



*The 119-year-old building that housed Marie's Rip Tide was razed in 2014 to make way for a big fancy building. Good times were always had by all.*

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Marie Wuczynski had a favorite number on the jukebox of the venerable Marie's Rip Tide Lounge, 1745 W. Armitage in Chicago.

She inherited the song when she bought the Bucktown bar in 1961. Mrs. Wuczynski died Monday of congestive heart failure in her home above the bar. She was 88.

Mrs. Wuczynski often would go to sleep after listening to No. 120 on the juke: "Melody of Love," with former WGN-AM all-night personality Franklyn MacCormack reading a poem as the Wayne King Orchestra played a waltz. In his profound baritone, MacCormack said:

*I love you not only for what you have made yourself*

*But for what you are making of me.*

*I love you because you are helping me to make the lumber of my life not a tavern, but a temple.*

And Marie's Rip Tide became quite a temple.

John F. Kennedy Jr. stopped there before his George magazine party during the 1996 Democratic National Convention. He hung around for an hour, playing the vintage trap shoot machine that hung on the north wall.

The Rip Tide was used as a set by the TV series "Crime Story," and Conan O'Brien featured the bar on "Late Night." In 1998 the Juleps with Cathy Richardson recorded the rock tribute "Marie's Riptide." The song made it on the bar's jukebox along with the Bobby Darin, Patsy Cline and Frank Sinatra tunes that attracted hipsters as the neighborhood gentrified.

The Chicago Code?

That was Mrs. Wuczynski.

At age 23 she went to work as a welder, first at Chicago's Schwinn bicycle factory and later welding airplanes during World War II. "I was a hell of a welder," she said in 1997. "You gotta weld them solid." Just like a Rip Tide cocktail.

One of the first things Mrs Wuczynski did when she purchased the Rip Tide was to open up a diner in the room south of the bar. She wanted to feed the four shifts from the corrugated box factory across the street.

"There were still railroad tracks across the street when I bought this place," she told me while peering out the window in a 1997 conversation at her bar. "One day through my windows, I could see the cranes picking up the tracks out of the ground. All of a sudden you start thinking way back about Mom and Dad and how seven cents would take you on the streetcar all the way to the lake. Those tracks reminded me of all that. That song reminds me of that."

Mrs. Wuczynski was born in Chicago and attended Wells High School. Her father was a Polish-born laborer. Her mother was from Warsaw, Wis.

Mrs. Wuczynski bought the tavern in 1961 from the husband of her best friend, who was

killed in an accident. Her first bartending gig was at the Lucky Stop, a polka bar owned by her uncle near Wood and Division. "The Lucky Stop Waltz," popularized by polka legend Lil' Wally Jagiello, was another of her favorites.

"I'm happy when other people are happy," she once told me over a shot of Jagermeister.

Ric Addy, owner of the Shake, Rattle and Read bookstore, was a Marie's regular in the mid-1980s. Addy and his posse would hit the Rip Tide after DJ'ing at the Artful Dodger in Wicker Park. "She didn't care who you were, how weird you dressed or how your hair was," Addy said. "Safety pins through your cheeks? It didn't matter. She loved people."

Mrs. Wuczynski was tough. She suffered a heart attack at age 73. Three years later she was seriously injured when a longtime companion fell asleep at the wheel and hit a guard rail near Milwaukee. He died at the scene. "She broke three vertebrae in her back," said her friend Tina Congenie. "They said she would never be mobile again. She proved them wrong."

Mrs. Wuczynski was known to occasionally stop in the Rip Tide for a nip of Jager in her spare time. "It's better than booze," she told me in March 1997 while staring at a shot of the dark stuff at the Rip Tide. "I used to be a Canadian Club drinker until I tried that."

The Rip Tide became known for its seasonal decorations. The back bar was adorned in a white cotton sheet. Cardboard cutouts and trimmings ranged from plastic-foam balls for Easter to the red, white and blue of Independence Day.

Mrs. Wuczynski is survived by daughters Sharon Morrison and Debbie Polazam. Mrs. Wuczynski was preceded in death by her husband, Michael Wuczynski.

Photographs of Mrs. Wuczynski will be blown up and hung on the walls for a tribute at the Rip Tide. Her beloved Jagermeister with a back of Coca-Cola and a pack of Parliaments will be the centerpiece of a candlelit shrine. Burial is at St. Adalbert cemetery, 6800 N. Milwaukee, Niles.