



Polaris Bar

200 Bering Street, Nome, AK 99762 (907) 443-5102
64°29'55"N 165°24'39"W

License Issued: 1949 to May Bale

DESTROYED BY FIRE October 31, 2017

Amenities: Pool tables, TVs, juke box, large TV screens, DJ, occasional live music, food, liquor store, hotel

Web Site: Facebook YouTube

History and Notoriety: May Bale moved to Nome in 1925. Originally from Sweden, she was described as “diminutive and petite” yet soon owned mining claims and a dog sled team. By 1936 she was also managing a hotel and beer parlor in Nome, known first as the Mayfair Tavern and later as May’s Cocktail Bar and Lounge. In February of 1949, she opened the brand-new Polaris Hotel, and by the end of that year, the Polaris included a bar and coffee shop. She decided to close her bar and focus on the Polaris, but by 1955, she had sold the entire operation. She bought it back in 1960, and then sold it again in 1964, this time to Jim and Margaret West (owners of the BOT) and Chuck Reader (owner

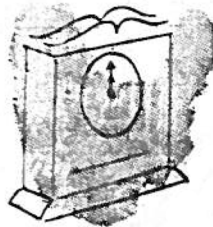
of the Safety Roadhouse). May lived the rest of her life in the Nome area and died in 1979 at the age of 89.

James Kealiher bought the Polaris in 1973 and sold it to John Knox and Norman Stiles in 1979. John and Norm owned the bar until 1993, when they sold it to Kwan and Tina Yi, who are the current owners.

During the mid-1980's, a local artist who called himself Marvelous Marv drew caricatures of the Polaris patrons, adding "Nome" to many of their first names. One wall of the Polaris is adorned with these framed drawings. More recently, a cartoon drawing of a cat drunkenly reclining in a cocktail glass, with the slogan "Happiness is a tight pussy" has become the official logo of the bar, and appears on souvenir t-shirts, tokens, hats, etc.

Visiting the Polaris Bar: This bar is very similar to sports bars in the Lower 48 and includes a huge flat screen at the back. Karaoke is popular here, as is the annual Halloween party. During the Iditarod, the Polaris hosts a karaoke contest and a pool tournament. However, what really packs the Iditarod crowds in are the Wet Buns (Men's) and the Wet T-shirt (Women's) contests. People of all ages, shapes and sizes make these events extremely entertaining.

Author's Note: The Polaris Hotel, Bar, Restaurant, and Liquor Store were destroyed by fire on October 31, 2017. One woman died in the blaze. It took more than seven hours to bring the fire under control. The bar has not been rebuilt.



*And all
the cheer
of the
New Year is rightfully yours
for the taking.*

**POLARIS HOTEL
BAR and COFFEE SHOP**

From the *Nome Daily Nugget* - December 22, 1949



Polaris Bar circa 1960
Joe Redington Collection – property of the Anchorage Museum



Photo by the author - May 14, 2011



Photo by the author - May 14, 2011



Photo by the author - May 14, 2011



Photo by John Handeland - October 31, 2017