



A CHICAGO TAVERN

a Goat, a Curse, and the American Dream

Rick Kogan



Reviews and Endorsements

“The Auditorium, a theater, and the Billy Goat, a tavern, are two Chicago landmarks. The first sprang from the vision of Louis Sullivan, nonpareil of architects. The second sprang from the vision of nonpareil journalist Mike Royko, when days seemed too long and nights too short. It is our good fortune that Rick Kogan, of a fabled Chicago legacy, has put forth a work so whimsical, wistful, and wondrous.”

—Studs Terkel, prize-winning author and radio broadcast personality

“A Chicago Tavern is clearly Rick Kogan’s best writing. I’ve been trying to figure out why it is so good and this is what I came up with: It is not him describing the life and deeds of someone else. This is Rick sharing his life with others. This really isn’t about a bar or cultural icon. This is an intimate look at various points in Rick’s life. He shares himself with everybody and stays true to his own voice. This is not reporting; this is storytelling at the highest level.

This book would make his idols proud. Mike Royko would have been proud of his protégé (although I suspect Royko would be angry that a book was printed about his joint). The scene of Royko signing the bag is perfect. Throughout the book I felt as though I was watching the scenes unfold not listening to a description of something. I felt like I was there.

I’m raving about this book. It made me smile and also infused me with a sadness and feeling of loss that went beyond nostalgia. I understand that the Billy Goat was the setting for this book but this isn’t about the Billy Goat. Bob Sirott was right, this book is so well crafted and engrossing that it transcends anything else Rick has ever written. It jolts the reader, leading to a visceral and emotional response. It may end up being Rick Kogan’s magnum opus. In case you can’t tell, I loved it.”

—Larry Axelrod, author *The Advocate*, *Death Eligible*, *Plea Bargain*

“A Chicago Tavern acutely focuses on the folklore, daily life, humorous anecdotes, and more revolving around the classy establishment that started the legend. Numerous black-and-white photographs add a you-are-there touch to this history of a beloved Chicago hang-out”

—*The Bookwatch*, The Midwest Book Review, January 2007

“Rick Kogan, who writes for the *Tribune*, is a city talking to itself—this city, Chicago. . . . He has become our local Boswell, a serendipitous chronicler of the nooks and crannies and curious characters that can turn the very act of living here into an adventure.

This year, we’re lucky enough to have two books by Kogan that contribute to the history and mythology of the city. They make me—a native Chicagoan now living in the emotionally colder climate of New York—homesick. They should make anyone who lives in Chicago get off their duff and explore a little more.

. . . *A Chicago Tavern*, an 118-page valentine, is a wistful, funny and surprisingly sturdy little vessel for keeping Chicago afloat in our imagination.”

—Jonathan Alter, *Chicago Tribune*, Books section,
“Grit and Glamour, wisdom and wit in the city by the lake,” February 18, 2007

“I met up with Rick Kogan for lunch at the Billy Goat Tavern, the old newspaper hangout beneath Michigan Avenue he memorializes in his book *A Chicago Tavern: A Goat, a Curse, and the American Dream*.

For most of the last year Kogan has used the Goat as a second office. He gets mail there, picks up and leaves packages for friends. At one point, Kogan set up shop there writing the life story of Billy Goat Sianis, Sianis’ nephew Sam (who is now the owner) and the many regulars who make it a Chicago institution.”

—Scott Jacobs, *Chicago Sun-Times*, “Newspaper, Newspaper:
Longtime reporter still loves to tell stories—and hang at the Goat,” January 28, 2007

“I agree with Studs Terkel, who calls the book ‘whimsical, wistful and wondrous.’ The only surprise with the Billy Goat, located beneath Michigan Avenue close to Tribune Tower in Chicago, is that it took this long for someone to write a book about it.”

—Doug Moe, (author *The World of Mike Royko*),
The Capital Times (Madison, WI), “What we need is a good bar book,” August 22, 2006

“The book is slender, like a volume of poetry, and I immediately read it cover to cover. I would say that it is perfect — celebratory and sad, a deft encapsulation of the present and an elegy to the past.”

—Neil Steinberg, *Chicago Sun-Times*, “Not just a bar,” October 16, 2006

“In the book’s acknowledgments, Kogan writes, ‘Reading the work of all the writers who have, with varying degrees of literary license, told the story of the tavern through the years, reminded me why I got in this business in the first place. There were once poets working for newspapers.’ Well, fortunately for us, there still are a few, and Kogan is one of them.”

—Bob Sirott, “One More Thing,” NBC 5 News, Chicago, October 17, 2006

“. . . [I]ncredible that this story has not been told until now. But, what a story it is. . . . As readers, we’re not just reading about the Billy Goat—we become one of its patrons, sitting alongside the bar, listening to these stories as if we were shoulder to shoulder with Rick, Mike, Sam or Billy . . . for a few hours we feel like part of the family, too.”

—Alice Maggio, Gapers Block, March 17, 2007



In Print

“‘A Chicago Tavern’ is no goat, Kogan’s book examines a time when corner tavern was king,” by Ron Roenigk, *Inside*, November 22–28, 2006

“Local Knowledge” *WHERE Chicago* magazine, November 2006

“The Billy Goat Tavern,” *The Gazette*, Galena, IL, November 15, 2006

Oak Leaves, Library Footnotes by Deborah Dowley Preiser, October 25, 2006

Greek Star, December 21, 2006

NewCity, “Pub Trouble,” May 1, 2007

Interviews



CBS 2 Chicago, October 31, 2006

WBEZ Radio, “Eight Forty-Eight,” November 14, 2006

ESPN Radio, “Talking Baseball,” November 25, 2006

WGN Radio, “The Spike O’Dell Radio Program,” October 20, 2006

WGN Radio, “The Steve Cochran Show,” October 16, 2006

Outside the Loop Radio, October 12, 2006

NBC 5 Chicago, “Local Author Gets Kick Out of The ‘Goat,’” December 23, 2005

“The Michael Dresser Show,” December 7, December 14, 2006
