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Hippo's Bar Destroyed In Hamtramck

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Michigan - The owner of Hippo's bar in Hamtramck watched Sunday night as a fire destroyed his business of 23 years. "I think it's gone -- the place is a swimming pool inside now" owner John Hypnarowicz said as he watched firefighters finish putting out the blaze.

There were no reported injuries.

The bar at 11621 Conant St. is best known for inspiring the name of the Hippo Club in the movie "Grosse Pointe Blank," starring John Cusack and Minnie Driver. Producers contacted Hypnarowicz during the making of the film to receive permission to use his bar's monicker.

Hypnarowicz said he received a call from police that his bar was on fire shortly after 10 p.m. Sunday. The bar is closed on Sundays, and the three apartment units above it were vacant and being renovated, he said.

Hamtramck Fire Chief Paul Wilk said the cause of the blaze is unknown and under investigation. In addition to the fire and water damage throughout the bar, Wilk said, a garage behind the bar was destroyed, and a neighbor's garage was damaged in the fire.

Hippo's was Hypnarowicz's sidelight after retiring from 33 years working for Hamtramck Public Schools, he said. After 23 years of ownership, he had the bar up for sale.

"I was planning on retiring," he said. "My wife is sick, I'm hobbling around."

Hypnarowicz said he intends to rebuild, but "that will be up to insurance and how they work with me."

Written by Detroit Free Press

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