



Big D Bar

5257 (Mile 274.5) Richardson Highway, Big Delta, AK (907) 895-4522
64°08'49"N 145°49'54"W

License Issued: 1953 to Harry Hunison and Tommy Heathman

CLOSED 2021

Amenities: TV, juke box, darts, pool table, shuffleboard, liquor store

Web site: None.

History and Notoriety: The construction of the Arctic Army Center in 1952 (renamed Fort Greely in 1955) brought many people and businesses to this area. Harry and Tommy built this bar in what was then called Delta City. Early ads boasted that the bar included a café, barber shop, trailer space, and “hostesses.” The bar also featured entertainment and on one occasion, a dancer named Joan Wise from the University of Alaska Fairbanks performed ballet and acrobatic routines here. The sturdy log building burned to the ground in November 1956. John and Mary Taro were managing the bar when it caught fire at 3:40 AM. Because the phone wasn’t working, Mary donned a coat and slippers and ran to the Post Office in -50°F weather to get help.

The Taro’ bought and rebuilt the bar (another log building) which re-opened the following spring. They sold it to August Valentine in 1959, who sold it to Clarence Brunt Jr. in 1967. Clarence was a businessman from Fairbanks and owned the Big D for 28 years. Construction of the Alaska Pipeline began in 1974, and the pipe was conveniently routed adjacent to the Big D, making it very popular with the workers. From 1979 to 1982, Carl “Lucky” Lentz and his wife Vernell managed the Big D and

musical jam sessions were held every Sunday. Cole Ulrichs bought the bar in 1995 and then sold it to Phillip Sobers that same year.

Visiting the Big D: This bar has survived while many other Delta area bars that opened during the same time period (Dixieland, Club Trio, Triangle Lodge, Malemute, Matt's Bar, Tom's Inn, Buffalo Lodge, Clearwater Lodge) are now gone. Drop by and visit with the locals and consider having the specialty drink "Moose Cock Drool."

Author's Note: This historic bar was a victim of the COVID-19 pandemic.



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