

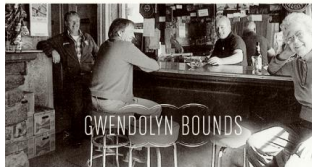


## Gwendolyn Bounds

**Little Chapel on the River**  
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**Q: All of your readers are no doubt interested to hear anything about what's happened at Guinan's since this book was written. Do you still live in Garrison and spend time at the bar?**

A: No one ran me out of town or the bar for that matter after *Little Chapel's* publication, so I'm still lucky enough to live in Garrison and be a regular at Guinan's. I'm at the pub every week, help out occasionally behind the counter or bar when the need arises and it still feels like home. I thought my sense of awe about the place might disappear a bit after the book came out, but instead it seems to rekindle every time I step foot in there. Readers from all over the world, including soldiers in Iraq, have written to me about their desire to find a place like Guinan's. Many have made a pilgrimage to visit Guinan's themselves. The family has handled the attention graciously, and little has changed about the place as a result of the spotlight cast on it. I'm grateful for this.



Jim, now 80, is doing very well. He hasn't been back in the hospital since the book came out. He's made a couple of trips to Ireland and when asked how he is feeling, answers: "I'm still vertical, so

that's good." Two of his good pals who were mentioned in the book have died, however. Tip Dain, one of the Fearsome Foursome golfing quartet, and old Ken Anderson who drove his little red car down to Guinan's every morning like clockwork. Both deaths served as a reminder to all of us who love Guinan's to be grateful for every day the door is still open.

John, Jim's eldest son, finally gave up working outside as an arborist and is now running the pub fulltime. He hasn't officially been put on the lease, but he hasn't been told no either. In this case, the status quo is not such a bad thing to have.

William "Fitz" Fitzgerald moved upstate not long ago. In true Fitz fashion, he refused to let anyone throw him a going away party. So someone stuck a piece of paper to his photo on the wall that says: "This seat available. Inquire at the bar." He still drops in to visit; we hear his laugh before we see him.

Ed Preusser, the eldest of the two handsome Preusser brothers, has been dating Kelly Guinan's granddaughter for nearly a year. Kelly still works at Guinan's sometimes with her father, so the store is in three generations of Guinan's hands.

I'll stay in Garrison as long as I can. Although I'm back to work at *The Wall Street Journal* and in New York City part of the week, the Hudson Highlands are my home. In the months/years to come, I'll continue to update the progress of the little chapel and its parishioners on my Web site: [www.gwendolynbounds.com](http://www.gwendolynbounds.com) so check back.

**Q: Do you think you would have responded to Guinan's in the same way if September 11th had not just happened?**

A: I'd have thought: "What a great place this is." I probably would have stopped for a beer and enjoyed myself. Might have even pondered whether there was a story there somewhere but then I'd have rushed back to Manhattan and forgotten all about it. Someone said to me recently that we have nothing but what exists right now. We have no guarantees about anything that will happen once we walk out the door to work in the morning. September 11th taught me that, and I believe that's what made it possible for me to really see Guinan's, in the truest sense, and make it a part of my now for as long as possible.

**Q: Can you say a little bit about the importance of such places in the world today? What are some of the things involved in their disappearance?**

A: While it's easy to wax nostalgic about the disappearance of small places, I do believe in progress and change, and I don't think everything big is necessarily bad. However, what I have found inside Guinan's walls is a kind of social history that I don't find in more cookie-cutter retail outlets. The fabric of our nation's history is imbedded in the walls of such small haunts, where stories and lives have spun and merged and lingered through the decades. When we lose these places, we lose our nation's history. To sit somewhere where your brother, father, and grandfather once sat, lends a sense of continuity to life that is comforting in a world of upheaval and uncertainty. We've forgotten places like this because we are a world always moving faster. We spend more time commuting and moving and don't set down roots the way people used to. What's more, all the electronic gadgets we have in the house keep us more insulated so that we don't seek entertainment and advice among neighbors as much. Those factors, combined with the sheer economic force of mass retailers who offer shopping convenience and ever-lower prices, have begun to make the places like Guinan's obsolete.

**Q: Would you describe your feelings toward Guinan's as nostalgic? Why or why not?**

A: Early on, when I first arrived at Guinan's, I would say nostalgia was something I tapped into. It was a longing for something that had the power to make me put the brakes on my fast-paced existence and just be content. Everyone in Guinan's always seems so content, and to experience that feeling is remarkable and difficult to put into words. I couldn't remember the last time I'd felt completely content, aside from when I was a kid at my grandfather's fish camp, until I sat down inside Guinan's for the first time. I don't remember the last time I even contemplated what it means to be content.

Now, however, Guinan's is a part of my everyday life. And that makes me less nostalgic simply because it is part of my here and now. It has quenched that longing.

**Q: Has your experience of life in Garrison changed the way you feel about New York life?**

A: This is a good question. While it seems that going to Garrison was a way to flee New York life, being in the small town has had the opposite effect. Instead, I feel closer to Manhattan in a way I never did before. Maybe it's because it doesn't consume my life the way it did prior to September 11th. People talk a lot about finding "balance" in their lives. I've always kind of scoffed at that as touchy-feely talk and figured it was impossible to find. But when it comes to Garrison and New York City, it's not such a bad word to use for the way the combination makes me feel. The two places balance one another out, and being in each makes me long for the other all the more.

Without Garrison, I might have eventually burned out in New York. You can start to think that nothing else exists off this Island when you are here. Garrison reminds me every day of how much more there is outside of the city, and in turn, it gives me fresh eyes for the city itself.