

**M O E ' S**  
**FRONTIER**  
**COCKTAIL BAR AND LIQUOR STORE**



**SKAGWAY ● ALASKA**

**From Lou Jacobin's *Guide to Alaska* – 1947**



*Color and romance await you*

— at **MOE'S FRONTIER BAR**

SKAGWAY • ALASKA

LIQUOR STORE IN CONNECTION

From Lou Jacobin's *Guide to Alaska* – 1953



*This little deer enjoys his beer,*

-- at **MOE'S FRONTIER BAR**

SKAGWAY

• ALASKA

LIQUOR STORE IN CONNECTION

From Lou Jacobin's *Guide to Alaska* - 1957

## **Conversations Overheard at Moe's Frontier Bar**

- By Colewade on October 8, 2003

### Stealing the Blackbirds

The locals at Moe's Frontier Bar were busy plotting a scheme during our visit. The scheme is to fly to Haines from Skagway to steel the blackbird figurines behind the local bar. You see, Moe's has no birds. The Pioneer Bar in Haines has one. (They recently stole one from Juneau). Juneau has three. (I believe they are in the Arctic Bar). Moe's is feeling the pressure. One local will have to get extremely drunk and unruly in order to distract the bartender, while the other steels the birds. Good luck to the Moe's patrons.

### A Skagway Big Mac Attack

In 1982, the first McDonald's opened in Juneau, about 95 miles by air to the south. You can't get to Juneau by road, so the residents of Skagway, not wanting to miss out on the excitement of the first McDonald's, arranged for two medivac planes to pick up an \$800 order of Big Macs and fries from the big city. Although there was a wind chill factor of 40 below zero, 200 people waited at the airport runway for the return of the "Big Mac Medivacs", and the planes rolled down the runway with a police escort. The school band played "Old McDonald had a Farm", after overcoming some freeze-up problems with their instruments. Wearing hospital greens, the pilots hustled the food into the terminal for distribution.



## **The end of an icon: Moe's Frontier Bar**

By Keith Crocker

*Bars & bartending*

Juneau Daily Empire (2007)



Keith Crocker

I had heard that Moe's Frontier Bar in Skagway had been sold and the future was uncertain, so I decided to investigate.

Open for business since 1942 in a 106-year-old building, this bar is the original "locals" bar. Inside, I found exactly what I expected, a smoke-stained ceiling and beer advertisements dating from the 1970s, complete with a sort-of operational jukebox.

The clientele are regular working folks that don't hold anything back but make you feel welcome at the same time. One can tell it is a local place as there was a Teamster's sign in the window, no pushing of T-shirts or hats, but a display of dusty hats on the wall advertising that they were only \$13.50. It was a regular, dark and smoky place filled with unspoken, unadvertised history.

Moe's is similar to many places in Southeast and emits a similar vibe to the Arctic Bar in Juneau or the Arctic Bar in Ketchikan.

After a couple of beers, I noticed that there was only one tourist in the place. After talking to the gentleman, I learned he was an independent tourist from Texas. I inquired why he had chosen this particular bar to have a drink, and he responded by telling me that it was the only place that looked like a regular bar, or as he put it, a "joint", the popular name for a regular-people's place in Texas - not to be confused with a "tonk" or "honkytonk," which is a place for dancing.

The bartender told me that the locals were at a loss and many were not sure where they would spend their time together, although many suggested that either the Elks or the Eagles lodges were an alternative. As the place is due to change hands in October, the present bartender is not sure what she will do and also informed me that some other bartenders would be leaving town.

The building and the liquor licenses were sold separately, although no one was sure to whom. The locals gave me the impression that it wouldn't continue to operate as a bar and most likely would become a restaurant with the licenses moving to another building or existing business. The workers as well as the clientele seemed to see the changes as the natural progression of the town in general. As it is a tourism-based town, everyone was sure they would see the older buildings sold off and remodeled, and the existing long-term businesses be reorganized to maximize the potential tourist profit. Sad but true, most of the money in Skagway arrives via large cruise ships.

It seems that local or neighborhood bars are becoming extinct at an alarming rate. Is it global warming or perhaps just the global economy? It's a shame to see places like these become seasonal and leave those of us who like to be here year round with no place to enjoy each other's company. These are the types of joints that have a lot of character, a lot of history, and make for an enjoyable place to have a beer with down-to-earth, regular folks. Let's hope that we don't see too much change too fast.



Photo by Phillip Greenspun – 1993



Photo by Murray Lundberg - 2008