

# Candlelight *Blows Out*

continued ▲ from front

borhood grocery, wasn't anything special, but for many residents the Candlelight Room has been a home away from home since the doors opened nearly three decades ago.

"It draws in quite a crowd," said Diloreto, adding the live music and the intimate small setting are why individuals visit the most. "There is music seven nights a week with no cover," he said. "And it's comfortable."

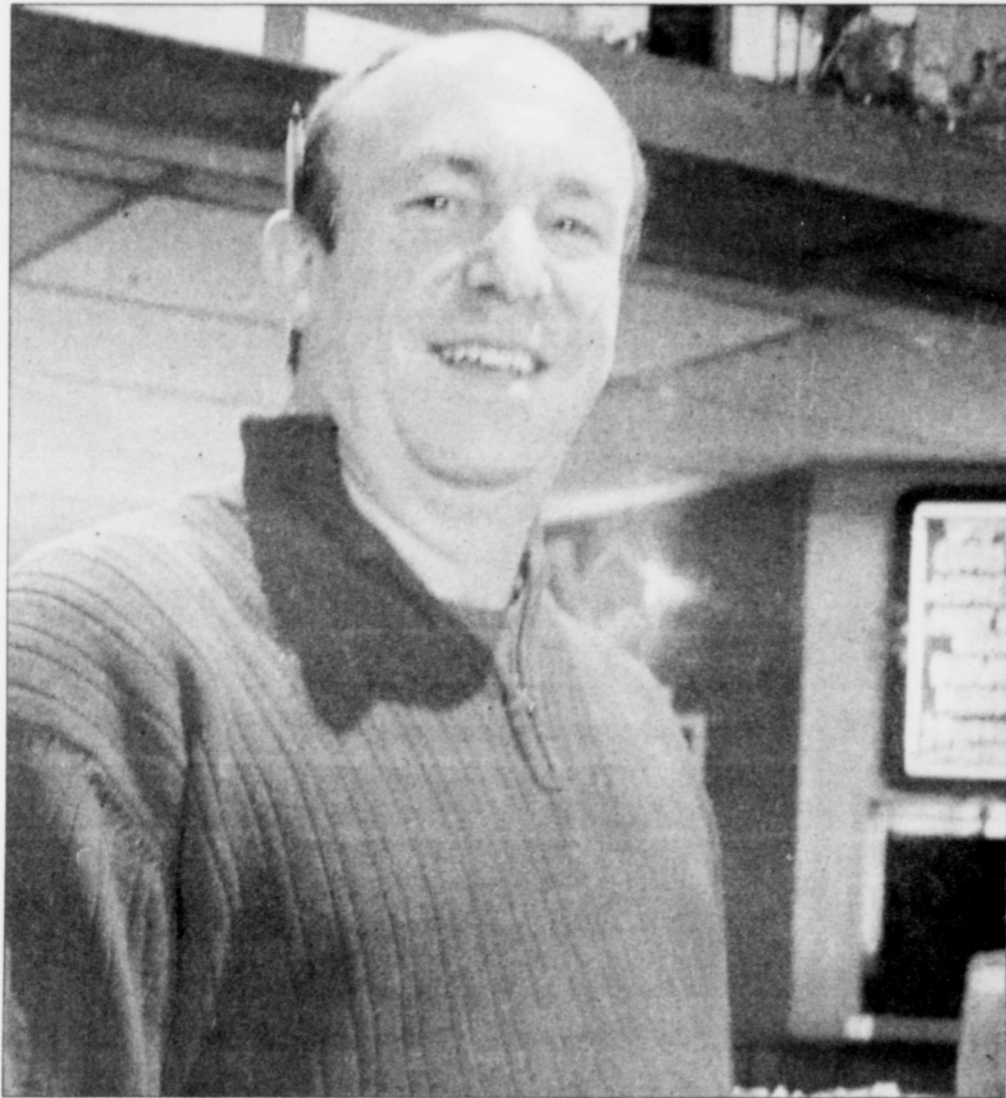
During the day, he said students from the neighboring Portland State University come in for a break. At night, however, regulars from all walks of life fill the room in southwest, downtown.

Diloreto, who has worked at the bar for 25 years, said there was time when the only music came from an old juke box available for customer use.

The Candlelight Room, which has become a staple for many residents since the music began, has been passed through multiple owners with an eclectic mix of names since 1954, when Lester Beckman purchased the building and leased the space to a young man who converted the store into a restaurant known as Mogal's.

In 1963, the restaurant was sold to Sydney Porter, who was a talented and well-known pianist, and changed the name to Sydney's, which hosted guests such as Ella Fitzgerald and Frank Sinatra.

But after Porter's death, the bar, which residents have grown to know today, was created when



Day time bartender Mark Diloreto, who has worked at the Candlelight Room for 25 years, serves customers inside the building near Portland State University, downtown. The café and bar, known for attracting a diverse clientele with live blues, soul and R&B, closes its doors at the end of the month to make room for construction of light rail mass transit.

passed along to Bill Hills, who tore out the stage and made room for the dive bar.

Although the space was soon sold to Ron Mead, the ownership only changed once more in 1984, when Joe Shore bought the local spot.

When Shore was on vacation, the bartenders decided it was time to have some live music again.

For Diloreto, however, he remembers the bar before music sounded through its walls each night, and the main clientele were mostly middle easterners traveling through the city. "This place is probably known throughout the world," he said.

"When I first started working here, we didn't have bands," he said. But over time, after experi-

encing a number of late night fights, Diloreto explained they began to provide music and entertainment, which has become a staple of the neighborhood. "We were primarily blues for the first 10-years, and then we added R&B and funk to keep the crowds comin' in," he said.

And coming in, they did.

Listed on their bar website, good reviews of the Candlelight Room are not hard to find.

"Amusing as it may seem that the Candlelight Room yet exists downtown, it's not really a stop for tourists. In an age where blues bars largely endure as chic

signifiers, The Candlelight indulges a dirty, grimy R&B groove so shamelessly drunken and aggressively lewd that ironic detachment shan't stand," wrote one customer.

"It's perilously close to PSU, and we'll buy a drink if you can spot a student - or anyone under forty beyond the occasional bassist likely press-ganged by uncles for bar-band service."

Another customer said, "No matter what, the music is going to be great. Totally reliable that way. Always danceable."

Although the bar will be closing its doors, the announcement



'Boogie Cat' Norman Sylvester will host a 'Wrecking Ball Jam,' celebration on Saturday, March 31, to mark the end of an era for live blues, soul and R&B at the popular Candlelight Room, downtown.

that the bar is in its last days has catalyzed an increase in business for the well-known dive. "It's been getting' busier," said Diloreto.

Chris Bradshaw, a local resident of Portland, brought his camera with him on his first visit to the bar, last week. "I wanted to see it before it's gone," he said. "It seems like the way Portland was before the hipsters took over."

While many are sad to see the new location go, others are hopeful the candlelight room, with its rich history of sustaining change, will open for business in a new location, which will bring the same vibe and variety of customers.

Diloreto said, however, the new place will be inevitably quite a change from what they have now.

Coming up on Saturday, March 31, starting at 5 p.m. the Candlelight Room will host its final live music event with featuring artist Norman Sylvester who will draw the crowds together to celebrate 63-years of the location where the bar welcomed anyone and everyone through its doors.

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