



The Bunkhouse Chronicle

Craig Rullman
Columnist

Bruno's Country Club

Jack Kerouac, who was himself no stranger to subterranean bars, smoky jazz drinkeries and blues joints, offered us this bit of wisdom: "Try never to get drunk outside of your own home."

I think that's excellent advice, for any number of reasons. It's probably better advice to never do it all. But that's a different column.

Alarming news out of Patos, Brazil, last week tells of a capuchin monkey, a bar mascot that got into the left-over rum, armed itself with a knife, and began chasing patrons out into the street. Video of the incident shows the monkey on the roof stabbing tiles, chattering wildly, and menacing the crowd with simian aplomb.

I prefer a good American saloon, particularly those dim and ramshackle outback cantinas off the beaten path, sandblasted highway watering holes where buckaroos and bikers and miners compose the bulk of the clientele. Things are orderly in there, quiet and friendly for the most part, and when they do get Western the fights are taken outside — getting stabbed by a monkey on a rum bender is not a principle

concern.

Bruno's Country Club, in Gerlach, Nevada, is a fine example of American Saloonery.

Sixty miles of dirt road from the ranch, Bruno's was a once-a-month delight for us cowboys in off the desert. There wasn't much in there, a long bar, a payphone on the back wall, an old jukebox and a pool table with stained felt, but the beer was cold, the cocktails strong, and we could smoke our handrolled cigarettes if we wanted, too.

Bruno, an old Basque who hung his deer in the back corner of the bar, was also your banker, and would cash your paycheck straight from the register, without taking a cut.

Those were halcyon days, but this monkey with a knife got me thinking about a night when things, as they sometimes did, started running loose in the Country Club, and two young hands from the C Punch outfit broke all of the rules and started throwing haymakers at each other.

Barstools tipped over. A bottle got smashed. There was some hooting and hollering as they circled each other, Marques of Queensbury style, the aggrieved parties in full fury but noticeably reluctant to take it much farther or faster.

Bruno stood watching it all with his arms crossed, like a father disappointed in his sons. He was of the older school, of course, largely unflappable, but severe and immovable when necessary, and so he lazily brought a coach gun out from under the bar and leveled it at their knees.

He said, in that marvelous

accent of the Pyrenees: "If you wanna act like cowboys in my place, I will make you into really short cowboys."

That solved it, and Bruno bought the next round.

We're missing some of that these days, I think, and not just in our saloons. I long for that vanishing kind of generosity, call it largesse, where friends can fall out and maybe even box a little, get firmly warned off their stupidity by a sober mind, then shake hands, climb back up on their stools and have somebody else buy them a drink. No harm, no foul, no cops, no lawyers, and no hard feelings.

Maybe a saloon — monkeys or no monkeys — isn't the best place to draw life lessons from, but then again, maybe modern university campuses aren't either. The lessons are where you find them, I suppose, and I found a few at Bruno's, way out there in the outback.

I was back at the Country Club a few months ago. It hasn't changed all that much. Outside, the wind still blows in steady off the Black Rock desert, coating everything with alkaline dust. Inside, the payphone is gone, and so are the miners. But the cowboys are still there, the pool table has new felt, and I'm told that Bruno, at 95, now sleeps most of the time. But he still has a warm soup on when its cold out, will cash a working-man's paycheck without taking a cut, and the coach gun is still under the bar.

For more of Craig Rullman's writing visit www.thebunkhousechronicle.com.

Bumper Jacksons...



PHOTO BY JAY MATHER

The Washington, D.C.-based combo entertained a big house at Sisters High School auditorium.

WASTEWATER: Sisters is in strong position to deal with future needs

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agriculture business.

The final project, which will be triggered by any eventual development of the Forest Service property at the west end of town, involves the west-side pump station, which would send wastewater along the south side of town directly to the treatment facility in the southeast corner of the city. By diverting west-side wastewater from pump station No. 1 in the

northeast corner of the city, the capacity of No. 1 would be increased.

The comprehensive planning document covers required improvements and additions to the city's wastewater treatment system through the year 2035. Compared to other Central Oregon municipalities, Sisters is in an enviable position from both monetary and planning points of view, according to staff. Paul Bertagna, public works director, Eric Huffman, city engineer, and the public works department staff, created the 200-plus-page plan.

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