



Never judge a book “case” by its cover

Durango's past includes a prohibition history when liquor was illegal and the resulting bootleggers and speakeasies had their own role in the economy. Today, Durango again has a modern-day speakeasy nestled into a city side street where passwords are required and all drinks are handcrafted.

Open less than a year, The Bookcase & Barber is a unique experience. The cover is an upscale barber shop that hides the small inside bar offering authentic cocktails. Owned by Thomas Gibson and Beau Black, they worked with First National Bank of Durango and Region 9 to fund their business and now employ an additional five people.

“We have been thinking about this business concept for the last year, and the stars just aligned,” said Gibson, who has a management background in aviation.

Black's background is as a professional chef, most recently at Ken and Sue's, and Pedro Vigil, is the front of the house barber.

Their immediate success is beyond all their expectations. The barbershop is booked two weeks out and there is already up to a two hour wait to get into the bar most Thursday-Saturdays.

“It is great to get confirmation that everyone likes the product and ambiance,” said Gibson. “The business is busier than we ever expected.”

Speakeasies don't typically advertise but word-of-mouth is already bringing in repeat customers. When the speakeasy is full, names are taken down and the clients called when a seat opens up. The business also takes reservations.

With room for 35 guests at a time, the staff that controls the door between the barber shop and bar is very important.

“We want to make sure everyone has a special seat and a good time,” said Black. “But initially we weren't sure if people would be willing to wait.”

“A lot of people who come to the bar in the evenings ask if it is really a barber shop,” laughs Gibson.

Black and Gibson are very enthusiastic about their diverse drink menu, using 150 year-old original recipes named after famous authors.

“Our best sellers are the whiskey drinks. The Hunter Thompson, Fitzgerald and Harry Houdini are the favorites right now,” said Black.

Gibson said, “We provide a personal experience and will help someone find the perfect cocktail by asking about their preferences for certain liquors, or other drinks they enjoy. Because of limited storage and demand, sometimes we don't have all of the drinks all of the time.”

They continue to make adjustments to meet the demand. “Not coming from a business background you learn quickly. We want to keep it small and keep our arms around it,” said Black.

You can reach The Bookcase & Barber at [970] 764-4123. They are located at 601 E. 2nd Ave. Unit B. in Durango.