



Paul's Tavern

by Rich Belmont

Year 2011 is history which means you are probably done noshing on Christmas treats and Holiday dinners. You have had your share of rich foods and big meals with family and friends. So you might be thinking it's time to get back to basic eating. Well you can't get more basic than Paul's Tavern on Locust Street between 1st and 2nd Streets in Dubuque.



This bar has been operating continuously for 62 years now. The Tavern opened in 1948 and was purchased by Paul Schollmeyer on August 3, 1949. Paul developed a reputation for serving good beer and burgers. He was also known for his fishing and hunting expeditions. During the 1950's and 1960's he went on many big game excursions and brought back impressive trophies. Several of these are still exhibited in glass cases mounted on the walls and even the ceiling of the tavern. For example, there are displays of a Big Horn Sheep from Montana, a



Whitetail Deer from Saskatchewan, a Grizzly Bear and Wolverine from British Columbia and a Polar Bear shot north of the Arctic Circle. All of these animals were taken years before there were any government restrictions on big game hunting. Paul is now 84 and still visits the Tavern when he is not in his winter home in Brownsville, Texas.



Tom Koch took over the Tavern in 1993. He was a manager at McDonalds for the previous 14 years and decided to try running his own place. He was already tending bar a couple of nights a week and knew many of the regular customers. Some of them asked him to keep the bar the way it was and not change a thing. Obviously Tom took that advice. The animals are still on display, there are still only 5 tables and 16 bar stools and the bar is still only closed on Thanksgiving and Christmas day. One thing that has changed is the price of the burgers. In 1943 they cost 25 cents and in 1999 they were \$1.45 and now in 2012 the price is way up to \$2.45!



There are no fries in this place so you can order your sandwich with a side of great tasting soup during the winter months. The soup is available Monday through Friday. There is Chicken Dumpling on Monday, Vegetable on Tuesday and Ham and Bean on Wednesday. On Thursday the Chicken Noodle is really good with big chunks of chicken and an overflowing bowl of noodles. Friday is Chef's Surprise day.



Paul's Tavern
176 Locust Street, Dubuque, IA
563-556-9944

HOURS: 9 am - 2 am, 7 days per week
DINING STYLE: Tavern – come as you are
NOISE LEVEL: Conversational; Loud during ball games
RECOMMENDATIONS: Beef Burger, Cheeseburger, Hot Ham & Cheese, Tuna Salad
LIQUOR SERVICE: Full Bar
PRICES: \$2.45 - \$2.75
RESERVATIONS: No
PAYMENT OPTIONS: Cash, Debit, All Credit Cards, NO Checks, ATM on premises
ACCESSIBILITY: No
KIDS POLICY: No Kids Menu; Booster Seats
CATERING: No **TAKE OUT:** Yes
DELIVERY: No
PARKING: On south side of building



Another thing that hasn't changed is the way the hamburgers are cooked. When this bar first opened a Broilator manufactured by the now defunct Norge Company was installed. This gas fired countertop broiler contains a very well seasoned cast iron griddle. The cook places burgers on this plate and pulls a lever that positions the plate between top and bottom flames. The meat is cooked at a high temperature and does not have to be flipped. The Broilator has been cooking over 100 hamburgers a day for over 62 years! The griddle only holds 8 burgers so when the bar is busy you have to wait your turn. Nobody complains, though, because the wait is well worth it.

Walking into Paul's Tavern is like stepping back in time. It's also an exercise in getting back to simple, uncomplicated eating. The menu is the same for lunch and dinner and it features only six items. They are Beef Burger, Cheeseburger, Ham Sandwich, Hot Ham and Cheese, Grilled Cheese and Tuna Salad all priced between \$2.45 and \$2.75.

You can have any cheese you want on your



Cheeseburger or Grilled Cheese as long as what you want is American cheese.

And you have your choice of burger toppings too. You can ask for ketchup, mustard, pickle and onions. That's all you need on these burgers anyway. In fact there is a sign next to the Broilator that reads "This is not Burger King. You don't get it your way. You take it my way or you don't get the darned thing". Fair Enough! The burgers are excellent! The quarter pounders are made fresh every day from 90/10 blend ground beef. The only seasonings used are salt and pepper and then the Broilator works its magic.

The result is a truly extraordinary burger. So much so, it has earned Paul's Tavern a listing in Hamburger America, A State By State Guide to 150 Great Burger Joints by George Motz © 2011. Some people consider this book to be the definitive guide to the great hamburger bars across the United States.



There is also Chili Monday through Saturday. Starting around April 1st the soup and chili are replaced by Macaroni and Potato Salad.

So stop by Paul's Tavern and say hello to Tom, his brother, Dave and daughter Amber Koch. They will be happy to serve you a bottle of several brews including Busch Light or Bud Light and fix you up with a great sandwich. Paul's Tavern is where you still get a burger and a beer for under \$5.00!

