

ae BOOKS

For Love of Place

BY LINDA MARKIN

Wendy Bounds' *Little Chapel on the River* was written in the aftermath of the attacks on New York September 11, 2001. Reading it now, as New Orleans and much of the Gulf Coast have been wiped off

that lies at the heart of Garrison, New York.

Bounds' touch is light. There are no overbearing monologues about "what matters most." And yet, only a reader not paying attention can miss what she says so clearly about Guinan's and the town of Garrison: *People* are

Only a reader not paying attention can miss what she says so clearly about Guinan's and the town of Garrison: *People* are what imbue a place with meaning.

the face of the continent by Katrina, brings the importance and love of place into poignant focus.

Wendy and her partner Kathryn had an apartment next door to the World Trade Center. They were preparing for their day as reporters for the Wall Street Journal when the planes struck the twin towers. They left their building quickly on the trail of a story, never considering they would be unable to return home by evening. It is hard to grasp that everything you once knew has changed when you are in the middle of the event that changes it.

But change it does. The apartment was uninhabitable, and a chance visit to a small town 50 miles north of New York City resulted in another life-altering event for Wendy and Kathryn. The story that unfolds in *Little Chapel on the River* is the story of a store/bar, called Guinan's,

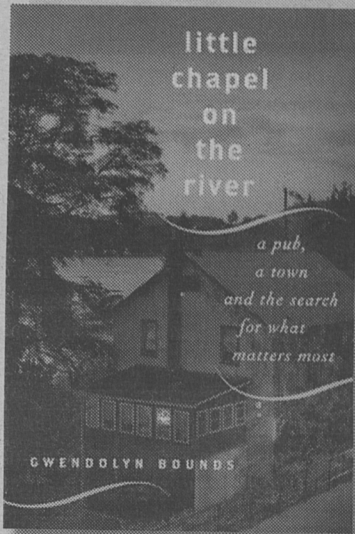
what imbue a place with meaning. People gravitate to places that humanize them. Making ritual and remembering history are the most meaningful of human activities.

Guinan's rituals are oriented toward inclusion and community. Far beyond mere customer service, Guinan's bar is about creating community from the people (and dog) who pass through her doors. Anyone who cares, anyone who values what is found there is welcome. Race, class, worldly status, political persuasion, sexual orientation – none of these rise to the level of dividers for the patrons of Guinan's. Rather, mutual respect and appreciation are the qualities that draw the people together and make the place special.

Guinan's in Garrison provided Wendy and Kathryn a home when theirs was devastated. It will take all the special places and all the

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respect and appreciation for differences and common humanity we can muster, to shelter the hundreds of thousands displaced by Katrina. We can only hope that beyond the soul-less strips that surround our cities, there are enough "Guinan's" and patrons of Guinan's to take in those in need. ▼

➔ Read more about Wendy Bounds and Little Chapel on the River at www.gwendolynbounds.com/index.htm.

➔ Linda Markin is the CFO of Concept Two in Morrisville, is the vice president of the Samara Foundation Board, and lives in Hardwick with her partner of 26 years..



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