





LEGACY IS ON TAP AT BALTIMORE'S

MAX'S TAPHOUSE

WRITTEN BY TEDDY DURGIN | IMAGES BY ASHLI MIX PHOTOGRAPHY

Max's Taphouse in Baltimore's Fells Point neighborhood will celebrate its 40th year in business in 2025. Husband-and-wife team Ron and Gail Furman have run the business pretty much from the get-go. And when you have stayed in the bar business that long, you are sure to get many up-and-comers asking for your advice on how to succeed.

Ron Furman tells them all the same thing with great emphasis: "It's a business! It's not a party. While you are the host, you have a great responsibility to your patrons and to your employees. You also have a responsibility to your neighborhood, and you have to honor that. It's why my wife and I have been able to keep our business up and running for the amount of time we have. We've given back so much. We have worked with schools and other local organizations."

Max's started as Max's on Broadway to highlight its address and that it was initially a watering hole that offered nightly live music. Furman has always been a big music fan, and that was the kind of venue he wanted to operate as a younger man.

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Ron and Gail Furman
Max's Taphouse

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Max's customers enjoyed live music until 1994. "I just no longer wanted to be a patron of the arts," Furman said. "I wanted to build a bar that would stand the test of time. I was determined to put a draft system in, so I put 24 taps on the front bar. We had to hand-build that back then. You had to hand-wrap the shanks with copper lines that had glycol, and then you had to foam it and put insulation on it. It was very tedious. But we started selling beer almost immediately. So we said, 'Hey, that's working! Let's add some more taps!' That worked, so we then added some more. Today, I believe we have 113 beers on tap, five or six beer engines, and about 1,600 bottles! We're one of the top beer bars in the world."

In addition to that amazing feat, Max's Taphouse is being featured in this ongoing series of articles on bars, restaurants, and taverns in and around Maryland and Washington, D.C., that are named either after their owners or their family name because Max . . . was Ron's grandfather. Initially, he

thought Max's on Broadway sounded a LOT better than Ron's on Broadway.

"I was never a very good student," Furman remarked. "But I do remember going to a marketing class and the instructor saying, 'If you have an X in the name of your business, it's a good thing!' Being that my grandfather's name was Max, it just fit. When we were playing live music, I indeed called it Max's on Broadway. Years later when we got serious about the beer, we made the change to Max's Taphouse. The rest is history."

His grandfather wasn't a beverage biz man, but instead was a big success in the auto parts industry. He started a company called RPS Auto Parts, which was one of the first companies in the auto parts niche to trade on the New York Stock Exchange. Furman hopes he has lived up to the man's reputation for excellence.

He said, "The favorite part of my job is reinventing ourselves all of the time. Right now, for instance, we have the side bar that we closed during COVID. We're in the midst





of getting it reopened. It will have an identity that will be different from the rest of the bar, but that's top secret. Please come do a follow-up!"

Max's Taphouse and the Furmans have also enjoyed a strong and consistent staff over the years who have given the establishment a reputation for stellar customer service. Many of Ron's employees have been on the payroll for quite some time. "I have a doorman who's been with me for 26 years!" Furman exclaimed. "My manager, Jason, has been with me for at least 17 years. Maybe longer. I don't know. My memory ain't what it used to be."

And just as the business has been named after family, Max's Taphouse is a family-run business. Ron and Gail's three daughters work in various capacities at the Taphouse. Of course, Furman jokingly says there is a downside to that, as well: "I used

to be king. But now I'll say, 'This is the way I want to do it.' And I get the eye rolls. There's nothing worse than the eye rolls! One daughter is 32, and I'm still getting the eye roll!"

But all of the Furman family love the business. And they especially love the historic part of Charm City where they operate. Furman concluded, "Fells Point has had its challenges. Everybody knows that. But we are in a very diverse neighborhood and a very smart neighborhood full of entrepreneurs. You don't find a lot of corporate businesses in Fells Point. You have people here who are very passionate about what they are doing. A lot of us have a great number of years invested here. We'll work through whatever problems there are, and Fells Point will be here and prosper for the next century and beyond!" ■



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