

MIXOLOGIST



THE
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OF THE
EUROPEAN
COCKTAIL

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PUBLISHER

JARED BROWN

EDITOR

ANISTATIA MILLER

CONTRIBUTORS

JARED BROWN, LYNN BRYON, SALVATORE CALABRESE, DOMENICO CONSTANZO, PHILIP
DUFF, ALBERTO GOMEZ FONT, STEFAN GABÁNY, CAIRBRY HILL, SUE LECKIE,
ANISTATIA MILLER, ALBERT MONTSERRAT, GARY REGAN

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From the Editor

It has been three years and many thousands of miles since the last time we visited the Cocktail and spirits world with you. Our move to the UK, in 2007, has given us a new perspective on the bartending profession and its practitioners. Ever since this noble trade was born, mixologists and the people who write about them have scoured the world in search of new experiences, superior ingredients, and timeless flavours. It is time for *Mixologist* to look at the world outside the United States to see how drinks developed from a European perspective.

In this volume, the third, of *Mixologist: The Journal of the European Cocktail*, our intrepid travelling cocktailians take us a tour of the path of the bartender as seen through the eyes of cocktail guru Gary Regan. Sue Leckie details why the legendary master Peter Dorelli is such an inspired and inspirational spirit. Albert Montserrat pays tribute to his mentor and her father, Doña Maria Dolores and Miguel Boadas.

A replete charmer in his own right, Phil Duff discloses some the essential secrets of cultivating bartender-right charm. The histories of two highly-regarded guilds, the UKBG and the IBA, are presented by Lynn Byron and Domenico Constanzo, respectively. Too often overlooked by young bartenders today, these organizations were champions of the profession during its most embattled decades, and continue to press the cause.

Maestro Salvatore Calabrese sets the record straight about the crystal-clear, potent Dukes Martini. Sue Leckie returns to challenge the notion that all of Britain's best bars and bartenders reside in London.

A century of German bar culture is eloquently presented by Stefan Gabány. And as a finale, a century of Spanish cocktails is presented with all the passion and ecstasy of a true aficionado, by Alberto Gomez Font.

Naturally, we had to put in our two pence. This time, we uncover a few surprises in the origins and bloodline of the world's favourite morning pick-me-up, the Bloody Mary. And we take you through the halls and the history of Exposition Universelle des Vins et Spiritueux a place that is very near and dear to our hearts.

We hope you enjoy your Grand Tour of Europe in this Cocktail Continentale.

Classic Cocktails

An Investigation

The Bloody Mary & Her Bloodline

by Anistatia Miller & Jared Brown

The fights are endless over the Bloody Mary. Was it a hangover cure created by an American entertainer visiting in Palm Beach, Florida? Was it a final toast crafted and named in a Parisian bar? Or something else?

Our story begins with the tomato. Tomato juice in particular. It's no surprise that barman Fernand "Pete" Petiot would have heard about this phenomenon. Born on 18 February 1900 in Paris where tomatoes had been used in cooking since the 1730s, he would have been more familiar with them than the average American.

Tomato juice was on French menus and ordered as early as 1914. It was available when Petiot took a job, in 1920, at the New York Bar: three years before it became Harry MacElhone's New York Bar.

Then the vodka arrived the same year. This is where the bloodline fight associated with the Bloody Mary's birth begins.

Who's Vodka Was It Anyway?

Purveyor to the Romanov Tsar Alexander III, Piotr A Smirnov had built a remarkably successful vodka distillery, beginning in the 1860s and capturing over half of the Moscow market within two decades. He died in 1898 and his widow passed away the following year, leaving five sons to run the enterprise until 1902, when Sergei and Alexey sold their interests, leaving Piotr, Nikolai, and Vladimir to continue operations. Two years later, Piotr became the sole owner when the remaining brothers released their rights and interests in the family trademarks. The distillery continued successful operations until the 1917 October Revolution.

According to an Opinion of the Court document filed in the US Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in September 2000 in a case against UDV North America and the Pierre Smirnoff Company, Lwów. when Piotr died in 1910, his wife, Eugenia, became the sole owner of the trade house. She operated the trade house successfully until 1917. Historian Valerian Sergeevich Obolensky, author of the 1993 online book *Russians in Exile: The History of a Diaspora*, states that the distillery was confiscated on 22 November 1917 and was placed under state control.

It appears that Eugenia married an Italian diplomat and fled to Italy before that fateful day, in all probability knowing that the fall of the Tsarist Empire signalled personal disaster. She eventually settled with her husband in Nice. She was not the only Smirnoff to emigrate to France.

Obolensky's account states that at the dawn of the revolution, Vladimir Smirnov was also in flight

hiding out in the Ukraine for a short time before he was arrested for being in cahoots with the tsarist regime and the White Army. He was given a death sentence by the Bolsheviks and was stood before a firing squad four times just to terrorize him. He finally escaped his captors, on 18 February 1918, with the aid of White Army forces.

This is where the facts get murky. Obolensky then places Smirnoff in Paris where, according to his research, this family member purchased a distillery on 2 May. But supporting evidence of this claim such as the location of his operation has not been discovered as of this publication.

However, the Opinion of the Court document states that Vladimir relocated to Constantinople (now Istanbul), where in 1920, he established a distillery under the title “Supplier to the Imperial Russian Court, Pierre Smirnoff Sons.” Considering that few aristocratic Russians settled in Turkey but many made their way to France, it would be no surprise if the enterprising Vladimir exported his product to Paris.

He moved to Lvov, Poland, in 1924, where he opened another distillery. He opened yet another in Paris a year later under the name “Ste Pierre Smirnoff Fils” or “The Company of the Sons of Peter Smirnoff.” He then changed the spelling of his family name from Smirnov to Smirnoff, as it was the popularly accepted spelling in French at that time.

His sister Eugenia first learned of Vladimir’s use of the Smirnoff name and marks when the Parisian distillery was opened. She was upset that Vladimir had reneged on his bought agreement with his late brother and consequently herself. But with the documentary proof left behind in now-Communist-controlled Russia, she was unable to prove her claim. Vladimir continued his operations without restraint.

Roy Barton & the Bucket of Blood

While Smirnov was hawking his vodka around Paris, it was inevitable that he would stop at the New York Bar where the young Ferdinand “Pete” Petiot worked. There were a dozen or so cocktail bars in the Opéra district surrounding Rue Danou and Rue de Volney. Henry’s, the Chatham Bar, but it was Tod Sloane’s place, the New York Bar, where Smirnoff found a mixologist who was willing to play with this ethnic spirit.

In a January 1972 interview with *The Cleveland Press* reporter Al Thompson, Petiot explained that the first two customers to try his creation “were from Chicago, and they say there is a bar there named the Bucket of Blood. And there is a waitress there everybody calls Bloody Mary. One of the boys said that the drink reminds him of Bloody Mary, and the name stuck.”

A similar story mentioned one of the customers by name. In Petiot’s obituary which appeared in the 8 January 1975 edition of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, it states that: “Petiot was said to have been experimenting with vodka after having been introduced to it in Paris in 1920. He settled on a mix of half vodka and half tomato juice then introduced the drink where he worked at Harry’s New York Bar which was frequented by American newspaper correspondents and bankers. An American entertainer Roy Barton, provided the name, saying it reminded him of a Chicago club, the Bucket of Blood.”

Who was this entertainer named Roy Barton? He is listed as the composer of “Alabama Shuffle”,

“American Rag”, and a few other ragtime compositions from the genre’s 1920s heyday in New Orleans’ infamous Storyville district. Born in the Big Easy, jazz and especially ragtime flourished amid the clubs and bars that sprung up between the licensed brothels frequented by tourists and naval personnel on leave after the district emerged in 1897. The city’s leaders had studied the legalized red light districts in the European ports of Amsterdam and Hamburg to understand how to monitor and regulate prostitution, and they did so until the federal government shut down the operation in 1917, fearing that enlistees headed overseas to fight in the First World War would lose their innocence in Storyville’s dens of iniquity.

When Storyville closed down, many jazz musicians headed north to St Louis and to Chicago. Ragtime hangouts sprung up in Chicago’s most infamous vice district, the Levee, which formed in 1893 during the World Columbian Exposition and was situated on the city’s Near South Side. The Bucket of Blood Saloon was one of the most famous. Situated at 19th and Federal Street, close to the high-class brothel, the Everleigh Club, made famous in Karen Abbott’s 2007 book *Sin in the Second City: Madams, Ministers, Playboys, and the Battle for America’s Soul*, the club remained a haven for jazz musicians and aficionados until, in the 1920s, the neighbourhood was slowly demolished.

Certainly Barton played at the Bucket of Blood. And it wouldn’t be surprising for him to have fondly remembered a young waitress who had worked there as he sipped a farewell toast to his past with Petiot’s creation.

But a future French classic doesn’t easily become an international staple without help.

Tomato Juice Was Spiced Long Before The Bloody

The essential Bloody Mary formula—tomato juice, Worcestershire sauce, lemon juice, horseradish, Tabasco sauce, other hot sauces, salt, and pepper—had been around since the 19th century, but it was virgin birth. *The Medical Record*, March 12, 1892 (William Wood & Company, New York) printed this excerpt from London’s *Hospital Gazette*:

A Recipe Returned from Over Sea.—It is reported that at the Manhattan Club in New York a warm beverage, called an “oyster cocktail,” is largely dispensed. For the benefit of those who may be possessed of suicidal intentions, I give the recipe. Seven small oysters are dropped into a tumbler, to which must be added a pinch of salt, three drops of fiery Tobasco sauce, three drops of Mexican Chili pepper sauce, and a spoonful of lemon juice. To this mixture add a little horseradish and green pepper sauce, African pepper ketchup, black pepper, and fill up with tomato juice. This should be stirred with a spoon, very slightly crushing the oysters, which are then lifted out and eaten, the liquid following as a cocktail.

According to the *Milwaukee Journal* in 1892, the recipe was slow to catch on in Britain. Due to a misunderstanding, perhaps from the misspelling of Tabasco above, people thought the recipe called for tobacco sauce. Tabasco, invented in 1868, was only twenty-four years old at this time.

In The Can

When the French Lick Springs Hotel resort in Indiana ran out of orange juice one day, in 1917, its French chef, Louis Perrin offered guests tomato juice. It was an immediate hit. Within three years, a handful of companies launched into commercial production. But canned tomato juice did not take off in the US until Chicago hotelier Ernest Byfield tasted his first glass of tomato juice cocktail, in 1927 while visiting the Yellow Cab Company owner, John Hertz, at his Miami vacation home.

~~Heir to a handful of luxury hotels including the Ambassador East as well as the College Inn Food Products Company, Byfield put his chefs to work on developing a “spiced” formula that included lemon juice and celery. It sold 60,000 cases in the first few months, strictly by word of mouth promotion amongst his cast of A-list friends and patrons.~~

It took a few years for the Bloody Mary’s main ingredients and originator to meet on American soil.

Two years after Harry MacElhone took ownership of the New York Bar, Petiot moved, in 1925, to the US in the midst of Prohibition. During a trip to Canton, Ohio, he met his future bride and was married.

Some sources say that Petiot then headed to the Savoy in London. But there is little evidence of the fact at time of this publication. What is known is that when the repeal bells rang out, the owner of the St Regis Hotel in New York, Mrs Mary Duke Biddle, convinced him to relocate, in 1934, and take a post under the Maxfield Parrish mural that adorned the hotel’s King Cole Bar, heading up a staff of seventeen barmen. (The mural had been commissioned, in 1905, by her grandfather Nicholas Biddle as a gift to the hotel’s original owner John Jacob Astor IV to hang in another of his properties, the Knickerbocker Hotel. When Astor died in 1912, his son Vincent sold the property to Benjamin Duke.

The year before all of this happened, American businessman (an Ukrainian emigree) Rudolph Kunett purchased the rights from Vladimir Smirnoff to commercially produce vodka in the United States. With the establishment of Ste Pierre Smirnoff Fls, Inc by Kunnett plus Benjamin B McAlpin, Jr, Donald M McAlpin, and Townsend M McAlpin, vodka was available in New York just in time for Petiot’s arrival.

Petiot’s tomato creation went on the bar menu as the Red Snapper. Somewhere between its invention and its emigration to the New York, Worcestershire sauce had been added to his mix. But the drink didn’t click with customers. Tomatoes grown on French soil are sweeter than their American cousins. Petiot hyped up his original recipe with salt, lemon juice, and Tabasco sauce, possibly from the old Oyster Cocktail recipe, then reinstated Barton’s name for the drink.

Bloody Mary got the attention she well deserved.

Who Done It Really?

She was so loved by American celebrities that one even announced that he invented it. Performer George Jessel claimed in his 1975 memoir, *The World I Lived In*, that in 1927 he invented the Bloody Mary in Palm Beach, Florida. Never mind that Jessel was infamous for his far-flung reminiscences in his two previous memoirs. Never mind that Jessel was close friends with John Martin of GF Heublein, the man who, in 1939, bought out Kunnett’s failing vodka company and helped invent the Moscow Mule.

As Petiot commented in an article that appeared in Geoffrey Hellman’s “Talk of the Town” column in the 18 July 1964 issue of *The New Yorker*: “I initiated the Bloody Mary of today. George Jessel said he created it, but it was really nothing but vodka and tomato juice when I took it over. I cover the bottom of the shaker with four large dashes of salt, two dashes of black pepper, two dashes of cayenne pepper, and a layer of Worcestershire sauce; I then add a dash of lemon juice and some cracked ice,

put in two ounces of vodka and two ounces of thick tomato juice, shake, strain, and pour. We serve a hundred to a hundred and fifty Bloody Marys a day here in the King Cole Room and in the other restaurants and the banquet rooms.”

Note that Petiot does not say he took it over from Jessel or that Jessel combined the vodka and tomato juice. His vagueness here has led many people to assume he meant both and to take this utterly inconclusive statement as proof that Jessel created the drink.

So where does Harry’s New York Bar play a part in all of this beyond that first moment? The drink was called the Red Mary in the 1940s edition of McElhone’s *Harry’s ABC*. Also in that edition is the College Inn Tomato Juice Cocktail. Made with tomato juice, Worcestershire sauce, celery salt, lemon juice, and **sherry**. Was it that MacElhone was not able to sell the vodka version to patrons after Petiot left the establishment until after the Second World War? Was the reason he renamed it the Red Mary because the initial name offended his Scottish upbringing or British patrons brought up in polite society? We may never know.

What we do know is that one of the world’s most loved morning pick-me-ups has engendered as much spicy conversation and controversy over its origins and that of its bloodline as its famed crystal clear cousin, the Martini.

But that, friends, is another story.

Negroni

The King of the Aperitivo

by Domenico Constanzo

“Good evening, I’ll have a Negroni please”

This drink order is heard more than any other during the hours of the *aperitivo* in bars all over Italy. It is a fact that it is one of the Italian’s favourite pre-dinner cocktails.

When someone mentions “*aperitivo*” they are talking about that time of the day when friends or colleagues meet for an *apéritif* simply to sip something good, to enjoy each other’s company, and to chat about their day or the upcoming night out on the town.

But where does the word come from? Since ancient times, some Italian communities preceded dinner with an aromatic concoction, either alcoholic or not, to sharpen their appetites. Indeed, the word “*apertitivo*” comes from the Latin term “*aperire*” [opening], which in this case indicates the stimulation of one’s hunger! But always, even back then, this was a time to meet and socialize while sipping on something flavourful.

The Negroni in Italy is an authentic institution, for more than 80 years it has been the *apéritif par excellence*. It is ruby colored, with a smell of sweet spices, strong and bitter herbs with juniper berries, orange, and vanilla. Its taste is unmistakable, full bodied and dry. It leaves a balanced pleasurable bitter aftertaste. Due to these peculiarities one could clearly state that the Negroni is the perfect interpretation of an authentic *apéritif*.

Let’s take a step back in time: Florence, in the beginning of the 1920s, with numerous *cafés* visited by artists, Russian refugees who had escaped from Siberia, foreigners touring Europe, anarchists, and local nobles. Count Camillo Negroni, a Florentine noble who often visited the *cafés*, involuntarily created what was to become a mixed drink icon.

Count Negroni was passionate about adventure. Having travelled around half the world, he returned to Florence where his experiences and stories brought a great amount of foreign influence to the bars he visited. One of these was *Caffè Casoni*. Negroni often stopped there to have his favourite *apéritif*, the Milano-Torino. It was a very popular combination of equal measures of red vermouth and Campari Bitter served with ice and a lemon peel.

Milano-Torino vs Torino-Milano

I deviate slightly to specify that this version of the drink, in reality, is the one that was in vogue in the *cafés* in Milan. However, when the first version of the Milano-Torino appeared, it was not actually

created in Milan but in Turin. In fact, in Turin people also drank the Torino-Milano originally made with equal measures of Amaro Cora and Campari Bitter, according to Camillo Bosco, who is past-president of the Italian Bartenders Association and a historian of Turin's bars and bartenders. When the drink arrived in Milan, the Amaro Cora was quickly replaced with Martini Rosso because the bitter taste of the Amaro Cora wasn't favoured by the Milanese.

From Milano-Torino to Americano

So with the addition of soda, the Milano-Torino soon became the Americano. The origin of the name is still not totally clear, but the most likely hypothesis is that the drink was called the Americano because it contained ice and soda: two very popular ingredients requested by American tourists when they visited Italy.

The Americano Becomes the Negroni

On an undetermined day between the end of the 1910s and the beginning of the 1920s, Count Negroni walked into the Caffè Casoni and asked the barman Fosco Scarselli to make his Americano with a dose of gin and without the soda to make it stronger and a touch more bitter, while introducing a pleasant juniper aroma to the drink. (Juniper is a very common plant in Tuscany, where Florence is located.)

For the garnish he asked for the lemon peel to be replaced with a half slice of orange, so that everybody would recognise that this wasn't the usual Americano but rather "The Americano" created by Count Negroni. From that day forward, when the Count visited Caffè Casoni, he ordered his usual arousing people's curiosity. Other patrons began asking for an "Americano like Count Negroni's". Soon this apéritif spread to other cafés in the city.

Because the drink was so successful, Count Negroni asked Fosco Scarselli to name his custom apéritif. With no hesitation he replied, "I would call it Negroni, dedicated to you sir Count, who was the first to drink it".

And that is how the Negroni was born.

Caffè Casoni still serves the original Negroni, even though the establishment's name and management changed, in 1933, becoming the Caffè Giacosa.

The Negroni was entered, in 1961, into the first edition of the official International Bartenders' Association [IBA] recipe book as follows:

1/3 Dry Gin
1/3 Vermouth Rosso (sweet)
1/3 Bitter Campari
Half orange slice garnish
Build into an ice-filled rocks glass

The recipe changed, in 1986, when the IBA instituted the new 10ths measuring system to:

4/10 Gin
3/10 Vermouth Rosso (sweet)

3/10 Bitter Campari

Lemon peel garnish

Build into an iced filled highball glass

But it did not last. By 1993, the recipe returned to its origins, adding a note that in some countries it's typical to serve it with some soda water. Then in 2004, the recipe was published in centilitres and the soda option was deleted.

3 cl Gin

3 cl Vermouth Rosso (sweet)

3 cl Bitter Campari

Half orange slice garnish

Build into an ice-filled rocks glass

The Negoni Becomes Sbagliato

Around 1972 or 1973, the bartender at the historic Bar Basso in Milan, Mirko Stocchetto, accidentally poured Brut rather than gin into a Negroni. Being aware of his mistake, Stocchetto offered to remake the drink. But the customer thought as it was a rather hot day the Negroni with sparkling wine would better quench his thirst.

The Negroni Sbagliato [Mistaken Negroni] quickly became very popular at the Bar Basso: It was its signature drink for many years. In fact, by the 1990s, its popularity had spread not only throughout Milan, but all over the country. Nowadays, people simply order a Sbagliato without adding the word Negroni.

Additional variations have joined the Negroni and the Sbagliato. Make it with vodka instead of gin and it becomes a Negrosky. Replacing red vermouth with dry white vermouth makes it a Cardinale. Use tequila in place of gin and you have a Tegroni. Replace the vermouth in a Negrosky with Punt e Mes and you have a Katiusha.

Original, Sbagliato, Negrosky, or Katiusha, the Negroni continues to be the Italians' most beloved apéritif even if its fame has spanned around the world. Not only customers appreciate it, the bartending community does as well, especially in the UK where bartenders have discovered Vermouth Carpano Antica Formula: a product that makes the Negroni even more refined.

However, my advice is to try a Negroni made with Barolo Chinato (a Barolo wine infused with quinine, herbs, and spices that was invented in the 1800s in Serralunga d'Alba) instead of vermouth. In my opinion it's the perfect Negroni: the most noble and the best apéritif to stimulate the appetite.

Inspired Spirits

The Path of the Bartender

by Gary Regan

I was brought up in the pub business in England. My parents were running a pub when I was born, in fact. The Horse and Jockey, Well i'th' Lane, Castleton, Lancashire. Think working class. Think cotton mills. Think coal mines. Think salt-of-the-earth. It's close to Manchester. When I was two years old, though, Vi, my Mother, convinced Bernard, my Dad, that they should get out of the pub business. A pub isn't the right sort of place to raise such a pretty little innocent lad as our Gary, she told him. Well, something like that. We moved about fifty miles to the Cleveleys end of a town called Thornton-Cleveleys, a seaside resort to which lots of folk new to the almost-middle-classes aspire. Some of those who make it open shops, some run boarding houses—bed & breakfast-type places that sometimes offer lunch and/or dinner, too—and some folk from the industrial north actually manage to retire there so they can spend their last years by the Irish Sea. Vi and Bernard opened a dress shop, about half a mile away from the seafront, and Vi ran that business while Bernard worked at quite a few jobs that he hated until, when I was 12 years old, he managed to persuade Vi that it was safe to get back into the pub business now that I was almost grown. How he pulled it off I'll never know.

The joke, of course, is that I was at one of the most impressionable ages of my entire existence and Dad immediately started to teach me how to clean the beer lines and scrub the floors of the beer cellar with bleach. He showed me how to tap barrels, how to tilt them so you got every last drop out of each one, and he taught me that, if a cask-conditioned beer was cloudy, as a last resort you could add just a tiny amount of British lemonade—lemon-lime soda in the USA—and it would clear up within an hour or so. Bernard was getting me used to the beautiful stench of beer. The Prince Rupert, a smallish, free-standing, modern-at-the-time building with a fair-sized car park, was on a council estate—Americans call them projects—in one of the roughest areas of Bolton, another industrial town close to Manchester. And Bolton's a pretty rough town as it is.

By the time I was fourteen I was tending bar and sneaking beer. Pub life was most definitely for me. Bernard hired a drummer and a piano player—would you believe they called themselves Styx and Tones?—and he also got an emcee who went by the name of Jacko Diamonds. Every Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday nights this trio put on a show and there was a huge knees-up in the pub. Everyone on the council estate did his or her party piece for everyone else on the council estate, and some of them went to great trouble to hone their acts. One guy, for instance, did an Al Jolson routine, complete with blackface, and he was pretty good, too. It wouldn't be politically correct to do these days, but back in the mid-sixties nobody thought anything about that sort of thing. Various other locals performed pop songs, C & W [country & western] numbers, nostalgic ditties from both the world war—“eeh, them were the good old days, weren't they?”—and various Rat-Pack-style songs. “My Way” was a particular favourite. Too bad nobody nailed that one till Sid Vicious came along. The younger end of the crowd sang pop songs. Beatles, Searchers, Cat Stevens, that sort of stuff. No R&B. No Stones or Yardbirds. Pop songs. Stuff that everyone back then, regardless of age, tended to enjoy.

One guy who showed up from time to time went by the name of Blosch. A tough town needs a town tough. ~~Someone who no one else ever tackles. Nobody in town ever wanted to get on the wrong side of~~ Blosch. Head to toe he measured around five-feet eight-inches. Shoulder to shoulder he was about the same. The man was a cube. His head was shaved bald, and nobody else in a town like Bolton, circa 1966, shaved his head unless they had ringworm or lice. Blosch would appear at the Prince Rupert about twice a year and the room would go silent when he walked in the door. For a minute or so you might hear his name being whispered to one or two people at the far end of the room who hadn't noticed his entrance. They might be laughing at some stupid joke but they soon shut up when they see who walked into the room. People didn't laugh when Blosch was around. He might think they were laughing at him.

Blosch would stroll up to the bar, get himself a pint of bitter—Bernard always served him, and they'd look each other in the eyes and show each other due respect—then Blosch would make his way over to Jacko Diamonds and whisper in his ear. Two minutes later Jacko was telling the room that Blosch was going to sing for us. Blosch made his way onto the stage—a platform just big enough to hold a drum kit, a small upright piano, and one singer. It was raised about eight inches from the floor. Blosch took the microphone, Sammy Ashworth started tickling the ivories, Jimmy the drummer—can't for the life of me remember his last name—picked up a slow beat. All eyes were on Blosch. In a powerful tenor voice that filled the whole fuckin' room with glory, Blosch would belt out one of the most soul-wrenching renditions of Danny Boy you've ever heard. He started out soft. Real soft.

*“Oh Danny boy, the pipes, the pipes are calling
From glen to glen, and down the mountain side
The summer's gone, and all the flowers are dying
'tis you, 'tis you must go and I must bide.”*

He fair bellowed the next verse. His voice reached the far corners of the fuckin' universe. I swear .

*“But come you back when summer's in the meadow
Or when the valley's hushed and white with snow
'tis I'll be there in sunshine or in shadow
Oh Danny boy, oh Danny boy, I love you so.”*

Back he came for the next verse. Way down low again.

*“And if you come, when all the flowers are dying
And I am dead, as dead I well may be*

You'll come and find the place where I am lying

And kneel and say an 'Ave' there for me."

Just a little bit louder now . . .

"And I shall hear, tho' soft you tread above me

And all my dreams will warm and sweeter be

If you'll not fail to tell me that you love me

I'll simply sleep in peace until you come to me."

And one last time he repeats that last line. This time he sings it way slow—one word at a time—and at the top of his fuckin' voice.

"I'll

simply

sleep

in

peace

until

you

come

to

me."

Blosh lingered long on that last word. Real long.

When the song was over there wasn't a dry eye in the house. Blosh would finish his pint, and he would leave peacefully. He didn't want to fuck up in the only place left in town where he could get some stuff off his chest without actually beating the crap out of someone.

For Bernard, the role of the pub landlord came very easily. He was born to play this part, was Bernard. He loved being the center of attraction, and the man had a heart of gold, too. He truly cared for the customers at the Prince Rupert. And it showed. And the regulars loved him for it. Most nights that Styx and Tones played ended with Bernard on the stage putting all he had into "There's No Business Like Show Business." And if he was in the mood, meaning if he has enough gin or rum in his belly, he would belt out some old war songs or music hall ditties, too. One of his very favourites was

“The Spaniard That Blighted My Life”, a little-known music-hall number that Bernard loved to sing when he’d had a skin-full.

*If I catch Alphonso Spagoni, the Toreador,
With one mighty swipe I will dislocate his bally jaw.
I’ll fight this bull-fighter I will,
And when I catch the bounder
the blighter I’ll kill.
He shall die, he shall die!
He shall die
tiddly-i-ti-ti-ti-ti-ti!
He shall die, he shall die!
For I’ll raise a bunion on his Spanish onion
If I catch him bending tonight!*

Bernard raised hell with this song. The regulars whooped and laughed and shouted and screamed and laughed some more. He was a regular superstar on the Great Lever council estate was Bernard. He had a voice, too. Not a voice that could have made a living on its own, but he was easy on the ears all the same. Vi just stood back and watched all this go down. She’d shake her head and smile and say, “Oh, Bernard.” Words I heard pretty frequently in the Prince Rupert days.

Most people on the Great Lever council estate in Bolton were living from one day to the next cash wise, and some of them would tap Bernard on the shoulder for the loan of a five-pound note every now and again, but money wasn’t the only thing that the customers at the Prince Rupert used Bernard for. He was looked on as a sort of father figure. Someone that people would go to whenever they were in a pickle. On more than one occasion the phone rang in the middle of the night, and a local would say something to the effect of, “Bernard, I think our Billy’s dead. I just woke up and I don’t think he’s breathing. What do I do?” Bernard would call the right people, and he’d go round to the house, too, to sit with the wife while it all went down. Vi—and I didn’t learn this till many years later—slipped cash to one or two people who really needed it. The daughter of one of the barmaids, it turned out, needed some medical attention not covered by the National Health program, and Vi came up with the cash they needed to sort it out. We were far from being wealthy, but we had a little more cash than the vast majority of people on that estate.

In return, the pub regulars were fiercely loyal to Vi and Bernard. Fiercely loyal. No strangers ever started any trouble in the Prince Rupert, and anyone who tried to take advantage of any member of the Regan family was quickly set straight. You wouldn’t want to mess with these guys, either. People with a little cash tend to know how to put a point across. The four years we spent in Bolton turned out to be very important to me in later years. Taught me some core values. That sort of stuff. I made some good

lifelong friends, too.

I quickly learned to love the pub game. The landlord's son got quite a bit of respect on the street, and I was staying up till all hours of the morning drinking pints of bitter with the big lads. Eventually "The Five Pints of Bitter Boys," a group of guys around four or five years older than yours truly, started to let me hang with them on Friday nights when they went into the center of town to get drunk out of their minds and try to get laid. We walked from pub to pub to pub drinking pints of bitter or Bacardi and Coke when we were a bit flush. Sometimes we ended up at a casino or nightclub, too. We actually saw Lulu singing "Shout" at the Castle Casino one night.

The long arm of the law never did catch me at my under-age drinking game, but I had strict instructions on what to do if I was ever collared. The law in the sixties exonerated whoever served a minor as long as they went to the trouble of asking how old the customer is. If the kid says he's 18, it was legal to serve him. Simple as that.

"If the police ever catch you," Vi told me in real serious tones, "You tell them that the landlord asked how old you were. You don't go getting other people into trouble. Okay?" Vi didn't lay the law down too often, so I had a pretty freewheeling youth, but when she threw stuff like this at me I knew I'd better listen. She'd never ever have laid a hand on me, but disappointing Vi would have been way more painful than a beating.

The Five Pints of Bitter Lads sometimes ended up with women on our nights on the town, but there weren't any eighteen-year-old chicks that would look twice at a fifteen-year-old boy, even if he did dye his hair grey at the sideburns so he could get into pubs. God I was such an asshole. Not a real obnoxious asshole, but an asshole all the same.

My money for these nights out with the lads came from my tending bar and from Vi and Bernard throwing cash at me for cleaning the cellar or the beer pipes, or helping out in the little shop on the side of the pub where we sold chocolates as well as wine and beer. Sometimes women would walk in the shop with a large pitcher and ask for it to be filled with a couple of pints of draft beer for their husband who was just too tired to come the pub tonight.

When I was sixteen going on seventeen Vi and Bernard snagged The Bay Horse. The pub of Bernard's dreams. It's a genuine Olde England pub, complete with beams and horse brasses. The building is over 300 years old and it stands right next to the train station in the Thornton end of Thornton-Cleveleys, about four miles from the sea-front. We moved back to the coast where I picked up old friendships but still managed to stay in touch with some of my pals from Bolton. We didn't leave the council estate without Bernard throwing one last big-time bash for the regulars at the Prince Rupert, though.

Everyone who ever set foot in the pub over that last four years was there on Vi and Bernard's last night at the Rupert. Pint after pint after pint crossed the bar, and it took half a dozen of us behind the bar to keep the glasses full. We tried not to break anything. Bernard posted a notice over the sink: "Due to the rising prices of bandages, would members of staff please try not to cut themselves while breaking glasses."

Closing time came at eleven in the PM, Bernard locked the front door, and the party carried on. And on. And on. At about two o'clock in the morning the police arrived. The policed liked Bernard and Vi.

They got free beer at the Prince Rupert if they tapped on the window after hours. This time, though, it was official business. “You’ve got to keep the noise down, Bernard. We’re getting complaints.” The music stopped, Bernard told everyone to keep their voices down, and the cops joined us. “Just one pint, then. We’ve got to get back to the station.” Two hours later Bernard had to call the police station. “I think you’d better send another car to the Prince Rupert.” The cops were way too drunk to drive.

Bernard and Vi taught me much during these pub years, both at the Prince Rupert, and at the Bay Horse. I didn’t realize I was being taught any lessons at the time, but I learned by watching them that the most important aspect of the job of a pub landlord or landlady is that they must truly care about their customers. They must care in a very real sense, too. They have to care on a very personal level. Fact is, you see, that nobody ever goes to a pub or a bar for a drink. Why would they? They can drink at home, right? People go to bars for all sorts of reasons. They go to get laid, they go to meet a business partner, they go for conversation, they go to celebrate, they go to cry on someone’s shoulder but they never, never ever, go to a bar for a drink.

And such is the path that the bartender must walk. It matters not whether the man or woman behind the bar can make a great Mai Tai, and creating new masterpiece cocktails is a drop in the bucket compared to the true job of the bartender. We who choose a life behind bars choose a life of service, and we must always remember one thing: Great bartenders don’t go to work to serve cocktails. They go there to serve their guests.

Peter Dorelli

The Silver Haired Story-teller

by Sue Leckie

You can't help but love Peter Dorelli. Ask anyone who has spent even a fraction of time with the man, and they will tell you so. Scrape beneath the surface of the "silver haired story-teller, and you'll find even more reasons to hold him in high regard. From the tough times he, as an avowed life-long pacifist, underwent to escape military service in Italy and remain in the UK, to the love laboured by him on making the American Bar at the Savoy the legend it became, he certainly hasn't had it easy. But the focus of the man is clear for all to see, and it is that dedication that has made him head and shoulders above his counterparts.

Roman-born Dorelli didn't set out to become a bartender, that wasn't his passion. In fact, it was his dislike of the future ahead of him rather than any burning desire for something else that was to set him on the (rather winding) path that would eventually see him become one of the world's best known and respected bartenders of modern times. "I'm from a banking family", he explains. "My elder brother was seen as a free man, having clear direction, my younger brother an artist. I had no sign of going one way or the other." So with no clear goal, it was a letter from the army, calling him to service that made him spring into action. And so, "armed with nothing more than a suitcase and a resident handyman permit" he headed to the UK.

Moving across Europe was not that simple in those times. Permits had to be gained, and their terms stuck to, unless changes were made in agreement with the labour exchange. Dorelli, resigned about his situation, set about working his way around the country doing a myriad of domestic jobs: from washing dishes in Cornwall to working as a boiler man in Sloane Square.

After one-and-a-half-years, by his own admission, he became a 'fugitive'. "I couldn't go on doing those jobs, but if I stayed in London, it was hard to get work without having to change my permit. I began taking jobs in bars, pubs and hotels". And suddenly, it would seem, Dorelli had identified his calling in life: "I loved the relationship between the bartender and the customer. I could finally use my personality."

But it was not easy. "I was always watching my back", he resignedly says. "I knew when my moment was over, when I was caught, I'd have to move on". Knowing that being discovered would mean a forced return to Italy, he bit the bullet and went back to working in the domestic market. And it was here that the real the Dorelli story began.

Working for a Jewish couple, he set about once again the tasks of cooking, cleaning and, additionally, hosting cocktail parties. "The man of the house took me aside one day, and declared: 'Why are you here? You can't be doing this forever!' I explained the situation to him, and the next

thing I know I am being frog-marched to the labour exchange.” The predicament he found himself in was heart stopping. “There are two stamps they use in the office—one to send you home, and one to cancel your permit—essentially giving you freedom to do anything,” he excitedly explained. “My heart stopped as the clerk picked one up. My employer, he leaned over and gave me the authority I needed to be taken seriously. The next thing you know, I’m free! I will never forget what he did for me,” he says humbly.

Suddenly Dorelli was a free man, with the world at his feet. After “getting drunk for two weeks”, he explored several opportunities and avenues in the hospitality industry, which soon led him to believe that he needed something where he could interact with the customer, where a relationship could develop and blossom.

After a few false starts, he headed to the Savoy Group in 1963. “It was the natural choice for anyone who wanted to work behind a bar, but there were simply no vacancies”. Instead he was directed to the hotel’s sister venue, Stones Chop House. Spread over two floors, the upper restaurant didn’t have a bar when he started, but this was soon changed. Dorelli, under the watchful eye of manager, Charles Galiano, coupled with his brother soon made the space, namely the Pebble Bar, their own. Soon he was to head to the Savoy, working for “the mighty Joe Gilmore”, but a year later he went back to his beloved Chop House.

The tiny place tucked away near Wardour Street, marked for Dorelli, “the best experience of my life.” A surprising declaration perhaps for someone whose name has become synonymous with the Savoy Hotel itself. It fast became the hangout of the movers and shakers of the day—from Roger Moore and Peter O’Toole to Lawrence Olivier and Richard Burton. The reason why? “I was not a bartender. I was a friend,” declares Dorelli proudly. A trait that has unquestionably followed him throughout his career. “They felt free. They knew I wouldn’t let anyone bother them when they were with us.”

On paper, this may look very fortunate, but it is the skill, the passion and the character of the man that got Dorelli to this place, although his humility prevents him from openly admitting this. Instead, he prefers to remain more matter-of-fact about the situation. “In those days, people used to pay to work at the Savoy and its associated venue. But I was fortunate. They gave me the chance to become the official cocktail maker of the company.”

Dorelli’s term officially began at the Savoy Hotel in 1980, where he and Victor Gower, who had spent 42 years at the hotel, wrangled for power. “He was very much in charge,” admits Dorelli. “He expected to have the job single-handedly, so I took on the front of house to avoid clashes”. Four years later, the move paid off, as Gower left the company and Dorelli took on the role of Head Bartender formally.

And this is where Dorelli could finally step up to the mark and flex his managerial muscles. A strong work ethic undoubtedly got him the respect he deserved and also assisted in building a fiercely loyal team. “I changed everything, but the most important thing for me was that everyone, no matter of what their position, should be expected to do the same. And in that I included myself. I wanted to train everyone, whether they were bartenders or waiters. I kept nothing back.”

Some of the changes to the system were relatively simple. A points system, whereby the higher up

the ladder the member of staff was, the higher the percentage of tips they received, incentivised staff “I also made sure that I kept some money aside each month, and every so often we’d all go out together.” The mentality of Dorelli as a manager was simple—they were all in it together, a family.

The approach certainly paid off. “Nobody left the American Bar unless I asked them to,” declares Dorelli. And ask he sometimes did. “No matter how good the person or the place, there is only so long they should be there for. Once they had learnt everything they could from me and the American Bar, was time for them to move on. I always found them somewhere appropriate to take their next steps, but it was crucial for them to move on if they were to progress.”

Other changes at the American Bar were more radical. Dorelli broke with tradition and hired female waitresses for the first time in the history of the venue. He put together a team of actresses “who looked a million dollars” and radically changed the nature of the venue. The emphasis was put on the girls being classy: wearing long velvet skirts, fitted blouses ruffled with lace plus a matching choker and velvet cuffs, they instantly pushed takings—and tips—through the roof.

Another move that was to shape the atmosphere of the bar was the hiring of Mike McKenzie, the former pianist at the Dorchester. The chemistry between he and Dorelli was electric; with the bartender frequently causing a stir by sending over trays of drinks to the musician, and a skit ensuing much to the delight of the guests.

“I did it my way. The only thing I couldn’t change was the dress code. That’s the only place I failed.”

But there were also things that Dorelli simply wouldn’t do that made just as much of an impact. “I would never shout on duty. I find that dreadful. You destroy the moment and the magic of that place. No Gordon Ramsay tendencies from our humble Italian.

Most importantly, he never forgot who ruled the roost. “The customer is king,” he proudly declared. “You must never, ever lose sight of that. Without making the customer happy, you are nothing.” This is perfectly exemplified when you quiz him on his most memorable moments in the bar. With the celebrity crowd at his feet—Dorelli can proudly list those he has served in his time, from the royals to the brat pack as readily as if he were reciting the alphabet—it might be shocking to some that it is the simpler things he relishes from his career. “What used to make my evening? When someone tells me it is their thirtieth anniversary. I want to say to them, thank you for choosing me to celebrate it with.” And it is that honesty of soul that makes him so beloved, amongst the industry and his past customer today.

Along with the determination to ensure that the guest was always put first, it was the constant evolution of the venue that Dorelli credits in ensuring its long-term fashionability. “The American Bar always changed. I always believe the bar has to be alive. You should stop and listen. You should be able to hear the heartbeat.” Does this still exist today? In a few places maybe, but these are few and far between. Reverting back to the service standards held in such high regard in the past may well be the perfect way of safeguarding the future.

But it is the role and respect of the bartender that Dorelli really holds dear. “For years I have tried to have the position of bartender recognized as that of skilled labour, but I always failed,” he claims, (although many would credit him with doing just that, both at his work at the Savoy and additionally

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