

Sevilla (1975 - Current)

I think it was my senior year at Union when several of us took a road trip to NYC. I don't remember how we got to the city (maybe the Gremlin) or where we stayed, but I know Richy was part of the crew and we met up with his cousin, **Jack Uram (see JU on next page)**, an attorney living his dream in the big city. Jack took us to Sevilla, a Spanish restaurant at 62 Charles (corner of West 4th) and we sat at the first table when you walk in the door. The place was always packed and had great and inexpensive margaritas (I think \$3.50 at the time), decent food, and the best waiters in NYC.

Little did I know Sevilla would become my *Cheers* (actually it was another 7 years before the TV show started). When we moved to the city, we started going regularly and became friendly with the owners (José and Bienvenido) and many of the waiters (particularly Roberto, Louis, Paco, and Manolo). There were typically long lines out the front door and we would go in through the kitchen and manage to establish position at the bar.



Jack and a recent Sevilla crew

I have now been there more than 1000 times, and have had many thousands of margaritas - and on a few occasions have had more than what most people would say is a prudent amount. José and Bienvenido still own the restaurant, and José's two sons, Tony and Miguel, are also involved. Roberto is still a waiter, and our favorite bartender is Tony who has been there for more than 20 years. Margaritas are now \$8.00, but they come with a shaker back-up that has another full drink in it (sometimes more). If we are doing something on the west side, we typically meet there for a pre- or post-event cocktail or two. If I am riding my bike on the west side, I typically peer in to see if I know anyone there - more often than not, there is someone, and I stop in for one or two.

Drinking If you have read this far, you no doubt realize I enjoy drinking. Roz (always Dewars) and George (often martinis with cheap gin) both enjoyed drinking, and typically had a cocktail or two before dinner. My tastes are more eclectic and depend on the season, the venue, and my mood. The first time I got very drunk (scotch for some reason) was at my sister's wedding when I was 15. During high school, we often drove to the Standard Club in Staten Island where the drinking age was 18; I was only 16 and looked about 14, but had a fake draft card I had made using whiteout and my father's copying machine, and the bartenders did not care. It was one of the stupidest things I have done in my life as we did not have designated drivers (and I was too young to drive), but somehow we survived. Most of the rest of my family and friends also like to drink, several a bit too much. The good news is that I am an affable drunk and a better dancer after a few drinks, but I occasionally get a bit concerned when I can't remember what I did the night before.

There have been many regulars over the years, but none more so than Richy who lives nearby. He is typically ensconced in the corner of the bar, often reading a book; but more often, he is speaking with someone he knows or has just met. For his 60th birthday we put a plaque on the wall with his name on it (Richy S). Other regulars include Jack, the entire Buccarelli family, Mirsad and Brian (a corrections officer and a plumber we met at the bar), Robby Werber (who loves the black bean soup), and Cecil (a retired Spaniard who eats lunch there almost every weekday). Karen and Andy have become regulars now that they spend more time in NYC, and their daughter Rachel (who we baby sat for in France in 1984) shows up occasionally with her husband, and they have started bringing their infant daughter.

We took Philippe there in 1986, and he has long been treated like royalty. His father, Kurt, knew only a handful of English words when he visited later that year, but after a few margaritas he was leading the entire restaurant in singing "Happy Birthday". Our Colombian family are also regulars when they are in NY, and Natalie is a favorite as we often went when she was going to Columbia University.

Others who have come over the years include virtually all of our Union friends, Jim (now lives in CA), Dave and Molly (now in NJ), Steve and Lauren (now in MD), Arnie's daughter Sidney (now in CA), Michael Rea (who lived above the restaurant for a couple of years before moving to NJ), and numerous colleagues from IBCA, AIG, and NYSIF that I took there

Sevilla is an important part of my life and thus gets an entire section devoted to it!

JU Jack Uram may be the most unique person I ever met. When I first met him in 1975 he seemed to have life figured out. He was a handsome bachelor in good shape living large in Greenwich Village. He had the biggest smile, a contagious laugh, a successful career, good friends, two dogs, excellent season tickets for the NY Giants, and plenty of female companionship. And over time I developed a deeper relationship with him.

Jack married late in life to a younger woman, and he was extremely proud of the fact that she was an ENT doctor to many stars, but over time the marriage turned less than perfect. Also, unfortunately, he had some physical ailments that slowed him down. He was one of the youngest 50 year olds I knew, but was old beyond his years at 70. JU was a great raconteur and had a million stories he loved to tell. When Jack was in his early 70s, he told many to Mikey Buccarelli who wrote them down. Here is an excerpt about Sevilla:

“The margaritas were lethal. Magic elixirs, or potions brewed with a hint of witchcraft that got you beyond buzzed. They were topped with a frothy white foam which hung over the edge of the glass, seemingly held together by dark magic. Attempting to pick up the glass often resulted in some spillage and thus seasoned patrons left the glass on the bar and put their mouth to the rim for the first “Sevilla Sip”. Whatever did not fit in the glass was left in the shaker to finish at your convenience, which makes it impossible to keep track of how many you have - and accounts for the many wildly drunken nights we spent there.”

Classic stories include the time he permanently lost vision in his right eye when a science experiment in his basement went awry sending into orbit the matzoh balls his mother, Harriet, was preparing for Passover; the time his father gave him the car keys to drive a date home (although he did not have a license) and he backed into a police car; the time he celebrated a birthday at Sammy’s Roumanian on the Lower East Side and his friends gave him a fighting cock (Sammy the cocksucker) that he took home and drove his dogs crazy; and the time Zippy the Chimp was on roller skates in Sevilla and downed three margaritas and left a destructive path behind him in the restaurant. Jack definitely embellished aspects, but he told great stories that were mostly based on fact.

Jack had a language of his own, and introduced us to a whole new vernacular, including Honolulu Baby, dems dat dies will be the lucky ones; there is a new sheriff in town, a sleigh ride for your tongue, and pally wally. He also had other “Jackisms” where he gave new meaning to words like “Mozambique” and “Chang Kai Shek” (I think the distinction is that the first means to leave, and the second is to leave as quickly as possible) or changed the meaning of common words like “please” and “thank you” by providing extra emphasis and a big smile.

JU was unabashed and happy to speak with anybody, particularly after a few margaritas at Sevilla. Three comments I will never forget are the time he told Ilana when she was in her early 20s that she had great headlights, the time he asked Natalie (our Colombian daughter) if she considered a career as a pole dancer, and the time when Brad (an AIG colleague who is 7-foot tall) walked into Sevilla, and Jack turned around, looked up, and asked, “how big is your schwanstucker?” But Jack was lovable, and somehow got away with his clearly un-PC comments.

Jack started getting frail and broke his hip several times. He spent an extended period of time recovering at Village Care 8 blocks from Sevilla. If he was feeling ok, we would wheel JU to Sevilla, and a few times we delivered a “Tony Margarita” to Village Care in a ginger ale bottle. Once, Naomi and I went with him to Sevilla for a few, and then to a great Italian restaurant (Trattoria Toscana which had the best homemade buffalo mozzarella) on Carmine Street. After several bottles of wine and a few grappas, we went to wheel him back to rehab. Unfortunately, none of us realized there were three steps leading to the street, and I still have a vivid image of reaching out to try to grab him as he rolled out of the wheelchair onto the sidewalk. Fortunately, aside from a few scrapes he was unhurt.

Life eventually caught up with JU, and he spent several months in rehab in Florida which was the last time I saw him. He had a tube in his chest and could not speak - but was still able to smile occasionally. Fortunately, he had an aide, Florentino, who took great care of him. But it was hard to see him so compromised.

Unfortunately, JU Mozambiqued instead of Chang Kai Sheking. It reinforced my view that society needs to figure out a better way to let individuals decide when it is time to go. Sometimes, dems dat die are indeed the lucky ones.



Roberto, Philippe, Paco, Luis



Learning to Sevilla sip



Experienced Sevilla sippers - Richy, the Buccarelli boys, Mirsad, and Naomi and me on Halloween (Money Heist)

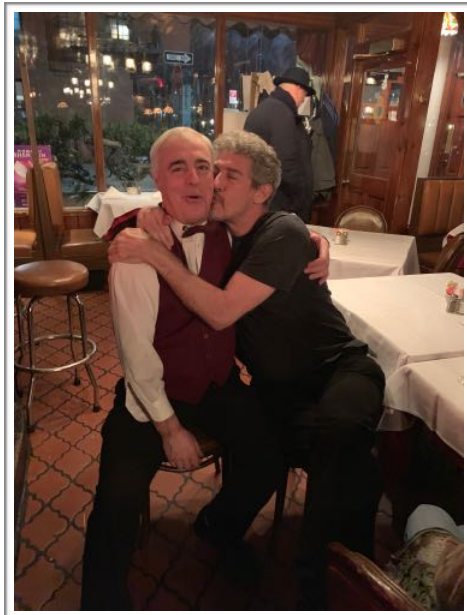




Tony, our favorite bartender



Our favorite bartender on Halloween



Our favorite bartender after a long night

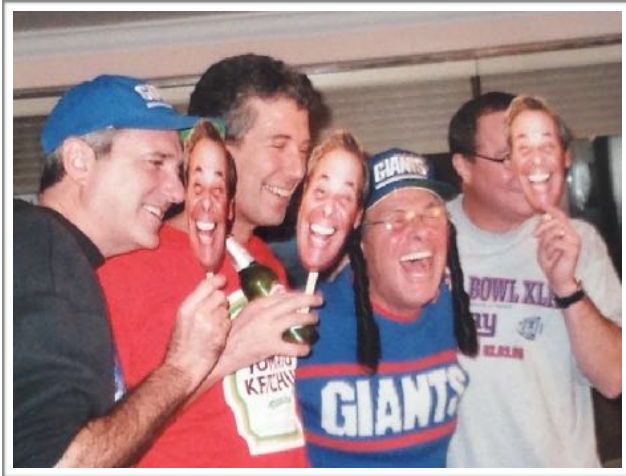
Naomi and Carl on a different Halloween



Our family with Roberto



Our Colombian family



Jack and his million dollar smile over the years!

- At Sevilla, many years ago
- With my dad dressed as Hasids at a Super Bowl party
- With Jack masks at my apt
- With Jack masks at Sevilla
- At the Palm with Carl
- Another night with the regular Sevilla crew
- Somewhere with Philippe.