

LOCAL BAR STILL PACKED AFTER 65 YEARS



Butch McGuire's 1962

When Butch McGuire opened his saloon on Division Street in June of 1961, he had one idea in mind, and it wasn't complicated: a bar where singles could meet and mingle. He sent an open invitation to the stewardesses in the neighborhood, put in bar-height tables and stools before anyone else in Chicago had them, and made one house rule non-negotiable — a man always offers his stool to a woman. It worked well enough that Butch spent the rest of his life joking that he couldn't understand how, for a bar with such a renowned reputation as a single spot, so many of his customers kept ending up married to each other.

The other idea he had was just as simple, and it's the one that actually explains why the place is still standing 65 years later: hard work and hospitality were the same thing. "What can WE do for you?" wasn't a slogan Butch hung on the wall, it was the question he asked every day he worked there, which was most of them. When a blizzard buried Division Street too deep to walk through, he called his friend Billy O'Connor, who showed up with two snowmobiles, and they rode over the roofs of parked cars to make sure the bar opened on time. That's the whole philosophy in one story.

What that hospitality built, over 65 years, is something bigger than a singles bar. These walls have echoed with the conversations and laughter of generations of families — at christenings, weddings, bachelorette parties, birthdays, reunions, and memorials. Butch McGuire's has become a foundational place of communion for so many of them, a spot where families have shared their lives with us, and we have shared ours right back. It's a role the McGuires never set out to play, and one they remain humbled and grateful for every single day.

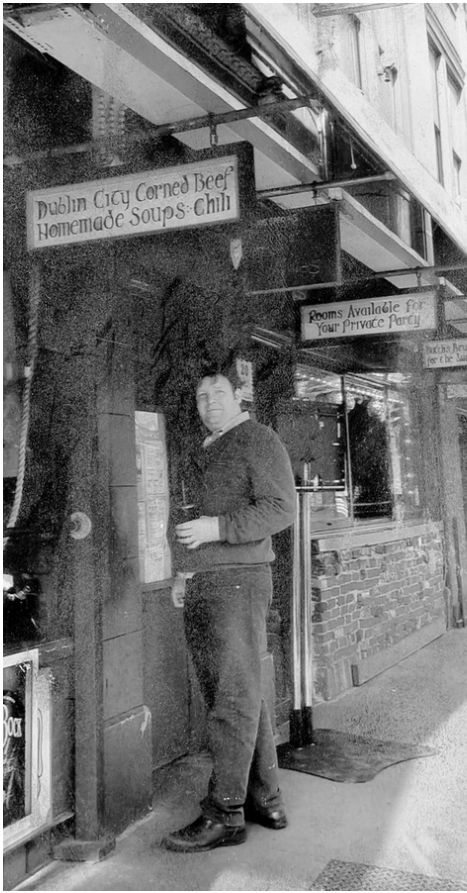
Sixty-five years, one kitchen addition, and three generations of McGuires later, the bar Butch built to help strangers meet each other has become the place where regulars bring their kids, and those kids bring theirs. His son Bobby has carried it forward since 2006, and in 2025 the family opened Mary Jo McGuire's in Lincoln Park, named for the woman Butch always said was the real secret to his success. The singles bar concept mostly speaks for itself these days. What's kept it full for 65 years is the part Butch insisted on from day one that everyone who walks in gets treated like they already belong.

"If you're lucky enough to be Irish, you're lucky enough."
— Butch McGuire

"The secret to my success? Mary Jo."
— Butch McGuire

"I'm the only man who had to build a saloon to win his wife."
— Butch McGuire

"It's more fun to eat in a saloon than it is to drink in a restaurant."
— Butch McGuire



Bobby outside Butch's

THE GREAT CORAVIN SHAKEDOWN OF 1985: Butch purchased a wine-pouring machine that turned out to be notoriously finicky, and the manufacturer offered little in the way of service. So when the Restaurant Show came to town, Butch put up a large, unmissable sign right on the machine: "Whatever you do, do not buy this piece of crap." Word got around the trade floor fast. Company reps showed up in person, promising to do better. He kept the sign up anyway. The next day, they returned with a brand-new machine pulled straight off the show floor.



Dave, Derek, Denis, and others

THE IRISH WHISKEY LOAF BOYCOTT OF 1980: The entire family, Mary Jo included, were fired for refusing to be the spokespeople and faces of Butch McGuire's World Famous Irish Whiskey Loaf. The silent treatment ensued and many of us were not rehired for 6 months.

THE 7 A.M. SATURDAY MEETING: Butch was notorious for calling company meetings at 7:00 A.M. on Saturday mornings — a time slot that guaranteed exactly one of two outcomes: employees either showed up still half-drunk from working the late shift the night before, or they sat through two straight hours of being berated and walked out in tears. There was no third option.



DEAR BUTCH'S

By: Mary Oelerich

"Where everybody knows your name." That's exactly what Butch McGuire's is. They know us. They know our names. Although it's been around for 65 years, it was back in 1982 when Frank and I first stepped into Butch McGuire's after an ND dorm formal and nothing has been the same ever since. It has now become our family's regular weekend brunch spot, post wedding and Christmas Eve brunch spot, Tuesday trivia spot, and Friday happy hour spot. The servers, bartenders, and staff know us and know our names. Vlad sees us a block away and is ready to welcome us through the door with just about everything but the red carpet.

Stevie knows all 5 of my girls, their spouses, kids and is ready to give them huge bear hugs. Gerry knows when there's 5 of us we don't need high chairs, but when there's 7+ we need at least two and he's ready to seat us, even if they're all "jammed up." Justin knows I like my bloody with no horseradish, and every server knows I like my Chardonnay with a side of ice. Kaitlin and Ashley came to Frank's funeral. English Dave's finished our coffee and end tables after I was so impressed with his work at the bar tops. The staff is our family and Butch's is home. Cheers to 65 years, the McGuire Family, and at least 65 more.

A CHRISTMAS STORY

Long before Christmas pop-ups were a thing, there was Christmas at Butch McGuire's.

Every year, the saloon transforms into a holiday spectacle, ornaments cover the ceiling, elaborate decorative mobiles hang overhead, twinkling lights fill every corner and the famous trains make their way through it all. What started as a Butch's tradition has become a Chicago tradition of its own. People travel from across the city, the suburbs, the country and beyond to see it for themselves. Some are walking through the doors for the first time. Others have been coming for decades, returning with children and grandchildren to experience the same Christmas magic they remember from years before. But the spirit of

Christmas at Butch's has always gone beyond the decorations. Giving back has long been part of the tradition, with Butch's supporting charitable causes each holiday season — a legacy that dates back to Butch and his regulars founding Santa Claus Anonymous in 1965 to provide warm clothing and toys to children in need. Since 2007, that spirit of generosity has continued through Butch's partnership with Mercy Home for Boys & Girls, supporting Chicago kids and families not just at Christmas, but all year long. And, of course, no Butch's Christmas would be complete without a Christmas in Your Mouth — the famous holiday shot that has become a tradition all on its own.



1977 Christmas Photo

For 65 years, Butch's has had a way of bringing people together. At Christmas, you can see it everywhere. The trains keep running, the Christmas in Your Mouth shots keep pouring, and year after year, everyone comes home to Butch's for Christmas.



1963

MEET THE OLD FASHIONED WAY

Butch McGuire's is known as Chicago's original singles bar, and generations of couples have proven the reputation right by doing things the old-fashioned way: striking up a conversation over a drink, and sometimes ending up married to each other.

The bar proudly credits itself with the meeting and marriage of over 20k couples and counting. A number that keeps climbing every year. To carry the tradition forward, the bar now hosts a monthly Singles Night. Living proof that meeting the old-fashioned way will never go out of style.

Meet the legend Hercules

(Porter/ Cook/ Chili's Man)

Hercules was a Butch's original. When the kitchen opened in 1963 he was there – and from that day forward, his chili became as much a part of the place as the Christmas trains or the bar-height stools. It was something you ordered without thinking about it – always with all the fixings. Hercules worked at Butch's for nearly two decades, and the kind of impression he left on this place doesn't fade. The chili is still on the menu and the recipe hasn't changed.



Meet the Legend Helen:

(Kitchen Manager, early 1980s–mid 2000s)

Helen came to Butch's in the early 1980s when the kitchen needed new blood. Butch hired her immediately—he liked her attitude and appreciated that she had no problem speaking her mind. It didn't take long for Helen to become the one in charge. For somewhere between 40 and 50 years, she ran the Monday-through-Friday kitchen, making soups from scratch, helping shape the menu, and training generations of employees. New hires quickly learned the routine: sit down with Helen, have a Wild Turkey and pay attention. Helen liked to sprinkle her words of wisdom with a little bourbon....Today, a Wild Turkey trophy with her name on it still sits behind the bar—a fitting tribute to a true Butch's legend.

Meet the Legend Eddie Carr:

(Doorman, Waiter, Bartender, General Manager, Artist in Residence 40+ years)

Eddie Carr came to Chicago after the Navy, walked into Butch McGuire's looking for work, and stayed for over 40 years. Starting as a doorman, he worked his way up to general manager—but his lasting mark is overhead. For nearly 15 years, Eddie handmade many of Butch's iconic decorations, from Christmas mobiles to St. Patrick's Day pieces. More than an employee, he became a close friend, mentor, and trusted member of the McGuire family. Some of Eddie's creations still hang from the ceiling today.



Meet the legend Dave Cramer:

(First Long-Term General Manager – 20+ years)

Dave Cramer started at Butch McGuire's Mount Prospect in 1969 before making his way downtown full-time. A hands-on manager, Dave helped build many of the systems Butch's still uses today—from hiring and training to ordering and day-to-day operations. He had a talent for finding the right people and keeping things running smoothly as the bar grew. Dave spent more than 20 years at Butch's and became a great friend and mentor, teaching Bobby much of what he knows about the business.



TIMELINE

- 1961 Butch McGuire's opens in June, on the site of the former Bobby Farrell's Duchess Show Lounge, inside a building known at the time as Kelly's Pleasure Palace.
- 1963 A kitchen is added.
- 1964 The bar expands into what had been Mayor Daley's campaign headquarters – later the Antique Room. Butch, one of Daley's precinct captains, worked to get out the vote during election years.
- 1965 Butch and a group of regulars found Santa Claus Anonymous, raising money for warm clothes and toys for children in need. It runs until Butch falls ill in 1990.
- 1970 Butch McGuire's joins the North Dearborn and Gold Coast Associations to support the neighborhood.
- 1973 10th anniversary celebration at Germania Place.
- 1978 15th anniversary celebration at Como Inn.
- 1980 Butch is named an honorary Girl Scout. Around this time, he and Tom Skilling begin co-hosting WGN's broadcast of the St. Patrick's Day Parade, a run that lasts into the early '90s.
- 1984 Butch hosts a fundraiser for Northwestern Hospital's cardiac care program at the Ambassador Hotel.
- 1986 25th anniversary celebration at The Drake.
- 1993 Butch throws out the first pitch at a Chicago Cubs game.
- 1995 Butch receives a heart transplant at the Mayo Clinic.
- 1998 Michael Rich leads the "Have a Heart, Give a Heart" campaign for the American Transplant Association.
- 2004 Cafe patio was added
- 2006 Butch passes away. His funeral and celebration of life are held on Division Street. Bobby takes the helm.
- 2007 Butch McGuire's begins its long and fruitful collaboration with Mercy Home for Boys and Girls.
- 2007 Christmas in your Mouth invented
- 2008 Back bar installed. Originally built by Butch in the 1970s.
- 2021 Mary Jo Passed Away
- 2024 RIP short stalls
- 2025 Butch McGuire's partners with Patrick & Connor Stewart to establish Mary Jo McGuire's
- 2026 Chicago – and possibly the country's oldest family-owned tavern celebrates 65 years.

Across
1. Mary Jo 2. Legends 3. Sixty-five 6. Guinness 6. Snowmobile
7. Brunch 8. Divisionsstreet
2. Oldfashioned
Down

The Juice Machine



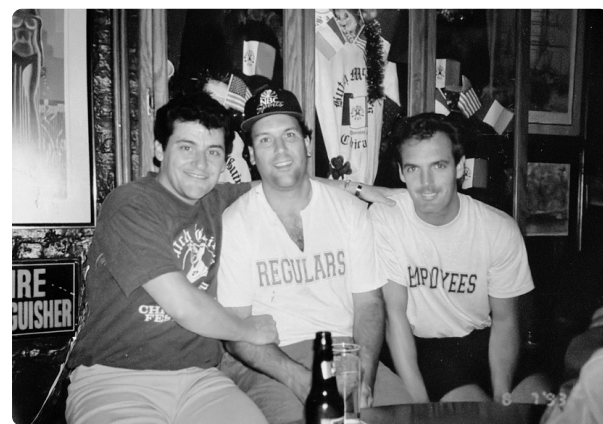
Outside Butch's 1980s

When Bobby was fifteen, Butch came back from California convinced that yuppies were drinking wine and the bar needed to get serious about fresh juice. So he bought a heavy-duty hand juicer and assigned Bobby — then a waiter, not a bartender — to squeeze four cases of oranges every brunch shift. Saturday and Sunday, from open until the rush died down, Bobby stood at the back of the bar next to four cases of oranges and squeezed. His hands shriveled. He got cuts. He did it for two weekends before he decided the machine needed to break.

So every few squeezes, he'd grab the spinning mechanism just long enough to make it grind. Then let go. Then do it again. It took nine months. Nine months of deliberate, patient sabotage before the machine finally started smoking and died for good. Bobby announced it was broken, unplugged it before he got electrocuted per his father's instructions, and figured he had a few weeks of reprieve before a replacement arrived. Butch never bought another one. Bobby was behind the bar by sixteen.



Bob O'Connell, Eddie Carr, Phil Turcy, Peter Hansen



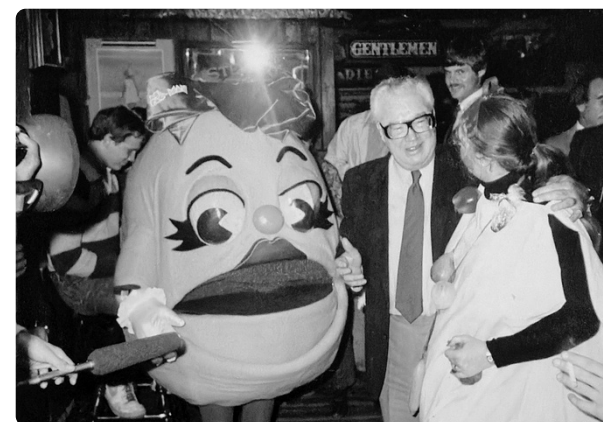
Regulars from the 80s



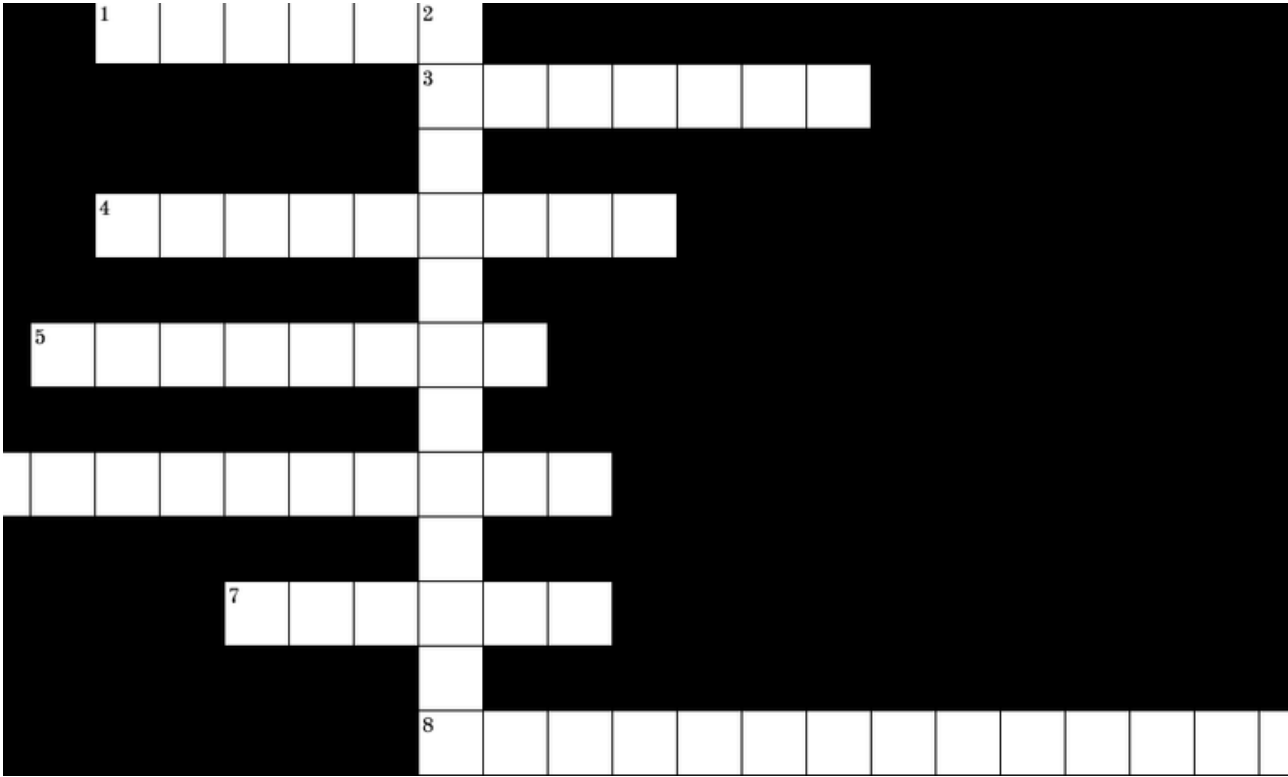
Division Street 1988



First 10 years of the taste



Celebrating with Harry Carey



Across

- 1. The secret to Butch's success (6)
- 2. Butch, Mary Jo, and the rest of the greats (7)
- 3. Years celebrated in this edition (9)
- 4. 100% chance of it, per the Weather Report (8)
- 5. Billy O'Connor's ride through the blizzard (10)
- 6. Weekend tradition at Butch's (6)
- 7. Home address since 1961 (14)

Down

- 1. The way regulars still meet each other (12)

Butch Fires Everyone (Including Himself, arguably)

Butch McGuire had a management philosophy that was simple, consistent, and absolutely maddening: he fired people in the heat of the moment, for any reason, and then expected them back at work the next day as if nothing had happened. No head on a beer. Fired. Showing up late - Fired. Existing in his line of sight on a bad morning - Fired. Bobby was fired at least six times. The pattern was always the same — Butch would come in the next day, ask where someone was, get told he'd fired them, and say "Well that doesn't mean he doesn't have to show up for work.



Cover of 25 Anniversary Magazine, 1987

Go get him." Since most of the staff lived in buildings Butch owned half a block away, someone would run over and drag the fired employee back in. The Irish Whiskey Loaf firing was the only one that stuck for awhile. The day after Christmas, a photographer arrived for a scheduled shoot nobody remembered. Butch heard the family grumbling about getting out of bed, declared "You're all fired," and went back to his morning. Bobby later calculated that he was technically the only one who actually worked there and therefore the only one who could be fired. He ended up delivering pizzas for Chester's for awhile before Butch decided he'd been punished enough and put him back on the schedule. No apology. No explanation. Just "you're late."

CRIME REPORT

50,200+

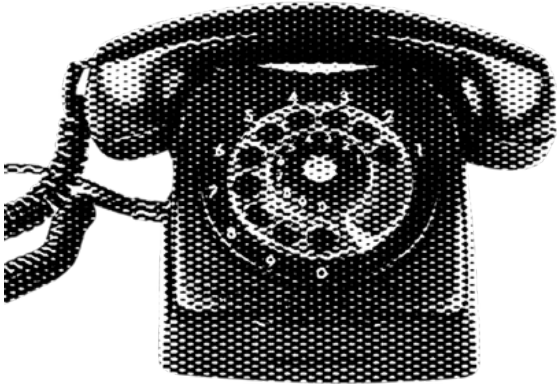
ASKED TO LEAVE

INCLUDING EVERY MEMBER OF THE MCGUIRE FAMILY

Weather Report

100%

Chance of Guinness



ADVICE

What would Mary Jo Say?

"Is it too soon to bring my new boyfriend to the family bar?"

If he offers his stool to your mother without being asked, keep him. If he doesn't, that's useful information too.

"I've been going to the same bar for thirty years. Is that pathetic or admirable?"

If you're lucky enough to have somewhere that still feels like home after thirty years, you're lucky enough. Keep going.

"My date ordered a Long Island Iced Tea on the first round. Red flag?"

Order confidence isn't the same as good judgment. Watch what happens by round three before you decide anything.



Bobby McGuire at age 11

TO OUR REGULARS:

When my dad opened this bar in 1961, he had one rule that wasn't really a rule — it was just how he operated. Take care of people. Make them feel like they already belong. Everything else follows from that. Sixty-five years later, I look around this room and I see the same thing he saw: people who came as strangers and stayed as family. Some of you have been coming since before I was born. Some of you met right here and brought your kids back to show them where it happened. Some of you have been here through things I have tried to forget like a fire or two, a barroom brawl on occasion or even a sewer main

break. 65 years is a long time and things happen! But Butch's was your place and you came anyway. That's not something you build. That's something people give you. We don't take that lightly. In 2025 we opened Mary Jo McGuire's — named for the woman who really did run the place, whatever my father claimed. We hope to see you there too. My sister, Lauretta, my brother Terrance, and I would like to thank you from the bottom of our hearts for what has been 65 wonderfully unforgettable years. Cheers to 65 more!

Thank you. Genuinely.

Bobby McGuire

A NEW CHAPTER

In 2025, the McGuire legacy took its next step forward. Butch and Mary Jo's grandsons, Patrick and Connor, opened Mary Jo McGuire's in Lincoln Park — named for the woman Butch always credited as the secret to his success. It was built to carry the same spirit their grandfather started on Division Street more than six decades earlier: a place where hard work and hospitality are the same thing, and where a stranger can walk in and leave as a regular. For Patrick and Connor, opening Mary Jo McGuire's wasn't about

starting something new so much as continuing something that had never really stopped. The same values that kept the original bar packed for 65 years — treating every customer like family, remembering names, working the room the way their grandfather did — came with them to Lincoln Park. It's the third generation chasing the dreams of their visionary grandfather, following in the footsteps of their legendary uncle and, above all, honoring their grandmother who made it all work in the first place.



Patrick and Connor at Mary Jo McGuire's in Lincoln Park

Since June of 1961, Butch McGuire's has been the heartbeat of Division Street. We're celebrating 65 years and we want YOU to be part of it.

Schedule of Events

Friday, October 16 — Mary Jo McGuire's

Doors open at 6:00 PM, with a live band taking the stage and plenty of reasons to raise a glass.

Tickets are \$19.61 — a nod to the year Butch McGuire's first opened its doors — with proceeds benefiting Mercy Home.

Saturday, October 17 — Butch McGuire's

This is the big one. Join us back where it all began for an all-day celebration of 65 years of Butch McGuire's. Doors open at noon, and from 2:00–4:00 PM, we're turning back the clock with 1961 rollback pricing on beer, wine, and call drinks.

Stick around as Bobby McGuire addresses the crowd at 6:00 PM,

Sunday, October 18 — Butch McGuire's

After Saturday's celebration, there's only one thing left to do: come back for brunch.

Join us Sunday for a casual Anniversary Recovery Brunch at Butch McGuire's. No speeches, no schedule, no formalities — just brunch, Bloody Marys, good company, and probably a few stories from the night before.



Butch McGuire's Today

