

WOODSY'S ROAD TO AC Travelogue, Part 2

Written by Michael Woods

Tuesday, 29 October 2013 15:20



Bernard Hopkins has thoroughly entertained me, getting into a nasty rumble with Karo Murat. You half expected on Saturday night for Murat to whip out a foreign object at the Boardwalk Hall AC, and go into full heel mode against B-Hop. In this second part of my Atlantic City travelogue--here is [Part 1 if you missed it](#)--I share my experiences post-fight, which includes a visit to a fabled AC watering hole, where I was welcomed with more warmth and generosity than I'd ever previously experienced.

1:22 AM I did a little tidying up in the press room, and chatted with my man Carlos Suarez, of Boricua Boxing, and also Showtime shooter Tom Casino. His grind isn't near done; he'll be culling images he's shot of the Hopkins-Murat (*as seen in above Hogan photo*), Quillin-Rosado and Wilder-Firtha fights, into a compelling gallery, which Showtime will put out in the early AM. This is a 24/7 business, we agree, and you've got to give the people ie the readers and the bosses... what they want in this day and age. Is what it is...

Carlos says he won't be long, but after 25 minutes, I tell him I'd like to jet. He laughs and basically admits he'll be there for a spell more. (At 4:30 AM, I get a Tweet from him, admitting that he's glad he didn't ask me to wait, as he's still in the press room, working on photos and videos for his websites.) So me and Mitch Abramson head to my Zipcar, parked inside the building in an immense hangar, and head to The Irish Pub. That's where Zach Levin, a common friend, and sometimes contributor to TSS, is hanging, with a crew. That crew includes [Benn Schulberg](#)

, a writer whose father Budd was fabled for his contributions to the silver screen (he wrote the 1957 Academy Award-winner "On the Waterfront" script) and the fight game (he wrote a bunch of superior books on the pug scene). His name will be familiar to disciples of the late George Kimball, the former Boston Herald and then TheSweetScience.com columnist.

[Kimball was pals with heavy hitters, like Schulberg,](#)

and investigative ace

[Jack Newfield](#)

, and

[Pete Hamill](#)

, and would occasionally delight readers with anecdotes from the days when some of these lions prowled and pounced with severe vigor and top-tier wordsmithery.

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1:43 AC is a bit of a trip. There is a bit of a lawless vibe to it, an aura that makes you wonder what the ratio of good guys to bad guys is, especially after midnight. We see a gal leaning against a pole, smoking a cigarette. Is she advertising something? Herself? Or waiting for a bus or something? We turn right onto Saint James Place, drive down a lonely road, and see a couple rooming houses. Mitch jokes that he will be residing in one of these establishments in about 30 years. We don't see another soul, but we do see the sign for the Pub. We find parking, always a marvel to NYC people used to crawling around, looking for open real estate. Parking lots, how 'bout that!

Inside, the mood is super relaxed. Zach greets us, and it's clear he's in love with the Pub. The memorabilia on the wall is a trip, and the proprietor, he tells us is a doll, and a character to boot. Cathy Burke is her name, and she owns the joint with her hubby Richard. I meet Cathy after a couple minutes, and she takes a seat at the table, along with Zach, Mitch, Benn, another guy name Mike, and Krystyna Rodriguez. We shoot the breeze, and I grab a wing that is in a basket, after Zach tells me and Mitch to help ourselves. Stories begin to be swapped. Cathy says that Joe DiMaggio spent a lot of time here, in the 80s, as the Pub is beneath hotel rooms which are available during warm weather months.

1:56 Burke, it is clear, is a throwback sort in a good way. She endears herself to me forever when she points at me and Mitch and Zach and excitedly, delightedly refers to us as the new guard, in the tradition of the [Schulbergs](#) and [Kimballs](#) and [Bert Sugars](#) and such, who were regulars at The Irish Pub. I do an aw shucks, and mean it, but she says no, You guys are the next wave of talent. Mitch and I whisper that we've never had such a fabulous assault of affirmation in our lives.

2:01 I look to my left and see a guy I know. Don't know his name, he's dark skinned, in his late 50s maybe, sturdy. Boxing guy, gotta be, I think to myself. Turns out the dude is a Heartbreaker, as in, one of Tom Petty's Heartbreakers. That's drummer Steve Ferrone, and he's leaving the pub with two pals. He's a mongo fight fan, someone tells me. I can't let that pass, I hustle out the door, and catch Ferrone on the street, headed to his car.

2:04 The drummer tells me he's a mega fight fan; he is 63, lives in Cali, and works out at Freddie Roach's Wild Card Gym in Hollywood. He grew up in Brighton, England, and has been doing the boxing workout for three years. Ferrone and two pals came to AC to watch the Hopkins-Murat/Golden Boy card. "Hopkins is enthusiastic and powerful, and loves what he does, clearly" Ferrone said. "He's not out there fighting some hack, he's fighting good fighters."

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He was in NYC doing some recording work, and finished early, and snuck over to AC. I try and lure him and the Heartbreakers to play Barclays Center, near my house and then thank him and his pals, for indulging me in the chat. One of Ferrone's pals is Massachusetts guy, Mike, and he roars when I do my profane Norman Stone imitation. Another night's highlight....

Back inside, Cathy says that the salt of the earth manner of Schulberg and Kimball and company was something she always treasured. It is crystal clear that this is a lady for whom honor and loyalty and decency are utmost imperatives. She recalls that author Richard Ben Cramer came in, looking for info on Joe DiMaggio, who he heard stayed at the Pub. "I've talked to a lot of his friends," the writer told Burke. "Mr. Cramer, all due respect, but those people, if they talked to you on the record, they weren't his friends," she replied. No, she said politely, when Cramer asked for some material on Joe D for his book, "Joe DiMaggio: A Hero's Life."

"And I think Cramer was a great writer," she adds, making clear her principles don't sit in an acid bath of malice.

2:11 Burke asks me what I want to drink. "Just a ginger ale," I said. Her eyes indicate she's mildly mystified by the request. "I retired, in '95," I say. "Ohhh, that's great," she says. Kimball too put a cork in the jug, we recall. "When the guys used to come in, and order, I'd get George ice cream. Peach ice cream," she said of the author, who died on July 6, 2011, not long after writing me an email telling me to wait for a new story, as he wasn't yet ready to hang up the gloves. "Don't give up on me," he wrote. We all remark that peach ice cream isn't easy to find, but, Cathy says, she had a guy.

3:17 Zach apologizes to me, asks for my forgiveness, wonders if I will still be his friend? Great God, what did he do? The egregious offense turns out to be...I ordered a slice of apple pie, and it was sitting waiting for me while I chatted with Cathy, after she twisted my arm, and wouldn't allow me to pay for two The Irish Pub t-shirts. "I ate your pie," Zach tells me. I forgive, forget, and order another slice.

4:15 Bout time to roll out. I'd love to stay, the joint is open 24 hours, but with this delicate constitution, I need to get some sleep, or I will get a cold. I scoop up Mitch, say goodbye to the gang, give Cathy a hug and promise to be back, as I have NEVER been treated with more warmth in an eatery as I have on this night...and scoop up Mitch and drive off.

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I bring him to Ballys, and then drive seven miles to my bargain motel, a Best Western. I saved more than \$100, and I then sent \$100 to the family of fallen fighter Frankie Leal, so I'm happy with my choice of frugality. (I don't say this to brag, or prove what a mensch I am. No, I ask that you follow me, and the other folks who have sent money to help Frankie's wife and son make ends meet in the future, and donate.)

4:44 This is ridiculous, and fabulous. I have the radio on "scan" and it picks up a station playing Christmas tunes. Too early for that? Nonsense I say. Give the people what they want. I hum along to "Holly, Jolly Christmas."

5:05 I drive around a gal holding up a puking man in the Best Western lot, and then give the puke puddle a wide berth as I walk to the desk, to get a room key. The room is quite clean, and I don't feel the need to inspect for bed bugs. Being a ludicrous type, I open up my laptop, and post Bernard Fernandez' story on the Hopkins and Quillin fights to TSS.

5:17 Teeth are brushed, bladder is emptied, I crawl into bed. Don't fall asleep right away, as some leftover adrenaline keeps my brain buzzing. But then I drift off, thinking of what a marvel Hopkins is, and the lovely compliments and apple pie at The Irish Pub. It's like Ferrone said about Hopkins; I too enjoy the hell out of what I do. I drift off, humming "Holly, Jolly Christmas."

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