

## Iconic Pipher's Bar Little-Changed in 80 Years

*New Photos and Story by Rick Hiduk*



**Pipher's Bar owner George Nesbit (left) wraps up his morning shift and hands over bartending duties to nine-year employee Lisa Payne on a Wednesday morning in September 2015. George inherited the bar from his mother and step-father, the late Edwin Pipher, who passed away in 1966. George has worked there for 55 years.**

Though the Pipher family was responsible for the construction and management of several buildings and businesses on opposite sides of the intersection at Wysox Corners, each was acquired or fell into the hands of other families as time passed.

Pipher's Diner and Pipher's Bar were constructed in the mid-1930s, with the diner being purchased by the Aquilios in 1938 and run by Lou Aquilio to this day. The bar was owned and operated by Charles Pipher until he became ill in the late 1940s.

When Charles' son, Edwin, who was an Army MP, came home from the service, he entered a partnership with Charles Jennings to run the Wayside Inn (current Bucket of Blood) in South Towanda together. They lured Charles' brother, Leon Pipher Sr., away from Pipher's Bar, which infuriated Charles, according to Edwin's daughter Sue (Wheeler).

"He sold the bar to Doc Lynch and promptly became upset that he had and went and repurchased it for more than he'd sold it for," Sue explained.

Charles' depression over the actions of Edwin and Leon and the costly transactions led Charles to commit suicide in 1947 by rigging the exhaust back into his car where he had

parked at the Wysox fairgrounds. Ironically, after his death, Edwin and Leon left The Wayside and returned to Pipher's Bar and managed the drinkery together until about 1970. Leon died in January 1971.

Edwin met Esther Jennings (Charles's sister) at The Wayside. She was a native of Macedonia and was married first to George Nesbit Sr. from 1937 until his death in 1945. Esther married Edwin Pipher in 1949.

Edwin already had a daughter, Linda, who married Jerry Rowe and now lives in Ulster. Esther brought two children into the marriage; George Nesbit, who married Claudia Herbert, and Doris, who married Ronnie Brown and lives in Leraysville. Together, Edwin and Esther had two more children; Sue, who married Joe Wheeler and lives in Asylum Township, and Sally, who married Kevin Allis and lives in Rome.

The family moved from their home between the Susquehanna River and the railroad tracks behind the bar to a house on the other side of the Roosevelt Highway (Route 6) built by the Poillet family in the early 1800s and predating the better-known Piollet Mansion (current Dandy Mini Mart) by about 65 years.

In the 1950s, the Piphers built an addition onto the house that became the Wysox Motel, as well as Pipher's Trailer Park behind it to accommodate workers associated with the Tennessee Gas Pipeline project in the late 1950s. Both businesses are still in operation today, though the strip motel is closed and rooms in the house are now rented by the month.

When George turned 18 in 1960, he started pumping gas at a service station run out of the front of the bar building. "My step-father said, 'It's either pay room and board or come and work for me.'" His first paycheck, signed by Leon Pipher Sr. was in the net amount of \$46.40.

Eventually, Leon and George ran the bar, while Edwin and Esther continued to run the motel. Claudia worked with Esther at the motel in the mornings, then worked afternoons at the bar. George always worked the late shift, which then ran to midnight. He'd pull a double whenever a bartender couldn't make it to work.

George and Claudia lived in George's grandmother's farmhouse on Tip Top with their daughter, Angela. "I slept in the same room that I was born in," George related. Angela continues to reside on the family homestead in a newer house with her husband, Jeff Burgess.

George's step-father and mother were well-known and well-respected in the Wysox business community, being at the helm of so many business in their lifetimes. Edwin Pipher passed away in 1966, and Esther worked in the bar up to her death in January 2009. Claudia Nesbit worked at the bar through 2006, when she passed away.

"It hasn't changed in the 55 years that I've been here," George said of the bar. The facade and businesses housed in the front portion of the bar building, however, have changed many times. George recalls that Clate Johnson ran the gas station from the 1960s into the 1970s. Not too long ago, it was a tattoo parlor, and is currently a bait and tackle shop.

The building behind the bar and Pipher's Diner has also seen numerous uses over the years, beginning with Earl Stroud's plumbing business in 1940s. "He started with a station wagon and a box of tools," George recalled, adding that there have been several beauty salons and a barber shop there, as well as a C&N Bank branch and the post office. It has been empty since the 1970s.

While other long-time business owners in the area recall periods of boom and bust, George

maintains that patronage of Pipher's Bar has been fairly consistent through the past half century or so. "The beer guys always tell me that they could bring over the beer each week without me ordering it," George remarked.

The bar, bar back, stools, and booths are decades old and lend the sense that you are stepping back in time when you enter either door. The walls are adorned with signed dollar bills, and old photos of patrons and sponsored ball teams. Posted everywhere are humorous bar-related quotes and antidotes.

George said that he was always a big fan of the television show "Cheers" because it reminded him of Pipher's bar. "I believed that the guy who wrote it had been to our bar," George stated. "We had all the same things happen here. We've had some real episodes."

One of more peculiar events at the bar, as recalled by Wysox Township Supervisor Jon Kulick, was roasted bear encrusted with salt was laid out on the bar for patrons to consume. "George smashed it with a hammer," said Jon. "It was the most tender bear meat I had ever tasted."

When business picked up a bit in 2008 with the arrival of new gas workers, a few new customers and regular patrons alike suggested to George that an update might be in order. "They wanted me to put in a couple TVs, a pool table, a jukebox and turn it into a sports bar," he related. "What do you do when you don't have any of those things? You're forced to talk to each other, and that's what most of my customers like about the bar."

Current bartender Lisa Payne, who has worked with George for about nine years, agreed that the drinkery remains a people's bar, which is why she enjoys working there.

Nonetheless, George is ready to sell the bar and retire. In fact, he noted, most of the Pipher-built buildings and businesses at Wysox Corners are for sale. That said, the days are numbered for local residents to step through the entrance of Pipher's bar and back in time to enjoy a few drinks and reminisce with George and his staff.



**Pipher's Bar (left) opened in the 1930s and has been run by the Pipher and Nesbit families ever since.**

**In this aerial photo (right) of Wysox Corners taken in the early 1950s, Pipher's**





Bar is clearly visible at the upper left (southeast) corner of the intersection, as is Pipher's Diner to the left (east). Pipher's Trailer Park had not yet been built.

(Left) Dollar bills signed by and attributed to regular patrons line portions of the interior walls of Pipher's Bar like wallpaper. Current owner George Nesbit says that, when he retires, he's going to peel

the money off the wall and buy himself a few drinks.



(Above) A drink token and souvenir from Pipher's Bar in Wysox.

