

# MY LOVE AFFAIR WITH HOTEL BARS

In those intimate lounges, in the presence of strangers from all over the globe, I felt truly myself

---

by Janice Eidus | Saturday, April 7, 2018

---



(Getty Images)

---

I sat by myself in the intimate lobby lounge of the Algonquin Hotel, lingering over a glass of Chardonnay. My table wasn't far from the mural depicting the famed literary and theatrical Algonquin Round Table (also known as the Vicious Circle) of the 1920s. Enjoying the subtle light cast by beaded chandeliers, I recited to myself a quip by its arguably most famous member, the writer Dorothy Parker: "*The cure for boredom is curiosity. There is no cure for curiosity.*"

Like Dorothy, I've always been a curious person. This was true from the time I was a kid with bohemian leanings feeling stifled by my less-than-progressive neighbors in the northeast Bronx housing project where I grew up. From elementary school on, I was chomping at the bit to explore the wider world.

I got out as soon as I was able to pay my own rent. Since then, I've lived in many places, including California, Iowa, the Virgin Islands and Mexico. Although Manhattan is my home these days, wherever I am, I seek out hotel bars. There I can sit for as long as I want, daydream, work, read and sometimes indulge in a cocktail with friends.

My love affair with hotel bars began over 20 years ago when, after some years living in cozy, café-filled Greenwich Village (a world apart from the conventional Bronx), I was hit with a rent increase and moved to the far west reaches of midtown Manhattan. I suddenly found myself surrounded by car dealerships, TV studios and diners with bathrooms that hadn't been cleaned in a long time.

"I need someplace to *unwind!*" I wailed to friends. "I can't unwind inside a BMW showroom!"

#### RELATED: It's in Her Kiss

Soon, I discovered that my new neighborhood contained numerous hotels. And those hotels contained bars (sometimes discreetly called "lounges") that were spacious, sophisticated havens where I was allowed to sit, undisturbed, nursing a single cup of tea or a glass of white wine. Some of the patrons were, like me, urban, boho types dressed in black. But I quickly grew to love the variety rocked by everyone else: plaid, paisley, pastel, floral, muted beige and gray, hot pink leather, tweed and pinstripes.

To my delight, the staff didn't ask me to leave, no matter how long I stayed. Maybe they thought I was awaiting a limo to the airport. Or meeting up with a fellow spy to exchange clandestine information. Or keeping a liaison with a secret lover. Most likely, they didn't fantasize about me at all, but it was fun to think they did.

Whatever they thought, I cherished my time alone among diverse strangers. I experienced myself as a traveler in a big, harmonious world, even though I was so physically close to home. I had complete freedom to read, write, think deeply or simply space out. No one recognized me and I recognized no one, although now and then I did spot a well-known rock 'n' roller and his entourage, or a beautifully aging European movie star hiding beneath a big-brimmed hat. Wanderers that we were, we were all alone together. In hotel bars, in the presence of strangers from all over the globe, I felt truly myself.

#### RELATED: Deeply Wanted: New Best Friend

My favorite hotel bars back then were the shabby-chic Mayflower (now torn down and replaced with ultra luxurious condos), the glamorous Essex House (referred to by the parents of a friend who'd been conceived there as "Sex House") and The Warwick (whose dark paneled walls reminded me of a 1950s suburban den).

I was enthralled by conversations I overheard among folks who were so different from me: Midwestern Girl Scout leaders passionately sharing strategies to help their charges sell cookies ("*It's all about the smiling!*"); an exuberant Spanish family in town to see the Christmas tree in Rockefeller Center ("*Can we go now? Por favor? Ahora? Ahora?*"); and two French women wearing meticulously tied silk scarves dispensing orgasm advice to their U.S. counterparts ("*You must allow your lover to fully enrapture you!*").

Moving around a lot, at one point I lived in an area of Brooklyn that had only one bland, uninviting hotel. Its lounge afforded a view of monolithic courthouses and fast food joints. Yet even there, I managed to enjoy myself, listening in on supposedly confidential discussions between lawyers and clients ("*Get a haircut, buy a suit and say as little as possible!*"). Eventually, I began exchanging greetings with the two other regulars, older gentlemen who sat behind newspapers.

## RELATED: The Pain of Googling Your Ex

Nowadays, I live close to The Algonquin and drop in all the time. The other day, sipping the Matilda cocktail—named after the hotel's resident cat, and containing vodka and Cointreau—I happily eavesdropped on a scowling group of men and women in suits at a nearby table interviewing a job candidate who kept flubbing it: *"My only flaw is that I'm a demanding perfectionist!"*

There were also a few British chaps in skinny jeans brainstorming about their "revolutionary, life-changing" dating app. And, an actress in a Morticia Addams wig networking with a well-known film director.

Recently, I flew to Florida on business. The trip was stressful with a long delay followed by turbulence in the air and a lost suitcase. Immediately after checking into my hotel, I headed for the bar, where I ordered chamomile tea and a late-night snack. At a dark table tucked away in the corner, I sank wearily into a plush velour chair. Surrounded by other travelers, I chose to imagine that each person there—the ones staring dreamily into their wine glasses, the bleary-eyed ones gulping down coffee to stay awake and the ones celebrating over martinis with friends—was seeking respite of some sort. I hoped that, like me, a restless and curious girl from the Bronx, they had found what they sought.

TAGS: BARS | HOTELS | LOUNGE | TRAVEL

## NEXT IN LIFESTYLE



### One-Hit Wonder

I smoked pot for the first time in a long time, and let's just say that I'm no longer as cool as I thought I was

## AROUND THE WEB

POWERED BY ZERGNET



**Celebs Reveal Their Hilarious Headshots**



**The Real Reason You Don't Hear About Caitlyn Jenner Anymore**



**The Tragic Real-Life Story of Mark Ruffalo**



**Avicii's Family Confirms His Cause of Death**



**Cosby Goes Berserk Moments After Guilty Verdict Is Read**



**Celebs Who Can't Stand Meghan Markle**



**An Era Comes to an End as Queen Elizabeth Names Her Successor**



**The Real Reason We Don't Hear From Demi Moore Anymore**

**3 COMMENTS**



Add a comment...



**Tom Sierchio** · Trenton State College

I know what you mean. I was at the Warwick just last week. 😊

Like · Reply · 2w



**Pamela Walker** · University of California, Irvine

Congratulations, Janice! I just finished reading your piece. You know I'm also a fan of hotel bars, especially the one, the only Algonquin! ❤️

Like · Reply · 2w



**Mindy Lewis** · Writer and Teacher at Freelance writer

Good piece! Makes me want to malinger someplace nice soon!

Like · Reply · 1w