calculate the number of chickens I’d eaten,” said another longtime regular, Lyle Greenfield, 60. “Half a roast chicken three nights a week for let’s say 30 years.” Mr. Greenfield, who is a partner in a music production company, said he used to take first dates to the bar. A second date depended on whether they liked the place.

Hanging green lamps cast a smoky pall as patrons flouted the law and smoked indoors. The crowds thickened with a mix of bankers, Bohemians and baby boomers. Overwhelmingly, people compared the bar to the one in “Cheers.” Some even said James E. Burrows, one of the writers of “Cheers” and a regular customer, based Cliff Clavin, the pathetic postal worker, on another regular.

Mr. Burrows, reached by phone in Los Angeles, dismissed that rumor but remembered the bar fondly. “The All State influenced me in so many ways in knowing what a bar climate was,” he said. “There was a Norm in All State.” Norm, of course, was another regular at “Cheers.”

It was whispered that Kevin Bacon, the actor who once waited tables here between films in the mid-80s, would swoop in and buy the building. But Mr. Bacon, the Chip, as he was known at the bar for his debut role in the movie “Animal House,” was not going to save it.

Mr. Burrows summed it up for many, “It was a place, dare I say it, where everybody knows your name.” He would know.