

## **Tom Kohler's Invitation to Chat: "Hello Buddy, what ya drinking?"**

Click here to book time with Tom and find out what made Jim Collins bar great, and we will ponder this little bar together

*Is there a place in your town and in your heart where "no one feels out of place"?*

These 5 words greeted me every time I walked into Jim Collins Bar from the time I was 19 till the time Jim died 19 years later. His widow continued to run the bar with the help of the JCBA - Jim Collin's Bar Alumni Association (also known as the 5 nights a week club) . Jim's had no sign, 8 bar stools, 4 tables, a bang up Juke Box, and a unisex bathroom before they were legal, much less fashionable. No dancing, no cussing, no pennies, no catsup, and no brown (or clear) liquor.

## **Man About Town: Jim Collins reunion, or, when a bar was more than a bar**

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The Jim Collins Bar reunion will be at 7 p.m. July 26 at The Sentient Bean, 13 E. Park Ave.

Former proprietress Lola Collins and daughter Kathleen will be on hand, as will a variety of regular customers. Some folks will even be playing 45s from Jim Collins' legendary jukebox.

Jim Collins was founded in 1964 at Lincoln and Bryan streets. It moved to Whitaker Street in 1983.

It was a dive in the best senses of the term - inexpensive, unpretentious, frequented by an incredible diversity of locals.

There was a certain amount of comforting dust, in addition to the perpetual Christmas tree and the eclectic artwork.

Beyond the jukebox, Jim Collins hosted live music, including R.E.M. back in the day.

Bar founder Jim Collins had already passed away by the time I moved to town, but the place obviously changed little after his wife, Lola, took over.

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In a Jane Fishman column in 2001, Lola Collins noted that she planned to close the bar after her husband's death, but community support virtually demanded that it continue.

"After we decided to keep it open," Lola told Jane, "I wanted to get in there and dust, but I was severely punished. Now it's business as usual."

Jim Collins closed about a decade ago, when its longtime home on Whitaker Street just south of Broughton was slated for extensive renovations.

We have some very comfortable bars around downtown these days. One or two of them can lay claim to the sort of diverse crowds that used to attend Jim Collins.

But a wave of gentrification and renovation has had a two-pronged effect.

More expensive apartments have limited the diversity of those who can afford to live in the downtown area. And more expensive commercial space has largely precluded businesses as casual and as inexpensive as Jim Collins.

But don't expect that mournful tone Thursday. I'm sure there will be plenty of reminiscing about decades of good times.

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