

## HAMELS GETS SUPPORT, WIN

Sports — 1C



## BATTLING EATING DISORDERS

Health & Wellness — 1D



[courierpostonline.com](http://courierpostonline.com)

# COURIER-POST

Monday, August 30, 2010

South Jersey's Newspaper

75 cents



DOUGLAS BOVITT/Courier-Post

Patrons fill some of the 16 bar stools at Twisties. 'It is out of the way,' says one of the regulars, who has made the drive for 10 years. 'It feels like home.'



# Where Key West meets Strathmere



Photos by DOUGLAS BOVITT/Courier-Post

Twisties is an institution on the bay in Strathmere, though it has gone by several other names. Patrons dine by the water, with the feeling of being on an old fishing vessel.

## Shore bar's lore goes back to '30s

*One in an occasional series on life at the shore*

By **KEVIN CALLAHAN**  
Courier-Post Staff

### STRATHMERE

**I**f the old jukebox could talk, it would tell the story of Twisties.

Instead, it plays music that also speaks to the history of this red shack on the bay in Strathmere.

On a late Sunday afternoon in early August, the Rolling Stones' "Gimme Shelter" roars from the jukebox. Fittingly, the patrons who fill all 16 stools around the bar seem to be seeking summer shelter from the rat race.

Twisties' intimate atmosphere — a feeling of being

aboard an old fishing vessel — does the trick for the moment. This is not a crowd that clamors for a modern bar with big-screen TVs.

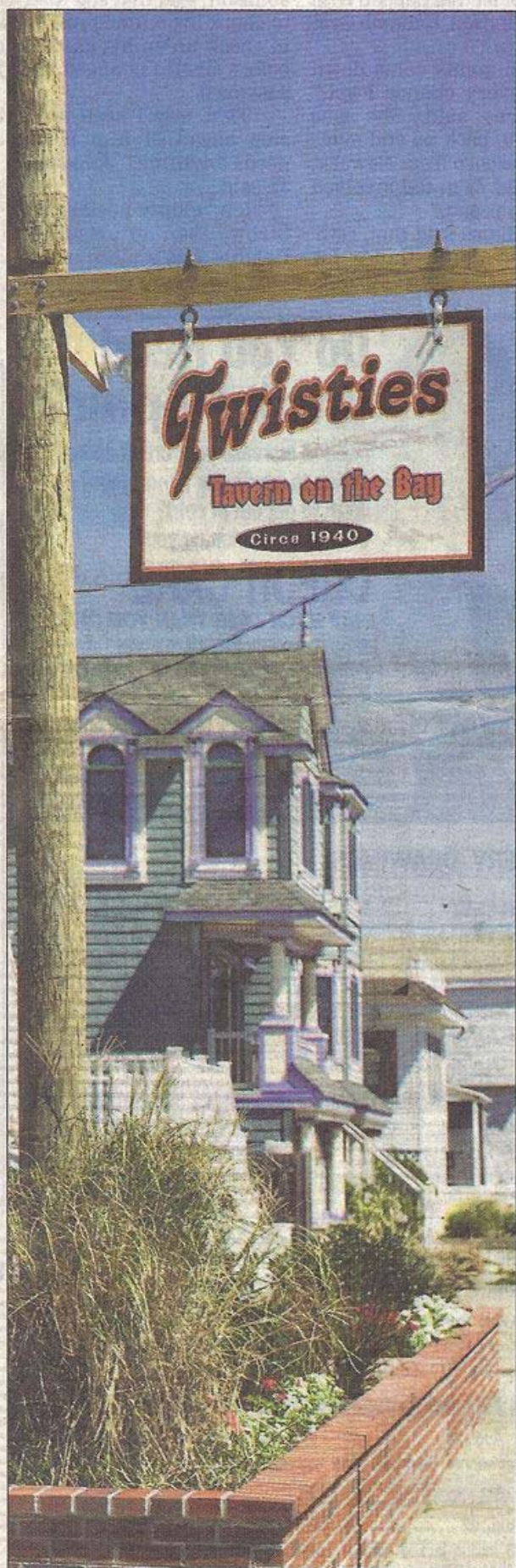
"I love it," says Rosemary Helm, a 50-year-old from Coatesville, Pa. "It is so casual.

"It's on the water and it is so welcoming. You feel no pressure here. You can just enjoy your family and friends."

Twisties' story dates back to Prohibition in the 1930s.

"When you enter Twisties for the first time, your immediate thoughts are 'this is where Key West meets Strathmere,'" says Denise Riordan, who owns this throwback taproom with her husband, Gary.

See **TWISTIES**, Page 6A





# Twisties/Shore bar's lore goes back to Prohibition era

Continued from Page 1A

"Everything about it is relaxed, the bay breeze flowing through the screens, the 'no white tablecloth' decor, the patrons' dress code — shorts and flip flops."

The easy-living look includes mounted fish on the wall behind the bar and coconuts carved into heads of people on a high shelf just below the roof. A lone dartboard occupies one of the dark mahogany paneled walls. Plastic pitchers for multiple beers are stacked next to the cash register.

It is ambience — not advertising — that brings in the summer crowds year after year.

"It is word of mouth and it hasn't changed," says Mike Rossner, a bartender at Twisties for the last decade. "It is family-oriented and low-key."

The Stones' five-decade-old smash hit "Satisfaction" blares from the jukebox as families with kids start to fill the dozen tables in the room adjacent to the bar.

"I describe it as a faux dive — a fake dive," says James Furmanski, 39, the chef at Twisties for 10 years.

"I had people comment that the food outdoes the atmosphere. They are very surprised with the quality of the food."

Rich Byerly of Avalon sits with three friends on the small deck next to the red shack. He has visited Twisties for the last 10 years, driving across the Townsend Inlet bridge from Avalon and through Sea Isle City into Strathmere at the end of the island.

"It is out of the way," he says. "It feels like home."

The building was raised about three feet this year to build up the foundation, but Twisties looks like it did during Prohibition, when it was run by Harold Charleston and his wife, Gert. At that time, it was also known as Dirty Gerties, because its

windows were covered like a speakeasy.

It is rumored Al Capone once visited and Gert lent the infamous gangster's wife a dress so she could go fishing.

"We do know that he was in Atlantic City during the time Twisties was open," Denise Riordan said.

In 1940, the owners were officially licensed under the name Bayview Inn.

The Charltons opened the bar only seasonally so they could spend winters in Florida. They returned each year with coconut heads as souvenirs, forty-five of which rest above the windows behind the bar.

In the 1950s, Jimmy and Rose Twist took over ownership and the Philadelphia natives operated a full-scale restaurant renamed the Strathmere Inn.

During the 1960s, the tavern was a hangout for Sea Isle City lifeguards, who called the red shack Twisties, after the owners' last name.

In the early 1970s, local real estate agent Marty Riordan bought the tavern and renamed it the Bayview Inn. In 2000, Riordan's son Gary and his wife, Denise, took over the operations. They renamed it Twisties Tavern on the Bay.

"There was a period of time in the late '80s and early '90s when it would only open in late August for three or four weekends," said Denise Riordan.

"It was always open for the Maloney's Bike-a-thon, which was a crazy period when some 1,000 bikers would come through in a short period of time to down a beer and continue on their journey."

Maloney's, the legendary Margate bar, closed five years ago, but Twisties remains, with summer hours every day but Tuesday.

"If people are looking for entertainment they should know that the socializing is

our entertainment," says Denise Riordan.

"We consistently have a crowd who rendezvous here to watch the great sunsets over the bay. Many times they come in by boat and dock here."

On this Sunday afternoon, "Gimmie Shelter" roars again on the jukebox — twice in 45 minutes in case anyone is counting. No one is.

Maybe they don't notice, not with the sun setting, shining off the bay and reflecting off the Sam Adams Summer Ale tap and into their eyes.

"This," Rosemary Helm says looking over the bay, "is the way the shore should be."

Reach Kevin Callahan at (856) 317-7821 or [kcallahan@gannett.com](mailto:kcallahan@gannett.com).