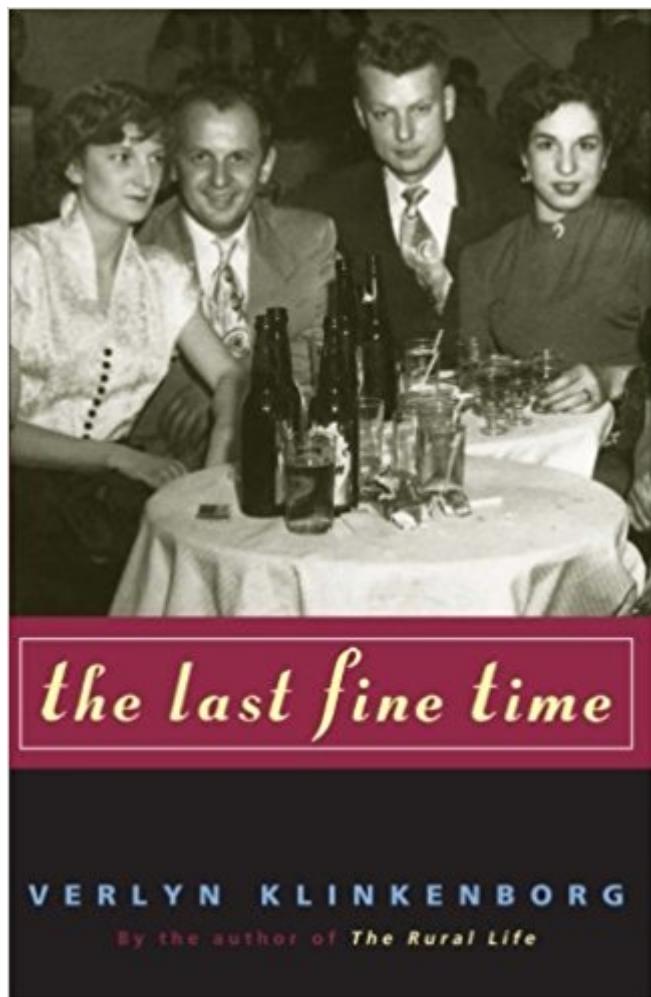


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The Last Fine Time



Synopsis

By turns, an elegy, a celebration, and a social history, *The Last Fine Time* is a tour de force of lyrical style. Verlyn Klinkenborg chronicles the life of a family-owned restaurant in Buffalo, New York, from its days as a prewar Polish tavern to its reincarnation as George & Eddie's, a swank nightspot serving highballs and French-fried shrimp to a generation of optimistic and prosperous Americans. In the inevitable dimming of the neon sign outside the restaurant, we see both the passing of an old world way of life and the end to the postwar exuberance that was Eddie Wenzek's "last fine time."

Book Information

Paperback: 224 pages

Publisher: University Of Chicago Press; 1 edition (April 1, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0226443353

ISBN-13: 978-0226443355

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.7 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 12 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 23 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #229,370 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #112 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Regional U.S. > Mid Atlantic #736 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Professionals & Academics > Business #1820 in Books > Business & Money > Biography & History

Customer Reviews

From its deft first sentence ("Snow begins as a rumor in Buffalo, New York"), this detailed, wistfully affectionate re-creation of the immigrant experience clarifies the human cost of the disappearance of once-distinctive ethnic neighborhoods. Klinkenborg (*Making Hay*) tells the story of a tavern in Polish-American East Buffalo that his father-in-law, Eddie Wenzek, inherited in 1947 at age 27. Originally purchased by his father in 1922 during Prohibition, the workingman's bar was transformed by Eddie into a fashionable late-night spot. The flowing narrative evokes a time and place where streetcars clattered, where advertising had not yet molded a consumerist culture in a postwar America "beating its swords into appliances." The Wenzels sold the tavern in 1970 and moved to the suburbs. Klinkenborg links the bar's fortunes to the gradual erosion of Buffalo's sense of destiny, "a sad tale of unknotting." Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Klinkenborg (*Making Hay*, Lyons & Burford, 1986) has written the history of a bar that flourished on the East Side of Buffalo from the 1920s to 1970. He also portrays two generations of the Wenzek family, the Polish Americans who ran and lived above "George and Eddie's" until the bar closed down. Yet, his incredibly moving book is much more than the history of a declining neighborhood bar and a city in transition. Klinkenborg's writing is superb; his sensitivity to the story is extraordinary; and his ability to capture a watershed period in the transition of American cities in one tiny institution like "George and Eddie's" is unique. Recommended for most public and academic libraries for its historical and sociological insights. This book deserves a wide readership.- Anne H. Sullivan, Tompkins Cortland Community Coll. Lib., Dryden, N.Y. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Written about a family-owned bar in Buffalo, I especially wanted to read this book as I loved *THE RURAL LIFE* by Verlyn Klinkenborg and wanted to see another example of his writing. Also, I am fascinated by close families and interaction of the various generations as to how they influenced each other and did not. The other aspect that I valued about this book was that the business the family ran was really a community gathering place much like an English pub once was (and no doubt, still is in some parts of the UK). Few of these types of places still exist where people can drop in and see the same faces, having been replaced by more commercial ventures where to sit there you constantly have to be laying out money. I appreciated the discussion of how the owner of the bar was such a "catch" as a young man as he was involved with the family business and the portrayal of an innocent form of courtship before The Pill changed everything in the early 60's. As a look back on small town America, I really enjoyed this book as well as Mr Klinkenborg's writing style.

A uniquely described history of an era and the pride of those living within Buffalo.

A beautiful documentary of Buffalo past. His ability to bring back the past with names of streets businesses, products, locations awesome in scope. Warning... Keep a thesaurus next to you. His usage of the English language just amazing. John aurora Ohio

Nowhere have I read a better, more poetic, or more accurate description of a Western New York snowfall than in the opening pages of *The Last Fine Time*. Although the book gets somewhat bogged down in the generations, like a car gets bogged down slogging through a few feet of freshly

fallen snow, and the ending becomes a sad metaphor for the downfall of a city once called (before Paris) the City of Light, this opening is a brilliant handful of pages worth the price of the whole book.

Well-written history of the Buffalo's Polish East Side in the early to mid-20th century. Author's style makes one want to read and re-read. Many interesting factoids and realia.

Wow! This guy can write. It brought me back...To the youth of my father on the south side go Buffalo.

This book was out of print for awhile. I'm delighted to be able to buy the paperback editions to give to friends. The Last Fine Time is a beautifully written book. I've reread it several times enjoying it more each time.

Kllickenberg is a great nature writer but this book about rust belt Buffalo has moments of greatness, but other chapters of tedium. His writing flourishes can be intimidating. Have your dictionary ready. If you grew up in the east side of (Polish) Buffalo you will love the hundreds and hundreds of place references throughout W NY That alone will endear you. The story of a tavern owner and his extended Polish family is typical. (I heard that its really his inlaws) Its uneven but probalby the best book ever written about Buffalo, NY

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