



West Dubuque Tap

1701 Asbury Road, Dubuque, IA 52001, 563-556-9647

HOURS: Bar: Mon-Sat, 6 am-2 am, Sun 8 am-Noon, **Breakfast:** Mon-Sat, 6 am-11 am, Sun, 8 am-Noon, **Lunch/Dinner:** Mon-Sat, 11 am-9 pm

DINING STYLE: Come as you are **NOISE LEVEL:** Loud during ball games

RECOMMENDATIONS: Magic Muffin, West Dubuque Special Breakfast, All Hamburgers, Pork Tenderloin, French Fries, All Lunch Specials, Reuben, Sirloin Steak, Friday Hot Beef & Mashed Potatoes Daily Special

LIQUOR SERVICE: Full Bar, **RESERVATIONS:** No,

PRICE RANGE: Breakfast: \$2.75-\$8.50; Lunch: \$3.85-\$9.25; Dinner: \$3.85-\$12.95

PAYMENT OPTIONS: Cash, Check, MasterCard and Visa, **ACCESSIBILITY:** No,

KIDS POLICY: No Menu; high chairs and boosters available

CATERING: No, **TAKE OUT:** Yes, **DELIVERY:** No

PARKING: On Street – Asbury Road and Cherry Street



West Dubuque Tap

by Rich Belmont

West Dubuque Tap is located at the corner of Asbury Road and Cherry Street in Dubuque. I confess I have driven by it thousands of times before I ever went inside. Then one day my friend Jim Robinson asked me why I never tried it. He said they had great breakfasts including their famous Magic Muffin (pictured below) and wonderful hamburgers and the most amazing homemade French fries. Jim took me there the first time and now I am a regular customer.



I always believed this place was just a neighborhood bar but now I know better. It's actually about 70% restaurant and only 30% bar. And it has a long history, a very long history. In fact, its origins go back to 1949. That year, Donna Ginter, who is originally from Humboldt, South Dakota, and her late husband, Joe, started a business called The Navy Club at 4th and Main Street in Dubuque, IA.

It was a chartered veteran's bar for US Navy, Marines, Seabees, and Coast Guard veterans. At the time Donna didn't know anything about the hospitality business and was guided by Danny Diamond the owner of Diamond's Cafeteria and Soda Grill.

In the 1960's the business was moved to the German Bank Building on Main Street. Over time it became more about food and less about drinks. The name was changed to the Broken Spur and later to the Silver Dollar.

If you don't know Donna Ginter you have probably heard of her. In the 1950's she was already well known for her generosity. Oftentimes she would feed her customers and wait for payment until they received their Social Security checks. She came to prominence in 1978 when then Iowa Governor Robert D. Ray presented her with a certificate

recognizing her efforts in having the German Bank Building placed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Donna is renowned for her hospitality. Many years ago she began serving a free Thanksgiving Dinner to those in need. It started when she brought six homeless people to her home on Thanksgiving. Today, with the help of an army of generous volunteers and donors she feeds over 2500 people on that holiday. The project would be overwhelming to most of us but not to Donna. To raise money she began hosting the Catfish Festival in 1991 and now also runs the Dubuque Riverfest which was held last weekend.

Donna was honored by the Telegraph Herald with its First Citizen Award in 1994. Fifteen years later Mayor Roy D. Buol, on behalf of the Dubuque City Council, staff and citizens proclaimed April 18, 2009 as Donna Ginter Day in honor of her 47 years (to date) of organizing free Thanksgiving Dinners.

Through it all Donna managed to raise seven children. In order to make life a little easier she sold the Silver Dollar and purchased West Dubuque Tap because it was closer to her home on Cherry Street.



Donna still contributes her expertise and 62 years worth of experience to this eatery. However, several years ago two of her daughters, Genny and Kathy Ginter (pictured above), became co-owners. They both remember the day the family took over West Dubuque Tap. It was May 8, 1980. So this restaurant has been operating for 31 years now, and obviously Genny and Kathy have grown up in the business. In fact, hospitality must be in their genes because Genny's daughter, Bobbie Coats (right), is now a cook alongside her mom and aunt.



So my friend Jim was right on. My first sandwich was an Olive Burger. A third of a pound of fresh ground chuck was hand formed and cooked on a griddle. It came to me with melted Swiss cheese

draped over a generous supply of green olives. The cheese is made locally by Zimmerman's Cheese in South Wayne, WI. Next to the burger was a huge mountain of those fresh homemade French fries. They have a young man come in every day to hand cut those Idaho Russets.

There were so many fries I told myself I would never eat them all. But they were so good I not only emptied the basket I even stole a few more from Jim's pile! Our server, Sue Nichols, was not surprised. She said a lot of her customers do the same thing.

So after this first visit of course I had to go back again. The next time I ordered the Pork Tenderloin. A fresh pork loin is tenderized and hand breaded with rice flour and secret seasonings and cooked to order. You can order this grilled or deep fried. When my server Doreen Jecklin brought it from the kitchen she laughed when I marveled at its enormity. It was easily three times bigger than the bun it was in.



Since the baskets include those magnificent French fries I always order a basket. A good choice is the West Dubuque Super Burger with mushrooms, bacon, lettuce, tomato, onions and American cheese. Or perhaps the Grilled Tuna Fish or Grilled Cheese sandwich would be more to your liking.

I noticed a lot of people go to West Dubuque Tap for lunch. That's because there is a Daily Lunch Special that is a different dinner each day Monday through Thursday. These specials are a full meal including meat, vegetable, roll and dessert for only \$6.25. There is no way you can eat these and still be hungry. And if you are in a hurry the staff will have you in and out in 20 minutes or less. In a recent week the specials were Meatball Sandwich, White Chicken with White Gravy, Lasagna and Pork and Noodles. On Fridays the special is always Hot Beef and Mashed Potatoes except during Lent.



There is also a Nightly Special Monday through Saturday. These are the same dinners every week. On Monday there is Hamburger Steak with Grilled Onions. The next night is Taco Tuesday in either hard or soft shell. By the way, the Fish Tacos are awesome! On Wednesday choose the Sirloin or Ribeye Open Face Steak Sandwich or Reuben. The Thursday Special is Spaghetti and Friday you can choose Fried or Baked Icelandic Cod, Fried Catfish or Shrimp Tenders (Yeah, I didn't know what these were either. They are shrimp without the tails).



OK. So now I have to tell you about breakfast. Recently Bryce Parks, publisher of 365ink and I went early in the morning. Well, OK, so it wasn't so early. We told our wives we each had a boiled egg and cottage cheese. Well that wasn't entirely true. Naturally I asked our waitress Marybeth Stelpflug to bring me the West Dubuque Tap Special consisting of two eggs cooked to order with bacon or sausage and hash browns. And Bryce had the famous Magic Muffin. This staggering jaw breaker was served as advertised. An egg, hash browns, two sausage patties and American cheese stuffed between the halves of an English muffin. Bryce munched away as if he was in heaven and for once I didn't have to listen to him talking!



So if you have been driving right by this establishment perhaps it's time to check it out. The food tastes like it was prepared in your mom's kitchen, it's reasonably priced and you will not go away hungry. You will leave happy and wondering how they manage to put out so many great meals in a kitchen that has only 7 feet by 15 feet of space!

Oh, and as you know, I always say a good dinner deserves dessert. Well here it comes out of a vending machine – snack size candy bars for only 25 cents!

