

Drop In Lounge

1420 South Cushman Street, Fairbanks

(907) 374-5053

License issued: 1956 to Robert and Doris Gavin

CLOSED October 2024

Amenities: Pool tables, dart boards, foosball, TVs.

Find them Online: <https://drop-in-lounge.edan.io/>

History and Notoriety: Robert “Bob” Gavin and his wife Doris opened the Drop In Café on June 13, 1950. It had four tables, a counter, and several slot machines. At the time, it was the only restaurant in Fairbanks that was open 24 hours a day.

Bob was born in Florida in 1922, and Doris was born in North Carolina in 1931. Bob served in WWII and was later stationed at Eielson Air Force Base in Fairbanks. After being discharged, he proposed to Doris over the phone, and they both drove from North Carolina to Fairbanks in February 1949. They bought the lot at 1420 Cushman Street, that was outside the city limits, and built the Drop In. They enlarged the café in 1953 and got a beer and wine license in 1954. When an additional soda fountain failed to make a profit, they decided to add a lounge and dining room. Grand opening was on June 16, 1956.

During the 1960’s, the Drop In was a popular place for organizations to meet. Toastmasters, Lions Club, Kiwanis Club, League of Women Voters, Chamber of Commerce, and the Alaska State Employees Association all met there. Bob passed away in 1972, and Doris married Ted Willner in 1974.

Many old-time Fairbanks residents associate the Drop In with El Sombrero. Rex Gavin (Bob’s brother) and Doris bought the small Mexican restaurant on Gaffney Road and moved it to the Drop In in 1977. Diners could get American food in the front of the building and Mexican food in the back.

Doris and Ted owned the Drop In until 1987. Rex Gavin and his wife Bonnie were the owners on and off until 2000. Basil and JoEllen Foxx bought it in 2002, and in 2006, JoEllen started collecting photos of the Drop In and its customers with the intent of creating a wall of pictures to showcase the history. Unfortunately, a fire in the kitchen in January 2008 forever closed El Sombrero and also closed the bar until 2011. William Pearson Jr. is the current owner.

Visiting the Drop In: This historic bar is in good shape and is a hangout for locals. What was once the El Sombrero is now the game room. The Drop In is a cash only bar.

**ANNOUNCING THE
GRAND OPENING**

of the

Dining Room & Cocktail Lounge

Sat. June 16th 5:00 P.M.

COME ONE! COME ALL!

"Drop in Around the Clock at the Drop Inn"

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner 06/16/1956



MODERNIZATION—The Drop-In Cafe and Bar at 14th and Cushman streets recently was renovated by owner Robert Gavin and now sports a modern front complete

with second floor front added. The job was one of several business construction projects this summer.

(Staff photo)

Fairbanks Daily News-Miner 08/11/1971



Photo by Deb McAtee – 10/23/2023



Photo by Deb McAtee – 10/23/2023



Photo by Bruce Randall *Fairbanks, Alaska* Facebook group
09/03/2025