



Gus

The hospital where I had my first nursing position was down the block from a daytime luncheonette that served breakfast and lunch. Now I didn't get out much for my lunch, usually it was a quick bite in the hospital cafeteria if it all, but occasionally for some reason usually on a Thursday I would be able to experience having lunch out which meant going down the block to this luncheonette. The lunchtime crowd was usually made up of a combination of hospital staff, teachers and others from the

elementary school further along down the block, police officers, sanitation workers, mailmen, delivery men, and some neighborhood people. The owner, Gus, always seemed to have a pleasant demeanor even during the busiest time of his day and he loved to partake in the conversations that ran from the counter, to the tables, and on to the back booths of the small luncheonette.

Gus', as it was appropriately named, was more like a neighborhood bar than a luncheonette if you compared the conversations that took place. Even in the quiet pauses when no conversations were going on rest assured Gus, our food bartender had something to bring up to promote a lively discussion. After all this was the early 70's and there was a lot going on in the world, in the United States, and in New York City and its outer boroughs. Nothing was off limits. Conversations went beyond the verbal celebrations of achievements, raises, marriages, and births and the expressions of sympathy for a job loss or a death. Heartfelt compassion was expressed when others went through the challenges that invade all our lives from time to time. The news, politics and religion were not taboo subjects, with all opinions being respected. Gus wouldn't have it any other way. And if it occasionally turned to some heated words accompanied by a lack of respect being exhibited Gus would be the first to jump in and point out that talk of this kind "would not be tolerated in his establishment".

Like the fictional 'Cheers', Gus knew everyone's name and if he didn't, he learned it straightaway (and remembered it). As I said earlier I was in an infrequent patron

compared to some of the others but I was always greeted as if I went there every single day. And if it was a Thursday he would ask me if I wanted soup, and I would always forget that soup on Thursdays was pea soup, and back then I never liked pea soup. He would smile and laugh, give me that pointing finger sign, and say "gotcha". I would shake my head in disbelief that once again I fell into his teasing trap.

A while back I passed Gus's luncheonette and it was still operating. I'm sure the original Gus is gone and I only hope that the new "Gus" is the same type of proprietor in spirit. I know in New York (I can't definitely speak for the rest of the country), on a Thursday all diners have pea soup on the menu. Whenever I happen to be in a diner on a Thursday I am reminded of Gus, the man. By the way, did I tell you that I now love pea soup? And that my name for Source is Great Universal Spirit - or GUS, for short.

With Gratitude,

Kai