

## Tommy's Elbow Room

410 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave.

1947 - 2003



**Title: Downtown Fairbanks.**

Identifier: uaa-hmc-0991-b4-f47-30

Collection Name: Bill Bacon photograph files, 1945-2004. UAA-HMC-0991

**Description: View of street in downtown Fairbanks. Lacey St Theater is seen at the end of the road. Other signs above stores include Chena Bar on left side of street and Tommy's Elbow Room on right side of street. Cars are parked on both sides of the street. Photo taken 1955-1977.**



**Archives. University of Alaska. Fairbanks**

**Title:** Second Avenue, Fairbanks.

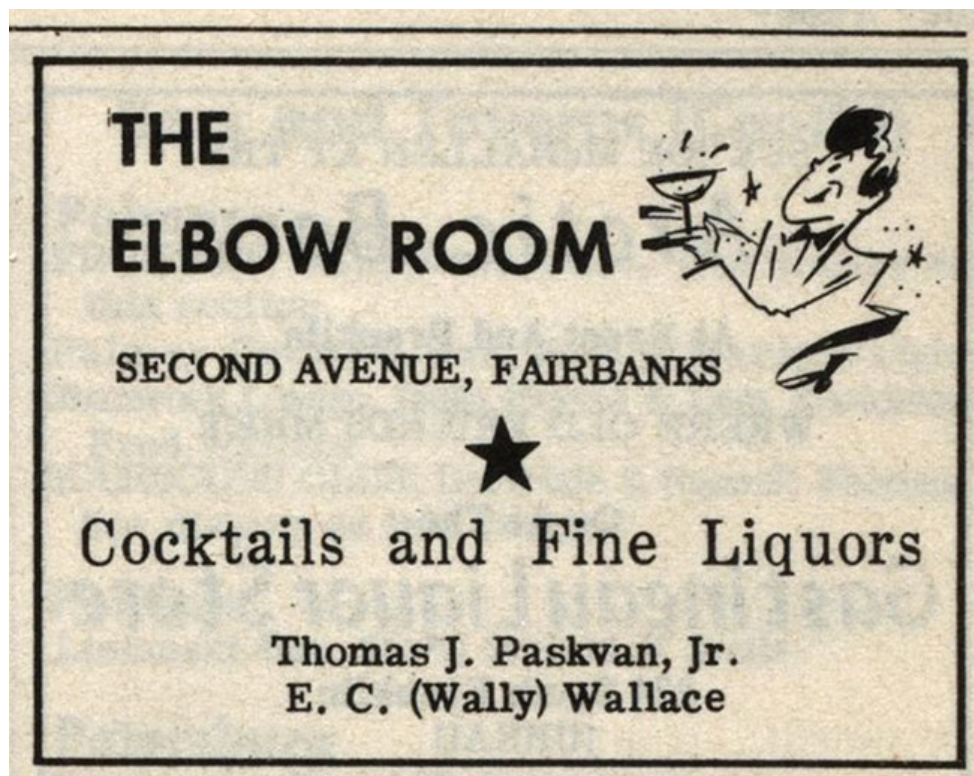
Collection Name: Russell Knapp Papers

Identifier: UAF-2015-126-293

**Description:** The finding aid indicates photos were taken from 1966-1969.



Photo by Doug Vandegraft – 2021



*Alaska Business Directory* by William Tewkesbury - 1948



# FREE!

**BOBO OLSON**  
Middleweight Champ

vs.

**RALPH "Tiger" JONES**  
Challenger

BLOW BY BLOW—9:00 P.M. ON  
**TOMMY'S ELBOW ROOM**

**TONIGHT! TONIGHT!**

410 - 2ND AVENUE

FDNM 04/06/1955

Stop in and enjoy the warmth of the fireplace centralized in an atmosphere conducive to fine dining and a worldwide cuisine of fine food & cocktails.

Open from 11 a.m., 7 days a week.



*the*  
**Firelite  
Room**

Adjoining TOMMY'S ELBOW ROOM  
410 Second • 452-6212

Perhaps you'd like our . . .  
**"TROUT ALMONDINE"**  
Rainbow Trout sauteed in butter with toasted almonds.

FDNM 02/01/1974



Courtesy of Joyce Paskvan

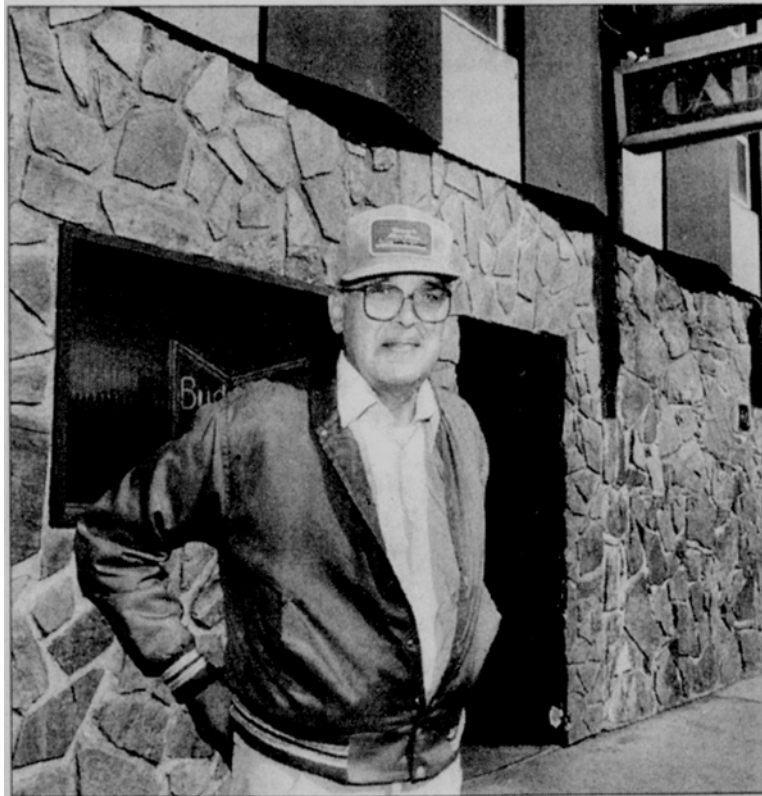
A Toastmasters meeting at Tommy's semi-circular bar, circa 1962.

*FDNM 03/09/2008*



Howard Rock – Photo property of Tuzzy Consortium Library (TT.01189)

Mr. Rock spent many hours at the Elbow Room working on the  
Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971.



News-Miner File Photo, Nora Gruner

**DOWNTOWN FIXTURE**—Tommy Paskvan, owner of Tommy's Elbow Room, stands outside his business in this Aug. 23, 1991 file photo. The 83-year-old Paskvan, who ran the downtown bar for 47 years, died Tuesday morning following a long battle with Parkinson's Disease.

**Thomas J. "Tommy" Paskvan Jr. 1919 – 2003**

*Fairbanks Daily News-Miner 09/14/2003*

## **Obituary**

Thomas J. "Tommy" Paskvan

Thomas Joseph Paskvan, 83, died on September 11, 2003, in Fairbanks.

Born to Thomas and Catherine Toldo Santini Paskvan on November 21, 1919, in Aurora, Minnesota, Tommy was an only son with three loving sisters. His favorite pastime was ice skating. He always said, "I could skate before I could walk."

Tommy played hockey and basketball for Aurora High School and was a National Honor Society member. At Eveleth Junior College, Tommy joined both Sigma Phi Alpha—an honorary men's club for scholarship, sportsmanship and fellowship—and the Catholic service group Knights of Columbus.

In Fairbanks, Tommy became head Knight, president of the Catholic school association and a Toastmaster. At the University of Alaska Fairbanks, Tommy studied mining engineering. As a Nanook, he was a hockey forward and lead scorer as well as a basketball center/forward.

Tommy served in Alaska from 1942 to 1946 in the Army. **With dreams, ambition, hard work and a \$10,000 veterans' loan, he built Tommy's Elbow Room with concrete and steel. Tommy's was a popular sports bar, meeting place for students, reporters, businesspeople, politicians and featured in Time magazine for Alaska statehood. In the early 70's, he expanded his business to prepare for the oil boom by adding office space and a restaurant that became the Cabaret discotheque. Tommy's operated in six decades and was sold in 1993. Tommy was the longest single liquor license holder in Alaska.**

**Tommy's sponsored many sports teams, believing that sports build character and make the world a better place. His basketball and softball teams proudly earned many state championships.**

As a founding member and president of Yukon Power for America, "Mr. Rampart Dam" envisioned inexpensive electricity and fresh water export to the Lower 48 states.

In July 1950 at Paxson Lodge, Tommy met Joyce Potter who was visiting from Michigan. Joyce was a hospital dietician and sister of Rose and Catherine Ringstad. Tommy proposed September 25, 1950. They married January 27, 1951, in Stephenson, Michigan. Ice fog hindered his airplane's approach to Fairbanks but when the pilot heard Tommy needed to take this plane to his wedding a successful landing occurred!

Tommy was 1965 Father of the Year in Fairbanks while they were expecting their ninth child. Tommy supported family, church, education, community and team sports. Respected in the community, cherished by family, he will be dearly missed.

Tommy and Joyce were blessed with nine children: Joe (Barb), Steve (Susan), Margie, George (Cynthia), Charlie, Gloria (Mike), Bonnie (Ron), Frank (Betsy), and Ted (Katie); 19 grandchildren Nicole, Chelsea, Tommy, Ryan, Jason, Adam, David, Laura, Tammy, Pamela, Georgina, Michael, Michelle, Mark, William, Savannah, Danika, Kendra and Samantha; and two great-grandchildren: Kalynn and Malieh. All reside in Alaska.

A memorial service will be held at Sacred Heart Cathedral at 5:15 p.m., Monday, September 15. A reception will follow at River's Edge Resort.

Though Parkinson's is a progressive, degenerative and fatal disease, Tommy lived in hope of research and a cure. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his name to the National Parkinson's Foundation, 1-800-327-4525.

Arrangements were by Chapel of Chimes Funeral Home.

Last updated 09/15/2003

<http://thomas.paskvan.net/uaf/obituary.html>

## Fairbanksans take time out to reflect, reminisce about Tommy's Elbow Room

By REBECCA GEORGE  
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It's said you can never go home, but for a few hours Wednesday night, locals shared tall tales and fond memories of Tommy's Elbow Room, the iconic social club that served as a home away from home for many Fairbanks locals for nearly six decades.

Tommy's Elbow Room, at the corner of Noble Street and Second Avenue, was silenced after its closure in 2003, leaving the building in disarray and in desperate need of repair.

But music will echo from the old establishment once again now that Chris Miller and his wife, Angela Schmidt, are renovating the building to serve as a music hall for the Cold Steel and Pantheon Steel Drum bands.

A family friendly pool hall called Hoppy's occupies a newly renovated portion of the building as well.

As Miller and Schmidt shared photos and film clips about the old building and the renovation process, others shared memories of the building's better days as part of the Tanana-Yukon Historical Society's lecture series in Pioneer Hall.

Originally built in 1947 with the help of a \$10,000 GI loan, Tommy Paskvan wasn't sure if his plan for a bar in downtown Fairbanks would be a hit.

Just in case, he built a garage door in the front of the building so if his business went

bust, he could always open a mechanic shop.

"That's right where we used to fight over the telephone," an older man piped in from the audience as Miller showed pictures of the old garage door that still stands in nearly immaculate condition.

As Miller showed every nook and cranny of the building, someone else had a story to tell about a particular spot on the wall, a seat at the old semi-circular bar and even about the table that belonged to Howard Rock, an editor of the former Tundra Times newspaper.

"My husband and I were introduced by little Joey Paskvan and did most of our courting in that corner near Howard Rock's table," Helen Brown said from the audience.

"I remember walking into Tommy's Elbow Room in between job interviews," Brown said. "I ordered a Coke, and the bartender, Joey Paskvan, asked if I was a Democrat. Next thing I know, I'm walking out with my future husband."

She and her husband, Fred Brown, have been married for almost 37 years.

Between slides of the renovation process, it was as if the flood damage and sugar cane roof decay disappeared in the eyes of the audience, who were left with just their memories of the Elbow Room's golden years.

"One of the best nights of my life was sitting in Tommy's in that very spot with an



Sam Harrel/News-Miner

Angela Schmidt, left, listens with Steve Paskvan, right, as people share their memories of Tommy's Elbow Room during a meeting Tuesday evening with the Tanana-Yukon Historical Society. Schmidt, along with her husband, Chris Miller, standing, purchased the Paskvan building and are renovating it.

Please see TOMMY'S, Page B2

*Fairbanks Daily News-Miner 01/22/2009*