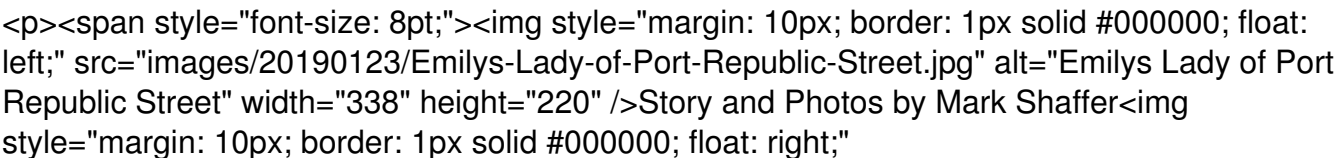


Eulogy for Emily's

Written by Mark Shaffer

Tuesday, 22 January 2019 14:33

 Story and Photos by Mark Shaffer 

A guy walks into a bar

In one of my favorite opening scenes from *Cheers*, a stranger wanders into the bar and strikes up a conversation with Woody. The guy explains he used to be a regular, but moved away and hasn't been in the place for twenty years.

Woody: Really?

Guy: Yep. See those stairs? They used to go down the other side of that wall.

Woody: Hmm.

Guy: And this floor, when I was here it was all ugly green tile.

Woody: Wow.

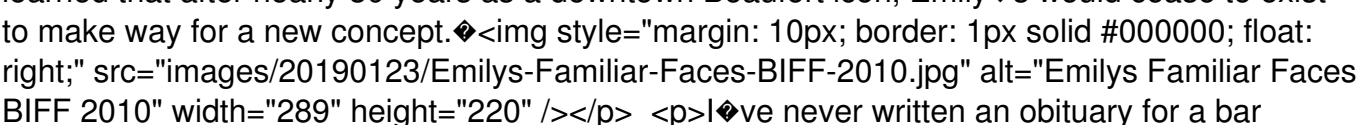
Guy: I guess everything changes in 20 years. They've even changed the paneling.

Woody: Where?

Guy: Over there, behind Norm.

Cue the music.

No doubt the regulars at Emily's Restaurant & Tapas Bar shared certain similarities with the patrons of Boston's famous fictional pub. Chief among them was loyalty. It was a locals' favorite — a place where everyone really did know your name. But change is inevitable. Sometimes it catches you by surprise like a blackjack to the back of the head in a dark alley. So it came as a bit of a shock when Tommy Winburn sold the business after nearly two decades. The bigger shock came a few weeks later when we learned that after nearly 30 years as a downtown Beaufort icon, Emily's would cease to exist to make way for a new concept.



I've never written an obituary for a bar before, but it seems appropriate considering the circumstances. It sure feels like part of the family's passed. When I get right down to it, Emily's was about family. My wife Susan and I stumbled upon the place in late 2007, newly escaped from the onset of another dreary Seattle winter, ready to come home to South Carolina. We were immediately welcomed into the fold. Looking back I'm certain Susan's natural charm, intoxicating drawl and ancestral Irish appreciation for a fine public house were the keys to our acceptance. We met the town at Emily's.

We moved to Beaufort a few months later. I went to work for this publication and we became Emily's regulars. It wasn't hard. Hell, the joint was only a block from my office. I've probably written most of what I've published between these pages in longhand at the bar. It's where I started this piece. I used to jokingly refer to the place as the home office or the Port Republic Annex. It was, as I once observed in this column, Beaufort's living room.



Emily's is where I first bumped into Pat Conroy in Beaufort. Back in those days it wasn't uncommon to stumble upon Pat and his crew — John Warley and Bernie Schein — swapping stories at the bar. It wasn't hard to find them, either. All you had to do was listen for Bernie. When major Hollywood productions came to town on a regular basis to make movies like Pat's *The Prince of Tides* and *Forrest Gump*, the stars ate and drank here. Back in those days the whole operation was housed in the mahogany paneled dining room. The original bar might have seated a dozen elbow-to-elbow, and it wasn't unusual for patrons to be three deep. In 1995's *Something to Talk About* Julia Roberts catches Dennis Quaid cheating on her here. While filming *Last Dance*, Sharon Stone threw a first class diva fit in the dining room and was invited not to return.






















































My friend Mary Godley was behind the bar in those days.






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She recalls the Stone incident, remembers Tom Hanks dining there and says,  Sally field was a dream, Dennis Quaid was super funny and Robert Duvall truly was a gentleman. 



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Day" width="300" height="220" />Emily's wasn't everyone's cup of tea. But here's the thing: it was a special place for a lot of people for a very long time, and specifically a close-knit group who disagree on politics and just about every other damn thing. But we came together there to laugh, sometimes to cry, to bond and endure.

Recently I had a beer with Tommy, who tells me his relationship with the landlord had simply become impossible. Offers to buy the property were rejected and faced with the prospect of a crushing increase in rent come spring, it was simply time to let go.

I met a lot of nice people, he says. Made a lot of good friends. And that was nice.

In the end his chief concern was the continued employment of his staff. I'm just glad they kept them all, he says. That was the most important thing. Although I kind of wish they'd continued the Emily's legacy. But I wish [the new owners] well. I really do.

Same here. I wish all the best to the new team, George and Jim and the forthcoming Mezes Mediterranean Grill. Chances are you'll read about it right here. In the meantime, the Displaced roam the happy hour landscape like a lost tribe and I can't help but mourn the First Lady of Port Republic . . .

Longtime Beaufort social icon, Emily's, quietly passed into history at the cusp of the New Year, December 31st, 2018. She was attended by the faithful until last call.

Like us on Facebook and share your memories and photos of Emily's.