

# CLUB WATCH

*'Patrons can easily steal away into an alcove that offers various games.'*



Robert Kirkham/Buffalo News

*Rick Castimore and Norma Jean Andrzejczak enjoy each other's company at Mr. Bill's.*

## FITS THE BILL

Cheektowaga club celebrates its homey and traditional atmosphere

**BY JOSEPH POPIOLKOWSKI**  
Special to The News

Immediately upon entering Mr. Bill's Restaurant & Bar in Cheektowaga it becomes clear you're in a land where pink lawn flamingos and bowling averages are cherished — a T-shirt featuring these now-liched aspects of Cheektowaga life is for sale. But while Mr. Bill's revels in Cheektowaga

kitsch, it is also a polished operation adept at making a night out memorable.

Located so close to the western edge of the airport's runways it's a wonder the windows don't periodically rattle, Mr. Bill's shares more in common with venerable institution Polish Villa than Salvatore's Italian Gardens, its neighbor to the east. It is low on glitz and glamour but receives high marks for good service, clean facilities and reasonable prices.

Our party of eight — which included my parents, two sets of their friends, and my fiancée — enjoyed the lounge, a pleasant area to converse before being seated in the adjoining restaurant.

Two people giving drink orders for eight on a busy night might call for a pen and paper, but our bartender never wrote anything down — even when one member of our party gave very precise instructions for his extremely dry martini (mini-

mal Vermouth, extra olives), which was mixed to perfection.

The bartender's memory didn't fail us as no one had any complaints. My Guinness was expertly poured according to Irish tradition, which calls for letting the half-filled glass settle then reversing the tap. My dad went with the premium Dewar's Scotch on the rocks with a hit of water. A Cosmopolitan curiously came with a light-up glow ring. It's a regular addition to the drink, said Mr. Bill himself, owner Bill DeLuca, who has run the place for 17 years with his wife, Nancy, and lives on the premises.

On tap was Labatt's, Yuengling, Michelob Light and Molson ranging from \$1.75 to \$3.75 — the kind of prices I now wistfully recollect from my home in Los Angeles, where a pint can cost double that or more. Mr. Bill's also offers bottles of local brewer Flying Bison's popular Aviator Red.

The atmosphere is standard but homey. Requisite sports memorabilia adorns the wall, and a flat-screen TV flashes from behind the bar. Stools run the length of the wall opposite the bar to provide ample seating.

To escape the noise of the main bar area, patrons can easily steal away into an alcove that offers various games, cocktail tables and a help-yourself popcorn machine, a throwback to a few decades ago when bar snacks were common. Why proprietors have abandoned the proven theory that consuming salty snacks leads to more drink purchases is beyond me.

This is a quintessentially Cheektowaga establishment. It prides itself on accurately filling orders and the personal touch — when he's not in the kitchen, DeLuca makes the rounds. Mr. Bill's appeals to those people who grew up appreciating such hospitality and still harbor a soft spot for pink lawn flamingos.



**Mr. Bill's Restaurant & Bar**  
1500 Cleveland Drive,  
Cheektowaga  
634-0783

**Scene:** A more mature crowd. Married, middle-aged couples are the dominant demographic.

**Music:** Computerized wall jukebox with more than 100,000 songs.

**Drinks:** Happy-hour specials on appetizers and most drinks from 4 p.m. until closing Monday through Thursday, 9 p.m. until closing Friday and Saturday

**Dress Code:** Casual