

Fellingham's named one of America's best bars by Esquire magazine

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Locals have been gathering at Fellingham's Restaurant Sports Bar in Southampton Village for three decades, cheering on ballplayers and sharing village gossip over juicy steaks, burgers and clanking beer mugs.

But this year, the unassuming Cameron Street watering hole caught the attention of a features editor from Esquire magazine.

Tyler Cabot stumbled upon Fellingham's during a winter visit to the village and became so enamored with the 17th-century carriage house-turned-sports bar that he included it in his magazine's annual list of the best bars in America, which was published in the magazine's June/July issue.

"Bars like this aren't supposed to exist anymore," Esquire says of Fellingham's. "Especially not here."

When reached this week, the editor was still raving about it.

"It was just fantastic. Everyone was very friendly. There was no pretense at all," he said. "If you go to enough bars, you can tell the good from the bad."

Regulars pour into Fellingham's like clockwork every night.

"Every Friday night, nine of us come together," explained Diane Deutschmann of Lewis Street, as she settled into her usual seat in the front dining area last week. "We love it here. It's full of locals."

Inside, beneath the exposed beams bearing trophies, faded team photos and various sports memorabilia, other customers shared fond memories while World Cup soccer from Johannesburg aired in the corner.

"I've been coming here quite some time," commented Geoff Croke, who was born and raised in the village and has been a patron for 25 of his 44 years. "It's a comfortable place where you know everyone. It's like 'Cheers.'"

The menu plays homage to sports greats like owner Joe Fellingham's favorite player, Babe Ruth, via the Bambino Burger, a bacon cheeseburger. The Phelps Burger, with fresh flounder, is one of the newer additions, named for Olympic swimmer Michael Phelps.

Chef Kevin Fallo of Hampton Bays, noted, "you can almost tell what time it is by who's here" and that the bartender, Whitey, "knows what everybody's drinking. As soon as they sit down, Whitey's making it already."

Meanwhile, Whitey, who goes only by that name at the bar, helped out with the carpentry work at Fellingham's prior to its opening 30 years ago, mostly in the sandpaper department. "Never had any ink before myself," he said of having his photo appear in "Esquire."

The designation comes just a few weeks after the village's Coopers Beach clinched the top spot on Dr. Beach's annual beach listing.

"It's just so perfect," said part-owner and manager, Millie Fellingham, "It's a great honor."