New York

The New York Times

A Fixture That Became A Rarity

Cigarette Machines Go the Way of Smoke

By MICHAEL WILSON

There once existed in every city barroom a sort of scruffy, lively, lovely symphony that played without rest and without ovation. But its members are falling away; background sounds once familiar have been silenced. The jangle of the pay phone on the wall, the click of the lighter, the snap and hiss of a match being lighted.

To those retired players in New York City bars, add the hulking workhorse in the back of the pit. It played all night: thunk, thunk, thunk, as the coins dropped into the slot, followed by the grinding crank of unseen gears as the rod was yanked out. The short solo ended modestly, like a tap on a high hat, with the whisper of a pack of smokes wrapped in plastic film sliding into the tray below.

The cigarette machine.

Time was, a man knew the workings of his favorite bar's cigarette machine better than he knew his own refrigerator. But that machine, once as familiar as the bartender himself, is going the way of the product it sold. The ban on smoking in city bars took effect seven years ago, and since then, the number of cigarette machines has dropped sharply, from practically countless to

Use a lever to select a brand, then put in more money than ever before.

easily countable to a child with one hand otherwise occupied.

A quick and dirty survey of the smoke-free landscape produced only three cigarette machines — one in Manhattan and two in Queens — that date back to the technology of the century past, with the levers that are pulled to bring forth a pack of cigarettes. Are there perhaps more than three? It is hard to say without inspecting every single bar. But if so, the New York City Department of Finance, which requires licenses for cigarette machines, does not know about them.

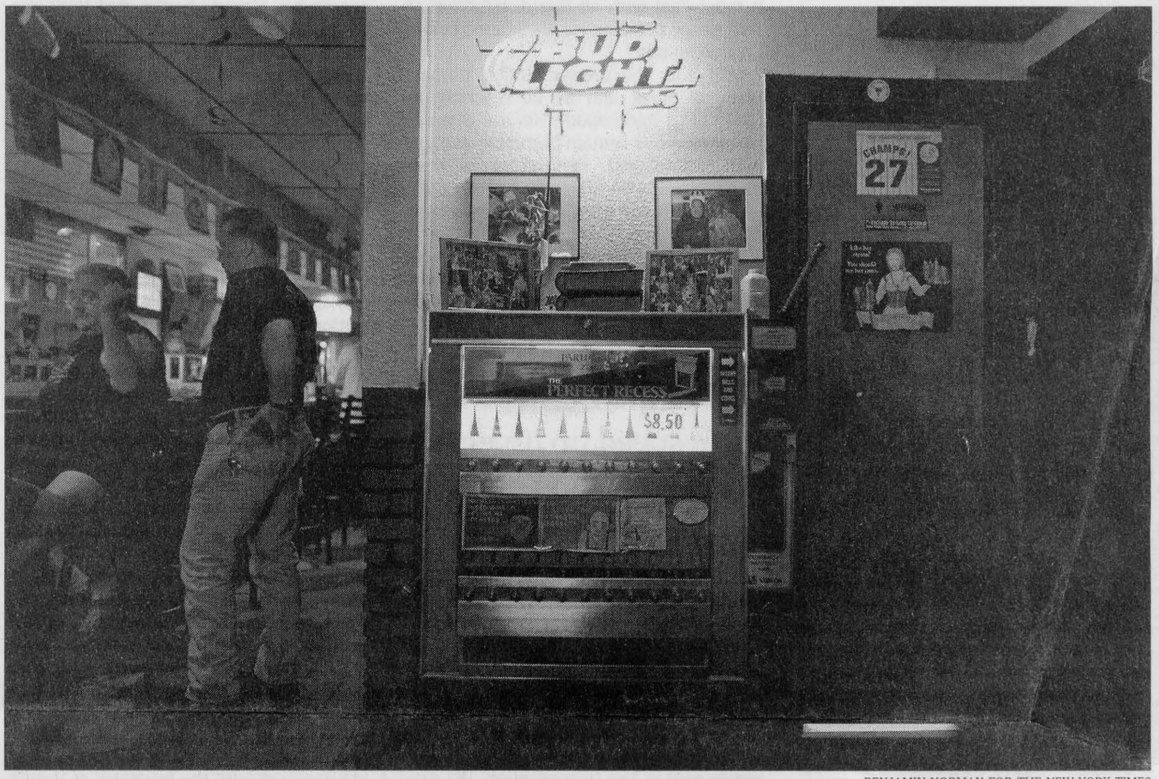
For the old machines still in use, life has gone on without pause or fanfare since the ban. There is one in J. Mac's, an old bar in the old Hell's Kitchen named for its 68-year-old Irish owner, an old man in this racket, John McAleese. "You can't buy cigarettes around here," he said from the bar, which is near the Hudson River, almost two blocks — all uphill — from the nearest deli on 10th Avenue. "If my customers leave at night for cigarettes, they never come back."

His machine sold all the popular brands — Marlboros, Newports, Parliaments — for $9 a pack, lower than the price at most bodegas, until the Legislature raised the cigarette tax last month.

Now the cost is $11. The machine sits in a corner of the tiny bar, under a stack of phone books and an odd statue of a Chinese warrior clutching an American flag. The machine is practically part of the bar; it is hard to tell where its back panel ends and the wall begins.

A vendor maintains the machine. "I've been trying to get him to replace some parts on it," Mr. McAleese griped. "There's a plate on the top that's missing, and a crack in the glass where it says 'Cigarettes.' The repairman did that."

But like so many machines that have come to be called low-tech, this one never failed. "It's all mechanical," Mr. McAleese said. "It don't break." Seeing it, smokers of a certain age — and sensible quitters — would remember well the satisfying resistance of that pulled lever, as if the machine were making you work a little bit for the reward to come. That nice loud ching-chang. The machine's only concession to modernity is the slot for $1 and $5 bills, sparing a smoker from having to lug around 44 quarters.



BENJAMIN NORMAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

The machine at Zachary Taylor's, above, in Flushing, Queens. John McAleese, below, is the owner of J. Mac's on West 57th Street, blocks from a deli. "If my customers leave at night for cigarettes," he said, "they never come back."

SUZANNE DeCHILLO/THE NEW YORK TIMES

The machine at J. Mac's predates its owner, a former engineer for the city Board of Education who came to it in an unusual fashion.

"I just came in here one night to buy a drink," he said.

The bar's owner was complaining so much, Mr. McAleese recalled: "I said, 'How much do you want for it?' It was an impulse purchase."

His girlfriend was not pleased. "Your little boys' club where you hang out with your cronies," she called it. But almost nine years later, business is fine most days; it was booming on the Fourth of July, with the crowds out for the fireworks on the Hudson.

The number of machines may soon, surprisingly, increase. Even as the old models disappear, their 21st century offspring are arriving. Several bars and nightclubs are being fitted with new, modern cigarette machines. They are shiny, electric, boxy affairs that look like the ones that spit out Cheez-Its in office break rooms. No rods, no levers — and not cheap, at $14.25 a pack. Karma, a bar in the East Village where smoking is permitted, got one last month and Trash Bar, in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, got one last week.

The state Department of Taxation and Finance said it gave out 1,238 stickers required for cigarette machines in 2008, the most recent year for which information was available. But the locations of the machines was not available, the department said.

In New York City, in the offices that keep track of these things, there is confusion. The city lists nine bars with machines — sort of. The information it provided for some was way off. For example, Zachary Taylor's is listed at 1 Lispenard Street in Manhattan, which is actually home to the tavern Nancy Whiskey, which got rid of its cigarette machine ages ago. Zachary Taylor's is in Flushing, Queens, and it still has a machine. The city listed another bar, College Green, at 36-19 24th Avenue, where in reality the club Albatross stands, with no machine. The real College Green, on Kissena Boulevard, has a machine; it charges $10.

Mr. McAleese's machine is serviced by S & J Vending, which is based in Brooklyn and also maintains video games, pool tables and jukeboxes. The profit margin on the cigarette machines is slim by comparison. An owner of the company said it once had 200 cigarette machines in New York City bars. Before hanging up without giving his name, he offered a bleak look at the future of his machines. "I don't know if I want to be bothered anymore," he said.

A Team, But Watch How You Put It

By CHARLES McGRATH

LAS VEGAS — Andre Agassi's new memoir, "Open," is an unusual addition to the shelves of jock autobiography. For one thing it's honest in a way that such books seldom are. Mr. Agassi famously admits that he took crystal meth and lied about it, and that he sometimes tanked matches he had no interest in playing. He also reveals that to amuse himself he lighted fires in hotel rooms, that his notorious mullet hairdo was partly a wig, that after 1997 he gave up wearing underwear on the court and that at his first wedding, to Brooke Shields, he wore lifts in his shoes so she could wear heels.

"A lot of the things that have been said about me aren't true, and a lot of the things I used to say about myself aren't true. Part

How a tennis star and a Pulitzer winner collaborated.

of my story is something I'm ashamed of," Mr. Agassi said on Tuesday before a publicity event at the Wynn hotel here, his hometown. He had signed so many copies of "Open" that his signature had come to resemble a runic symbol or a snippet of electrocardiogram. "I knew in the book I had to expose everything. I think the reader can tell when you're holding back, and I also wanted to see my own narrative come into focus. The truth is always surprising."

Mr. Agassi's book is also an uncommonly well-written sports memoir, and part of the credit for that belongs to J. R. Moehringer, Mr. Agassi's collaborator, who insisted that his name appear neither on the cover nor the title page. "The midwife doesn't go home with the baby," he said on Tuesday. "It's Andre's memoir, not our memoir, not a memoir 'as told to.' It's his accomplishment, and he made the final choices." He added that in September, before the book went to press, he wanted to change the final line,

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Though They're a Team, Watch How You Put It

From First Arts Page

but Mr. Agassi wouldn't let him. "He explained the ending of the book to me. He understood it better than I did."

Writing in The New York Times, Janet Maslin said of "Open" that "somebody on the memoir team has great gifts for heart-tugging drama." Mr. Moehringer, who at the beginning of his career worked briefly at The Times, is a former Pulitzer Prize-winning newspaperman and the author of "The Tender Bar," a well-received 2005 memoir about growing up fatherless in Manhasset, N.Y., and finding role models at a pub. Mr. Agassi, a ninth-grade dropout whose father was so tyrannical and tennis-crazed that his son has spent much of his life trying to create an alternate family for himself, read the book in 2006. He was so taken by it, he said, that he began to ration the pages, hoping to make it last longer.

That August he called Mr. Moehringer, who was then working for The Los Angeles Times, and proposed they collaborate on a book.

Mr. Moehringer was initially reluctant. He had a number of friends who had worked on book projects with athletes, he said, and they all advised against it. Typically, they warned, the athlete gives you about 30 hours and then never talks to you again until you turn in a manuscript, and then he draws a line through anything you've written that's remotely interesting.

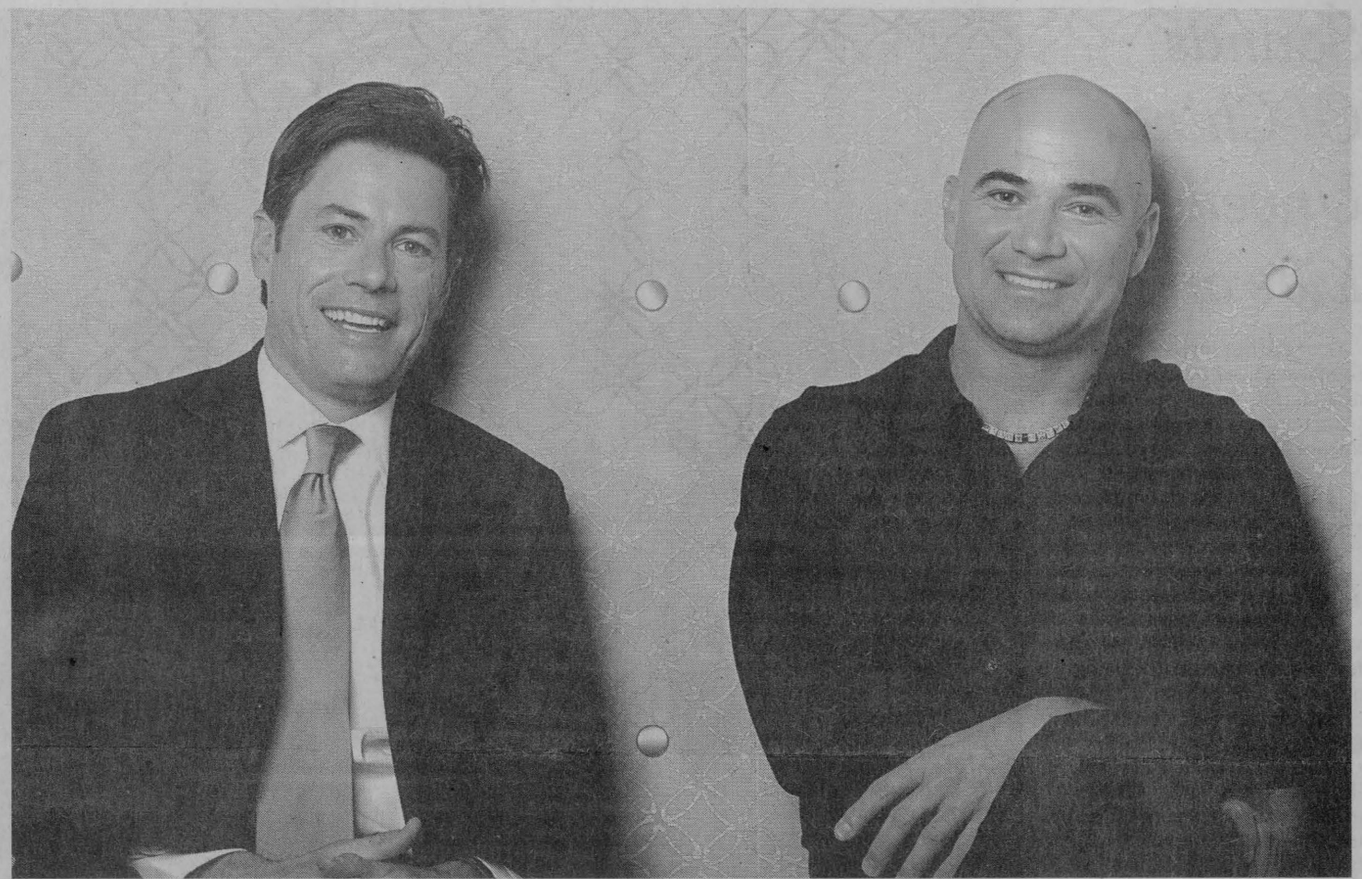
But Mr. Agassi, known for wearing down opponents on the court, was dogged. "I wanted to see my life through the lens of Pulitzer Prize winner," he said, adding that he and Mr. Moehringer, who at almost 45 is about six years older, sometimes seemed like "brothers from a different mother."

Mr. Moehringer and his employer, meanwhile, were no longer getting along. "The paper asked me to go out to Palm Springs and write a profile of the world's oldest chimp, Cheetah from the Tarzan movies," he recalled, rolling his eyes a little. "I wanted to be a team player, so I went out there, met the chimp and did the piece. I wrote it in the chimp's voice."

The editors, he said, leaned on him for rewrite after rewrite of the article, to the point that he thought of quitting. "But my friends talked me out of it," he went on. "They said I would go down in history as the guy who quit over a chimp story." There were still more rewrites, but in the end Mr. Moehringer didn't quit over that. Instead he took a providential buyout and called Mr. Agassi.

Their collaboration was so intense that Mr. Moehringer wound up moving to Las Vegas, and their taping sessions together, some 250 hours in all, sometimes resembled psychoanalysis. "Our first few interviews were just painful," Mr. Moehringer recalled. "He was completely locked — stilted, resistant, halting. His memory was crystalline about matches but not about relationships. He hadn't reached any conclusions about them and couldn't make connections."

Gradually, though, Mr. Agassi loosened up. Mr. Moehringer, meanwhile, was reading Freud, Jung, mythology — anything he could find that would help explain Mr. Agassi's tortured psyche. "Freud was a big help," he recalled. "Especially 'Civilization and Its Discontents' and the idea of a death instinct. One of the pillars of Andre's personality was



ISAAC BREKKEN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

J. R. Moehringer, left, and Andre Agassi in Las Vegas on Tuesday. They collaborated on Mr. Agassi's memoir, "Open."

A close effort indeed: 'I felt like we were Gilbert and Sullivan.'

his self-destructiveness, and I realized that I had been pushing away the idea that this could be an organic part of his nature."

Mr. Agassi recalled that both during the interviews and later, when the two of them pored over the transcripts together, he sometimes felt he was in an intense tennis match. "I have a lot of capacity for pain, but I didn't understand how hard this process would be. I was being asked to talk about the subject I know least about: me."

All along, Mr. Moehringer said, he and Mr. Agassi had been talking about the nature of memoir and the different forms it can take. But when the time came to make a narrative out of the thousands of pages of transcript and to find a voice in which to tell it, he was, for a while, at a loss. "I knew I had to get rid of the journalist's voice," he said. "I also knew that you damn yourself if you think that you have to imitate Andre's voice."

Among other models, he was reading Bertrand Russell's memoir, which is full of connections, conclusions and deft one-sentence summaries. "I thought, well, that's not in our toolbox, but what if Andre's was the complete opposite? He could be the bizarro Bertrand Russell: present tense, no quotation marks, sort of stream of consciousness."

"The ease with which Mr. Moehringer slips into telling someone else's story is both consummate and spooky," Ms. Maslin wrote. Mr. Moehringer said that some of the book's best passages come almost line for line from the transcripts and that he and Mr. Agassi went over and over the final text, sometimes word by word. "I felt like we were Gilbert and Sullivan," he said, and added: "Andre was always the final arbiter. When he attacks a book, he attacks it. It's one of the great crimes: What would his life have been like if his father were language-obsessed instead of tennis-obsessed?"

Mr. Moehringer spent so many hours pretending to be Mr. Agassi, he recalled, that it was sometimes a jolt when the real Andre would turn up at the end of a day. "It was like, how can you be here when I've already been you?" he said, adding, "It was good training for fiction writing, which is what I hope to do next. I hope to replicate the whole process with someone who doesn't exist."

—*Irish Tourist Board*

THE DUBLIN BARFLY'S BOOK OF ETIQUETTE

by CONOR O'BRIEN

There is a favorite illusion about Dublin, never seriously refuted by its denizens, that it is generously endowed with pubs exclusively patronized by bright-eyed men whose nonstop conversation is so devastatingly witty that no outsider dare ope his lips in their company. Invariably, they wear no neckties, their hair is black and tousled, their faces ruddy, and their voices increase in volume as they strive to outdo each other in brilliant repartee. All have the manuscripts of unfinished plays in their inside pockets.

Once, some of us Dubliners did our best to put the record right, to emphasize the bleaker reality. We were getting the message across as gently as we could when along came the incomparable Brendan Behan. Invariably, he wore no necktie, his hair was black and tousled, his face ruddy, and his voice increased in volume. His arrival set us truth-propagators back a full generation. Not only was Brendan available to visitors at all times in every Dublin pub simultaneously, he also went on tour, scattering his wit and exuberance around the drinking houses of New York, London, and Paris. The myth got new currency among those anxious to believe it; they passed the stories on with extravagant embellishments; and so reality went back to square one.

What, then, is the truth about Dublin pubs and their inhabitants? In a vast area of uncertainty the only absolute is that nobody has replaced Behan. You may find some posturing minnows in a few of the haunts I shall mention later, but those are the fakes, the professional Irishmen in search of wide-eyed tourists who buy them drinks in return for a bout of verbal chicanery. Give them a whiskey if they amuse you, but make it a small one. Buy them a second and you have either made a discovery or are too drunk to drive back to your hotel.

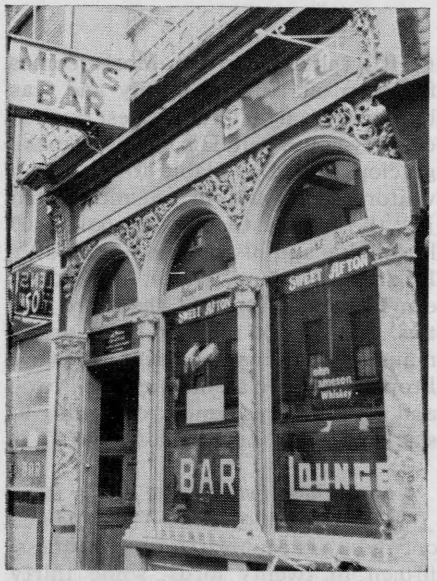
Even these impostors are rare enough. More often than not the Dublin drinker is predictable—solemn, silent, and sometimes solitary in the afternoon, garrulous and declamatory in the evening as he surrounds himself with a constantly increasing circle of friends. Is it so different in bars anywhere else in the world? My experience in this context is obviously limited, but it is a fact that we Dubliners talk far more than, say, New York bar lizards. Our improvidence with words usually varies proportionately with the consumption of fuel. For the outsider, the challenge is to select with precise accuracy the optimum moment for joining one of these highly charged groups; too soon (before two pints of

stout have settled into the blood stream) and one runs the risk of being treated merely as an outsider; too late (after the square root of two pints to the power of four) and one is certain to be overwhelmed by a tide of amicable near incoherence.

Sophisticated Americans are well aware of the Irish (and British) system of buying "rounds." Four men and four women walk into the pub, and at once there is much agitation among the men for the honor of buying the first round. The winner of this joust will buy drinks for all eight in the party, but the "round" system decrees that each of the other men will cough up his round at appropriate later stages. It is a heinous practice that invariably results in moderate drinkers taking more than they want or is good for them. But it is the law of the Dublin pub. The solitary American who establishes contact with such a group is advised to contribute his round and get just as jarred as they are. But where there are two or more, it is quite in order to establish firmly and politely that, although they are glad to be admitted to the general company, they prefer to buy their own drinks.

The staple drink in most Dublin pubs is either Irish whiskey (we insist on the "e" in the spelling) or Guinness stout. Both are acquired habits—some might say too habitually acquired. Take your whiskey with not too much water and sip it slowly. If you want to try stout, order only a half pint to start. The uninitiated palate will find it strange and heavy and malty, but it has an impressive pedigree, and patient application will finally produce

(*Continued on page* 77)



Dublin pub—Solemn in the afternoon, garrulous and declamatory at night.

TRADITIONAL PUBS

RYAN'S OF PARKGATE STREET (near Heuston railway terminus). If you want to see what a Dublin pub looked like more than a century ago, this is the place. Most of the furnishing is sparse, but genuine, Victoriana. The rest, such as the wood panels and seats, are honest, modern attempts to re-create the times. In general, the rule is men only, but there are four splendid "snugs," small areas partitioned off from the rest of the bar, any of which a lady may enter with complete propriety. Not all that long ago a woman seen in a pub had as good as surrendered her virtue; so the private snug was introduced to satisfy husbands who were insane enough to want a quiet drink with their wives. Most other traditional pubs have these snugs, but I believe Ryan's is unique in preserving the old system whereby nobody can get in until the barman has released a central locking device on each of the snug doors. It's not exactly Houston Control, but it works admirably. Remarkably, in terms of Dublin pubs, the toilets are spotless.

THE LONG HALL (O'Brien's of South Great George's Street). The long hall is, in fact, a very narrow passage behind the right-hand entrance and will probably prove to be much too confining for normal drinkers. At the far end is a lounge full of interesting prints, but also full of silent patrons less interested in chat than in the blaring television set. Turn left, enter the main bar, and take a deep breath. You have stepped into the nineteenth century, and the décor has all the trimmings of a flamboyant era that gave genuine craftsmen their heads in the decoration of public places. There is a superb bar of ancient dark oak, highly polished brass fittings, some lovely glass and mirrors, all lit by splendid candelabra. Note the magnificent plates along the walls, also the clocks. The Long Hall should be in Dublin's list of museums. Despite the grandeur, plain folk drink here and ladies are welcome. A tip: A very tolerable brandy is served for about 50 cents, appreciably lower than current Dublin prices.

CHATTY PUBS

NEARY'S (Chatham Street, which is just off Grafton Street). Theater people, business executives, and Bright Young Things. Good plain food available, such as salads and plates of meat.

Two pubs favored by journalists and writers are the SILVER SWAN (George's Quay, on the River Liffey near the railway bridge) and the PEARL BAR in Fleet Street. The best talk in both of these starts at about 9 p.m. when the journalists are taking their half-hour supper break.

In term time the universities have their nests. University College students (all 11,000 of them) talk their heads off in KIRWAN HOUSE (bottom of Leeson Street, near St. Stephen's Green), while Trinity College gravitates toward the LINCOLN INN (near the back entrance to the college) or MOONEY'S (of College Street, near the central police station!). These are all pleasant spots, but distinguished by their inhabitants rather than by the pubs themselves.

CURIOSITY PUBS

THE BRAZEN HEAD (Bridge Street). Right in the heart of medieval Dublin and under the magisterial shadow of Christ Church Cathedral. The Brazen Head claims, and justifiably so, to be the city's oldest pub. It got a formal license to serve drink in 1666, but it existed as an inn in the 1100s when the Town of the Black Pool was under the influence of Norman land-grabbers. The present building, of course, is nothing so ancient as this, but its age is undeniably formidable. It is full of historical bric-a-brac which Mr. Cooney will be glad to explain. The murky atmosphere and an uncompromising reverence for the past don't exactly add up to the most comfortable pub in Dublin, but it can't fail to impress you. Sometimes in the evening a spontaneous sing-song adds an incongruous, but thoroughly enjoyable, new dimension to the surroundings. Best at weekends.

SINGING PUBS

The unwary tourist has to enter this difficult and largely uncharted alcoholic area with very great caution. "Here Be Wilde Beasts." In theory there are several Dublin pubs that provide organized entertainment while you drink. Usually some singing by a professional is the

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Dublin Barfly's Book

Continued from page 45

that consummation devoutly wished by all true imbibers.

What is a Dublin pub? It is, above all, a place of rest and release, but in that it is no different from drinking houses the world over. The Dublin Thing is that the stranger can slip so very easily into instant companionship. If he is full of himself and tries to monopolize the general conversation, his chances of being accepted are slim. But if he has something of interest to say, or if he wants advice, he will have a warmly sympathetic group around him in no time. A Dublin pub is a place where you do *not* talk about women, sex, or marital difficulties, not because of any moral fastidiousness, but because these subjects are boring. Above all, a Dublin pub is as discreet as a convent. Phone a well-run alehouse and the barmen will rarely give away the fact that this is so-and-so's pub. Some patron may have left a note for his boss that he was doing a bit of business but that he could be contacted at a certain number. Ask for somebody by name and the really expert barman will reply with a baffled "Who?" as if he had never heard of him. He knows, and the caller knows, that the man is never out of the pub, but first-degree torture wouldn't drag admission from the barman.

This discretion is neatly stated in a framed cartoon in one Dublin pub. A barman leans across the counter and whispers into the ear of a customer: "Mr. G. was in, Mr. O., but he said nothing about the other thing."

Singing Pubs

Continued from page 45

centerpiece, the rest of the evening being filled by the customers. The lady from Liverpool will make a shrill declamation about the Biggest Aspidistra in the World; the American will persuade you with enormous vigor that a Yankee named Doodle Dandy was the nonpareil of the free world; and at least half a dozen locals will bawl out the sorrows of Ireland in nasal decibels that render all conversation impossible. All good clean fun. In practice, however, it is wise to be selective.

Your indomitable correspondent, purely in the interest of up-to-the-minute accuracy, has crawled from each of the pubs mentioned in this article to others that are not. Suffering reached its highest point in some of the singing pubs. Nearly all depended on electronic overamplification; most of them encouraged music that was on the way out ten years ago. This appeals to the Ancient Britons, who are the mainstay of Irish tourism, and sometimes like to feel they are joining the young scene, man. Invariably, however, the American visitor wants what he calls a "real Irish night."

He will certainly find it at Howth, a wee hump of land that sticks out into the north side of Dublin Bay. Expensive houses are separated by great banks of wild heather and rough, reddish stone. If you are a sturdy walker, climb the lush, winding roads to the top of the hill; if you are not, drive there. In either case, time it so that you arrive at the summit for sunset. Given a fine evening, you will never forget its still and scarlet peace.

The point of this outdoor exercise is to give you an appetite for a fish supper in the ABBEY TAVERN, which is tucked away in Howth village at the bottom of the hill. Don't be put off by the gloomy light, the sparse, bare wooden beams. The food is good, and the entertainment afterward upstairs in the barn is uncompromisingly Irish. Ballads, booze, and infectiously gay. But the word has got around, and it is imperative that you book well in advance.

Less sophisticated, but more genuinely traditional, are the fun and games at SLATTERY'S, of Capel Street, tucked away in an unfashionable area off the River Liffey. There are two pubs of the same name in this street; the one you are looking for is farther away from the river, on the corner of Mary's Abbey. There is an informal simplicity about this place that is endearing. Climb the stairs and pay the 50-cent cover charge. Grope through the dim lighting, find a seat, and [illegible] to let your ear get accustomed to the whimpering beat of the music. This strange melody has so many centuries behind it that it defies description. As do Dublin pubs.

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Sat.

Tom Harry's doubts abt passing Med Lodge to Proxy's daughter
Bill Reinking calls it the jr. syndrome...

I'd seen too much of the Junior syndrome, as I've heard it called. Fathers who can't let go of a ranch, even when their sons or sons-in-law as good a rancher as there ever was, start to get long in the tooth. I watched my neighbor, Dill Egan, get that way, not able to turn decisions over to his son Mike even when Dill was in his eighties and Mike was damn near sixty. So my offer and Marcella's to Riley and Maria had been that we I would get out of the picture, move into town and do our best to keep our mouths shut. (Lexa and Steve told us what we already knew, that they couldn't be gotten out of Alaska except at gunpoint.) I even argued the matter with Riley, pointing out he could have a setup about like mine with Kenny, having somebody else doing the day-by-day running of the place. He was always wanting to write a book, wasn't he? He could sit up there on the ranch and write until he wore his fingers off.

"It wouldn't work, Jick."

"Why the hell not?"

"I've spent too much of my life getting away from a ranch."

"But this one doesn't have any of that family stuff attached. I mean it, about staying out of your hair if you take the place. That's the way Pete Reese passed it to me, and that's the way I'd want to pass it to you and Maria."

Tom Harry

Those religions which feature years of solitude and silence, I have grave doubts about. Sheepherders too spend time alone and in most cases their minds simply tend to unravel. That's maybe not entirely fairm assessment. A ~~Pete~~ Sam Hoy

OO was one of those herders who talks to his dog, to his horse, to the sheep, anything for his voice to go into.

Gr~~andma told me~~ that her sons used to ~~send away for~~ free mailings and ~~give~~ put down grandiloquent ~~return~~ addresses: Sageubrush Avenue or Jackrabbit Street. I tried it a few times, and it made ~~the day,~~ all right.

Living in Ringling was like carrying on your life behind a pane of glass. Since every house ~~sat out~~ stood off by itself, with the ~~land~~ slope rising enough to give each site a clear view, everything was seen, more than everything was known. I was in a period when I wanted to bat a ball by the hours, but it was embarrassing to be playing in front of the whole town. When Angus and my older cousins might drive by, I would let the bat trail behind me as if it unexpectedly had flipped into my hand and give a vague half-wave as if I weren't sure who they were and ~~thus~~ so they couldn't be sure who I was.

There was always a large gray canker a few feet from the front step where we threw wash water and ashes, I think even emptied the slop pail. The chickens ~~[illegible]~~ picked away the slops, but the lye of the soap and ashes had killed the ground for good.

Browning always seemed to be a stunned town, snuffling in its own dust and bleary from booze or boredom or both. The streets were chuckholed.

On our provisioning trips, we would buy groceries for a week or two, fill the gas barrel in the back of the Jeep, see if there was any mail. Grandma won a set of china in a drawing at the grocery store, the last thing in the world we needed to pack around the reservation with us.

We found a saint ~~The~~ Browning Indians ~~were~~ even more mauled ~~mysterious~~ than those who came to Dupuyer: squinly leather-colored people, some with black braids dropping from under their cowboy hats, They dipped and veered along the sidewalk; entire families drunk. The saloons were such millraces of whiskey as to shake even Dad. I see now that theirs was a flattened culture, mauled by the loss of tribal ways.

The house in Ringling was three small rooms and a path. It had one of the signs of long residency -- the outhouse had to be moved.

The first several months, there was no water. We carried it in buckets from the Badgetts' ~~well~~ pump.

A gray scab of ground where dishwater was tossed, an ash pile, a load of firewood dumped behind the house. More visible signs of how people lived in those days.

There was one lawn in town, a small scarf of green around the house where the Brekkes lived. The house before them had been owned by a couple who taught school, and the house ever after seemed to have learning and order about it. The Brekke family read; I could borrow back issues of magazines, books.

Just down the slope from us lived Les and Dot Gassett, who if anything seemed to be worse off than we were. Les was a ranch hand, a quiet block of a man who had bought the saloon and ran it with little excitement and less profit.

The Badgetts shored us up. Not only did we get our water from their pump and buy our eggs fresh from their chicken house, any visiting or sharing of meals was with the Badgetts.

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A minute to compose myself was definitely required, and I moved to the side of the Bago that was out of the wind and stood looking at the town, the main street born wide because freight wagons and their spans of oxen or workhorses had needed maneuvering room, the twin processions of businesses, dead and alive, now aligned along that original route, other streets angling squarely out to rows of homes, the high lattice of cottonwood limbs above those neighborhoods. The dark up there beyond the trees was just beginning to soften, the first of the hourlong suggestion of light before actual sunrise.

more

more

With all the cars and pickups parked on Main Street at this usually empty hour and only one building alight, Gros Ventre looked busy in an odd concentrated way, as if one behavior had entirely taken over and shoved all other concerns out of the way. Maybe that is what a holiday is. I gazed across the street at the crowd of heads behind the plate