

# ICONIC DOWNTOWN BELOIT BAR IS GOING UP FOR SALE

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Hillary Gavan/Beloit Daily News Chelsey Hankins pours a beer at Suds O'Hanahan's Irish Pub on Thursday. Her father Tom Hankins will be putting the business up for sale on Jan. 1.

BELOIT - Suds O'Hanahan's Irish Pub owner Tom Hankins is putting the longtime downtown business up for sale on Jan. 1.

Although it's more than a half-a-year away, Hankins said he wanted to get the word out in hopes of finding the right buyer when the time comes.

Suds will always have a special place in Hankins' heart. He said he's proud of the fact his business has always been a bit of a chameleon.

"It can be whatever you want it to be," Hankins said.

The bar has played host to all kinds of events, from bachelorette festivities to baptism parties and even Irish wakes with caskets included.

Other times Suds was filled with runners for 5K events, St. Patrick's Day revelers and many other happy celebrants clinking their glasses. Over the year many couples met there and fell in love, going on to start and raise their families with happy memories of their wilder days.

There were stories shared, friends made and plenty of chatter about politics and life.

Hankins recalled he and some partners purchased 433 and 435 E. Grand Ave. - then vacant buildings - in the spring of 1995. The spaces had once been home to the Nest Egg and an office supply store.

With experience in bar and restaurant management and being three quarters Irish, the purchase was a perfect fit for Hankins and his wife Joelle. At the time Beloit Corporation was still in business, Kerry had moved into Beloit and Regal Beloit was growing. Hankins said there was a need for a downtown bar.

Once the Beloit Corporation closed, Hankins said he started focusing more on becoming a destination bar. He bought his partners out in 2005, and his business continued to flourish.

Hankins said he always tried to provide a warm, inviting and open atmosphere with a cross section of patrons including blue collar workers, students and professionals.

Although the early years were more focused on the restaurant, in more recent times Hankins focused on the bar side of the business. He became close friends with many customers and employees. Over the years Hankins said the drinking culture evolved, with people either drinking less overall or moving it to their homes.

Hankins said he still loves the bar business but is ready for a change. He is considering volunteer work and other options. No matter what he decides, he said he will remain in Beloit.

When his daughter, manager Chelsey Hankins, was asked her favorite thing about the bar, she said, "everything."

Chelsey Hankins has been working at the business for almost 11 years and said she has enjoyed the people as well as working with her dad and will miss it.

Tom Hankins said he wants to stress the business is not closing. As he starts thinking about the impending sale, he invites everyone down to Suds to celebrate with him.