

SIPPIN' AND SAYING GOODBYE AT THE WHISKY BAR

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By the time you read this, my wonderful friend Susan will have moved away. At the time I'm writing this, I'm suffering from a small hangover. The two events are not unrelated. Susan and I were to have a drink on a Thursday, our last "just us chickens" night. "I need drinks!" Susan said, at about 5 p.m. (She'd had a hard day.) By 7 we were ensconced in the Roaring Fork (the Big Ass Burger is now \$8.95 after 7 p.m. instead of \$6 all the time -- the Roaring Fork just lost 90 percent of its appeal for me). By 10:30 p.m. we were at the Whisky Bar.

If I'm out in the Warehouse District with time to kill, I'll stick my head into the 3 1/2-year-old Whisky Bar. It's a late-night kind of venue -- turn up before midnight and you'll find yourself with many choices of seating, which oftentimes is exactly what I'm looking for. Sometimes the music is so loud I can't talk to whomever I'm with (occasionally a good thing); sometimes the bar is completely mellow. Sometimes I feel like drinking a whiskey in a place that specializes in whiskeys and Opal Divine's is just too far to walk. But when, last week, I realized that I'd never written about it, I asked Susan to come along and have one more drink with me before we called it a night.

When we arrived, the bar was largely empty, so we headed straight for the back room, where the DJ was spinning some '80s stuff -- Thursdays are '80s music; other nights jazz and hip-hop rumble from the DJ booth. Nothing, of course, is as much fun as '80s music for a sentimental night out: Who could be better than the Smiths? The back room consists of an upstairs and a down -- when first you walk in, if you look up, you can see the DJ spinning in a small booth upstairs. Opposite the DJ and, again, upstairs is what we promptly christened the Make-out Room because it was curtained and snugly and well, there was a couple clearly getting ready to make out.

Back downstairs we made our way to the bar, set up camp and had ourselves a drink. We could, of course, have sat in either of the other two rooms: the big front room, with its many booths, tables, modern art and a small stage for live music; the tiny middle room with its booths facing the bathroom doors and cigarette machine (more or less). But the back-room has space cleared out in the center that sometimes people dance in. And while we weren't dancing ourselves, it's always nice to be near the dancing space, especially if you're hoping someone might do that Cure-swaying dance your 10th-grade boyfriend was so good at. (Sadly, no one did.)

Given that the Whisky Bar specializes in single-malt scotches such as Scapa and small-batch bourbons such as Basil Hayden's, it would have behooved us to order something spiffy -- or, at the very least, a nice sipping Irish whiskey (the Whisky Bar has Redbreast, which I'm quite fond of).

But we'd already had a drink or two and I was feeling a little sentimental and Susan and I had shared many a Jack Daniels over the years. So in a bar full of small-batch and hard-

to-find-in-bars whiskey, we drank the most mass-produced readily accessible one there: JD, mixed with Coke. Oh well.

Leaving the twentysomething hipsters populating the bar behind ("vampires," another patron had called them, because they don't come out till midnight), I laughed because it was only about 12:30 a.m. (How many times I'd tried to have an early night with Susan and how often we'd closed places down.) But Susan had work the next day and I had a plane to catch. No wild night out, no madcap after-hours dance parties, but still an evening well worth the morning's headache -- and the tiny heartache, realizing the Susan-Moira gallivanting had come to an end.

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