

# Tradition evergreen at Duffy's

By Michael Stock  
Staff Reporter

Duffy's is one of the few Irish bars in Lincoln. And Sunday night will find everyone sharing in at least one proud Irish tradition — the celebration of St. Patrick's Day.

St. Patrick's day is regarded as second only to New Year's Eve for drinkers' amateur night, Duffy's owner, Reg McMeen offered.

"It really is. People who come out and drink twice a year... they get real drunk on New Year's Eve and kind of drunk on St. Patrick's Day, because they're still dealing with their hangover from New Year's Eve," McMeen said.

"Of course, professional drinkers like us don't have any trouble with that," joked not-so-silent co-worker, Red Tolnai.

Red jokes a lot. Duffy's was swept into existence in 1938 by John Wilhelm. (Note the strictly Irish surname.) Created originally as a soda shop, Duffy's holds the second-oldest

liquor license in Lincoln.

"Basically, I think everybody was just hopping on the bandwagon because prohibition was over and they wanted to start making some money on liquor... legally. It was a soda shop prior to being a bar. I guess there was some kind of... gin mill activity going on here, or something," McMeen said.

So why call it Duffy's? "It was basically a tie-in to probably try and get a large portion of the drinking populace in. There is certainly a correlation between Irish people and drinking. So I think it was more of a propaganda tool than anything."

"Duffy's is a real traditional name for bars. If you go to a community of any longevity at all, most of them have a Duffy's. There's a Duffy's in Omaha, Colorado Springs... Ireland. It's just a real traditional name," McMeen said.

One working partner and two silent partners have owned Duffy's for nearly four-and-a-half years,

McMeen said.

Taking time off from school, McMeen was working at a now-defunct bar as bartender, but was dissatisfied with his position.

"They were sucking us dry for ideas and not giving us any monetary compensation. So I took my \$3.01 an hour and left that joint in search of a better and more lucrative opportunity," McMeen said.

Looking into various avenues of entertainment, McMeen considered several different options for opening his own business. But nothing seemed to offer the right option.

"Just when we were about ready to give up on the idea, our real estate agent said... 'I don't know if you're interested in just a regular old bar, but there's this bar on O street for sale.' The next day we were down here taking a look at it and about two weeks after that we were signing papers to get in it," McMeen said.

With Harp and Guinness beers on tap, and Bushmen and Jameson whiskeys behind the bar, Duffy's takes its Irishness seriously.

"I'd like to think that even though Duffy's wasn't set up to be an 'Irish tavern,' that we've done what we can to... validate it a little bit," McMeen said. "We've tried what we can to at least provide for those people in the community who feel ultimately tied to Ireland."

But St. Patrick's Day does not find only the true Irish out for a celebratory drink. St. Patrick's Day finds nearly everyone out celebrating something.

And what does McMeen think about that?

## Lincoln Pubs and Taverns

"St. Patrick's Day has been so bastardized by the Americans (that) it's really hard to distinguish Irish tradition from what America wants it to be. It's a drunken brawl here, and in Ireland, it's a national holiday," McMeen said.

So why come to Duffy's for St. Patrick's Day?

"What a stupid question that is!" Red Tolnai screamed and offered a comprehensive list of viable answers.

"First, because I'll be here for one. Second, where else are you probably going to see the prettiest girls and the ugliest guys? Third, if you can't get laid on St. Patrick's Day, when can you get laid? Fourth, green beer. Fifth, Barb (Burke) will be here. Eighth, where else are you going to go? We're going to open at noon. You could go to the Rail for inane conversation, or you could come here..." Tolnai chuckled, actually liking the non-Irish Brass Rail.

As I said, Red jokes a lot. Somewhere around sixth or

seventh on Tolnai's list comes the highlight of Duffy's St. Pat's celebration, when Tolnai strips to his shambrock boxers on the shuffleboard table at midnight.

"This year I've got something special... if you want to come down. They took pictures last year. The pictures are startling," Tolnai chortled.

It isn't just the green beer and jello shots that make Duffy's the true Irish hot spot on St. Pat's Day. It's the people.

Tolnai said that "Judy's working, and she's the best bartender in Lincoln. Judy can handle more customers than..."

"God?" asks barmaid, Barb Burke.

"Well, God can handle a few more — but Jesus for sure..." Tolnai offered.

"If nothing else, there is always someone at Duffy's who can quote Yeats at any given time," Burke promised.

Isn't that as good of reason as any to celebrate St. Pat's at Duffy's?

# Everyone comfortable at Duggan's

By Pat Dinslage  
Senior Editor

Despite the Irish name, Duggan's Pub, 410 S. 11th St., is not what you would call an "Irish" bar.

There are no year-round shamrocks or pictures of leprechauns decorating the walls. The lighted signs, advertising just about every kind of beer you can think of, do that.

There's no "Danny Boy" or "When Irish Eyes are Smilin'" on the jukebox. Instead, there seems to be just about every oldie rock or folk album that ever went gold.

There are no stereotypical drunken Irishmen or women holding forth about the beauties of the land of Eire.

Who is there is a real cross section of most all the groups who call Lincoln home. There are the bikers, the college students, the blue-collar and white-collar workers, the suits-and-ties and the latest-in-casual-wear yuppies. But there's no rainbow-colored hair or punk rock styles.

There are people dressed up and dressed down. Men with

beards and long hair hang out there, as well as men without any hair on their heads at all.

There are women in jeans and sweat shirts and women in heels and suits and every mode of dress in between.

The Pub does not seem to discriminate on the basis of race, sex, religion, ethnic origin or sexual preference, only on the basis of age: You have to be 21.

A friend of mine who goes to the Pub told me that it is one of those old-fashioned bars: It's safe for a woman to walk in by herself and not get bothered unless she wants to be. I suppose the same goes for men.

The Pub's atmosphere is like a small-town bar. There are the regulars who hang out there. You can tell they're the regulars because they call the bartenders by name when they want a drink.

On a Friday night, there were four bartenders serving drinks to customers — three were behind the bar and one bartender was circulating around to the booths and tables, socializing and making sure no one was going dry. The owner, Jack Gross, knows what

his customers come into the Pub for: drinks and fun.

Speaking of the drinks, they're healthy. They're not expensive, but not the cheapest in town either. A glass of beer is \$.85; pitchers are \$3 to \$3.50. Mixed drinks run about \$2.

The Pub is a friendly bar and an easy one in which to start a conversation. If just sitting and drinking is not your style, there's the games. The Pub has two pool tables, a pinball machine and at least two television sets. It should not surprise anyone if the TVs are tuned to some form of sports at all times.

That's the Pub on pretty much any given weekend, according to the bartenders and Gross. But what's happening on St. Patrick's Day in this non-Irish bar with the Irish name?

Gross said the partying will probably start Saturday, March 16, with the biggest crowd on Saturday evening. He is planning to serve the traditional green beer and peanuts, as he has for the last 13 years, both Saturday and Sunday. He is expecting a "decent" crowd on Sunday afternoon, but

By Jim Hanna  
Senior Reporter

With a name like O'Rourke's, it's got to be Irish.

Whether it's the name or the atmosphere, O'Rourke's Tavern, 1329 O St., is bound to be packed this St. Patrick's Day.

"It's our busiest day of the year," said Jim, a friendly O'Rourke's bartender with no surname.

While there is nothing decid-

edly Irish about the bar during the rest of the year, St. Pat's at O'Rourke's has a variety of festive features.

In addition to green beer, the bar will be serving free corned beef and cabbage. Jim also expects a big run on Guinness and Harp beer.

The fact that St. Patrick's Day falls on a Sunday this year will pose no problem for Jim and his co-workers. The bar will open at

noon and stay open until 1 a.m.

Since St. Patrick's day has fallen on "school days" before without a subsequent clientele loss, Jim said he is not worried that people will stay away from the bar on a traditional day of rest.

For those students who choose to drink heavily despite their Monday academic conflicts, Jim guarantees a heap o' Irish day fun.

"A good time will be had by all," he said.

One O'Rourke's regular expects to have a good time this Sunday. For Bob Holbert, this St. Patrick's day will be especially fun and he intends to celebrate at O'Rourke's.

"The woman I'm living with will be out of town and I'm Irish Catholic," he said.

On the other 364 days of the year, O'Rourke's is one of the most delightful bars in town. It's bound to be one of the best bets in town on St. Patrick's Day.

### Distributors tap into Lincoln's green beer market

Local beer distributors estimated how many kegs of green beer they will sell for St. Patrick's Day celebrations this weekend.

K&Z Distributing Co. 100-150 kegs	D&D Distributor 60 kegs	Lincoln Beer Distributing Co. Inc. 50 kegs	State Distributing Co. 35-50 kegs
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Source: local distributing companies

Amie DeFrain/Daily Nebraskan

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