

New book taps into the history of Somers Point bars

By Bill Kelly

Nick Regine's new book, "Between Drinks," describes itself as a history of Somers Point bars.

The long subtitle says it's, "A memoir of growing up in Somers Point, with a tip of the hat to the history of some of the bars, saloons, tap rooms and bartenders of that era."

Regine is the only person who could have written this book, not only because it is a memoir of growing up in Somers Point in the '50s, but because he knew the places and the bartenders he writes about, many of which are no longer with us.

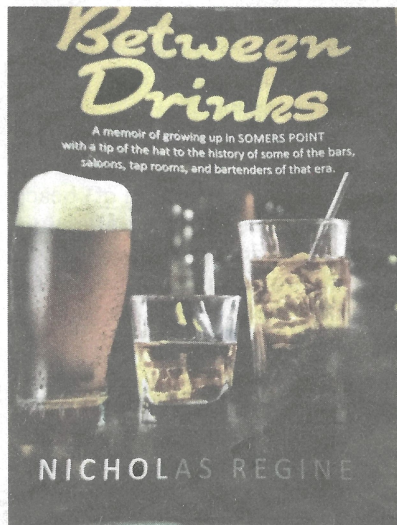
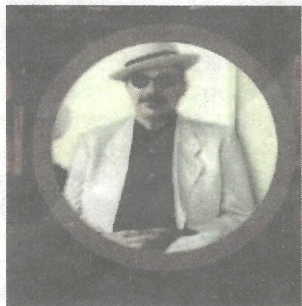
What's between the drinks? Life, and life in Somers Point. In the '50s, '60s and '70s, it was not like it is today. It's still what Greg Gregory calls "a drinking town with a fishing problem," but the character of the town and the characters who popu-

late it have changed. Regine tries to document what it used to be, and in many ways succeeds.

Gone are Maenner's, Vaughn Comforts, Daniel's, Harry's, Chi Chi's, Mac's, Tony Mart's, Bay Shores, Sullivan's, the Launch Haven, Harbor Lights, Bubba Mac Shack and many others.

Then there's the iconic bartenders who worked for them, many for decades: Charles Carney, Vince Rennich, George McGonigle, Don Dunleavy, Tommy Swayne and Ed Marjarum. While each gets a mention, a few have pictures, and some of the bars get chapters of their own.

Luckily we still have D'Orio's, Charlie's, the Anchorage and Gregory's keeping some of the traditions alive, along with younger bartenders who are making their own mark – Tom Milburn, George Gerety, Barb Mao-um, Larry Capua, Jim "Rock n' Roll" Gallagher, John Napoli; everyone has their favorite bartender.



Regine, who worked for decades in education, either instigated or played a huge role in establishing a number of now traditional Somers Point events – Good Old Days Picnic, Friday Night Beach Concerts, the Jazz Society, and was instrumental in seeing that my book, "300 Years at the Point," was published.

Now he can add his book, which documents the history of some of the

classic bars of the Point. And he does it in a short, sweet, Hemingwayesque style that's concise and easy to read.

Regine says what he knows, which is a lot. It will be interesting to see what the reaction is to this book on social media as many people, residents and tourists, are certain to have their memories stimulated by this book and want to share what they recall. I am sure there are many stories left untold about these places and people.

This book is not for the mass market, but it will be necessary reading for all those who live in, have lived in or visit Somers Point, as it captures a time that has passed us by, but still lingers in our memories, like the salt air and the sugar sand in our shoes.

Many of those memories will be shared this Sunday, Dec. 10, when Regine will hold a book sale (\$20) and signing at Gregory's from 2:30 to 4:30 p.m., with a complimentary buffet, sponsored by the Somers Point Historical Society. The book is also available at Sun Rose Words & Music, on Asbury Avenue in Ocean City.

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