

Gas stations no more

Businessmen transform former 'fill'er ups'

By DIANE BLAKE
Campus Editor

In this wasteful age of throwaway, disposable, no-deposit-no-return everything, a few local entrepreneurs will remember the old World War II slogan, "Use it up, wear it out, make it do."

And they've incorporated the motto into their commercial activities: these tradesfolk have transformed useless old gas stations into thriving business establishments.

With a little imagination and a lot of paint, area businessmen have turned defunct petrol emporiums into, among other things: a bar, garden shop, vegetable stand, dance studio, car parts store, tire warehouse, and an auto repair shop.

Another example of putting new wine in an old bottle is located on University Avenue.

Warren Grote and David Mogford, Texas A&M graduates of 1977 and 1978, worked for 1½ months on a Phillips 66 station and in September 1979 opened the Thirsty Turtle.

Grote said the reason for the change was two-fold: gas allocations were tight at the time and the location was right for a bar. Nearby residence halls provide a stream of beer-drinking customers.

Except for breaking two water lines in the process, the two had little trouble making the change, he said. "We poured a new floor instead of cleaning and leveling the old one," Grote said, and the only major addition was a pool room out front.

City ordinances prevent further expansion of the bar, he said.

Vegetables took the place of gasoline at the Farm Patch a few years back, and owner David Scarmardo

credits strong drink for the conversion idea.

"I had too much to drink one night," Scarmardo said of his inspiration. "You know, you can think of a lot of good ideas when you've had one too many."

Scarmardo said he worked on the building off and on for two years, putting a shed out front and fixing up the inside. Further expansion of the vegetable stand will be underway soon, he said.

About three years ago Jan Jones Hammond waltzed into an Exxon station on South College and saw not state highway maps and Ford gum machines but her own dance studio. And after a summer's work she opened La Petite Academy of Dance.

"We put in a new floor, changed the storeroom into a dressing room, put in a shower and closed in the bay area with windows," Hammond said.

But she doesn't envision a chain of filling stations turned dance studios. If the business expands, Hammond said she'd prefer to buy an old church to renovate.

The main problem with the present building is lack of cross ventilation: it only has two windows.

A drive down either South College or Texas Avenue reveals a plentitude of businesses housed in buildings where petrol was once peddled.

The more obvious changes are to automobile-related businesses offering tires, mufflers, foreign car parts and auto repairs.

But a former Arco station on Texas shows that someone took the idea and ran with it.

He operates a combination tire/

boot/appliance/car store all under one old filling station roof.

"I was one of the very few in the very beginning to change service stations into other things," said Al Gutierrez, owner of the House of Tires.

Eight years ago he ripped out his gas pumps and got into the tire business. Now he sells major appliances, boots and used cars. And he brokers new cars, making special orders to Detroit. He also plans to add mattresses to his cornucopia within the next two weeks.

Gutierrez studied electrical engineering at Texas A&M for three years and has owned an oceanographic company in Mexico, worked for Lockheed and the National Space and Aeronautics Administration as an electronics technician, and worked for Texas A&M in oceanography.

Although Gutierrez has owned up to six tire businesses of this type before, he now runs only the one in Bryan.

He said the conversion of the building from gas station to tire store was no problem at all. "We don't put much into the building, he said. "We just try to keep it painted and clean."

"People come to buy the product, not the building. We keep a very low overhead: our concept is merchandising."

Apart from the unorthodox combination of goods and an unlikely structure to house them, Gutierrez' business is also distinguished by an unusual sign out front.

Today it reads, "Do not doubt Christ wants us to succeed. The cross is proof enough."

Religious sayings such as this have differentiated the store from others like it since Gutierrez' son died of leukemia four years ago.

He said he had made a special request over the radio for prayers while his son was ill. On the day of the boy's death, Gutierrez posted a sign thanking the community for praying for his son.

The response to that sign was so positive that he continued putting religious messages on it, he said.

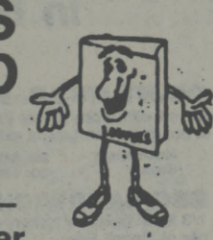
Gutierrez said he has lost business because some people think he is a religious fanatic, but he doesn't care. "It's depressing that so many people worry so much about money," he said. "I really don't give a darn if I go broke (because of the sign)," he said. "And so it stays."



LOST A BOOK RIGHT BEFORE FINALS?

Lou Will Loan You One 'til You Take Your Exam! And We'll Buy The Used Ones You Do Have...

LOU NEEDS YOUR USED BOOKS!



LOU POT'S BOOKSTORE

Northgate — At the corner across from the Post Office

Dallas' 'best rock band' to come to Basement

The Bee's Knees, a pop-jazz band from the Dallas-Fort Worth area, will play Friday and Saturday nights at the MSC Basement Coffeehouse. Admission is \$3.50 and shows start at 8 p.m. each night.

The group was selected as the best rock band in Dallas by the Dallas Morning News. The Bee's Knees have served as an opening act for such performers as Loggins and Messina, Jimmie Speeris, Cheech and Chong, Linda Rondstadt and Dr. Hook.

Apartments • Duplexes • All Types Of Housing
Call for appointment or come by
A&M APT. PLACEMENT SERVICE
693-3777
2339 S. Texas, C.S.
"Next to the Dairy Queen"



WELCH'S CLEANERS

ONE HOUR SERVICE
FREE STORAGE
DRY CLEANING
(TOWN & COUNTRY SHOPPING CENTER)

Gloria Vanderlits



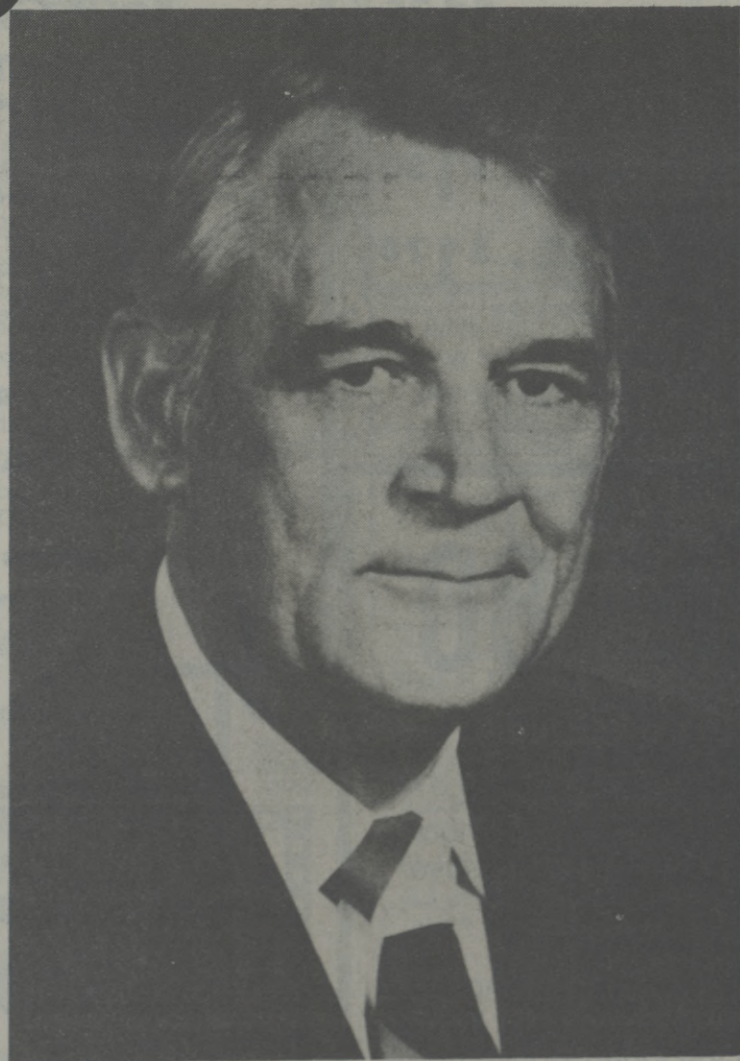
chambray oxford cloth shirt... 28.00
matching chambray pant... 38.00

Charli
707 Texas Ave. 696-9626

AGGIES, KEEP YOUR VOICE STRONG IN AUSTIN!!!

SENATOR BILL MOORE HAS REPRESENTED YOU AND TEXAS A&M WELL IN THE TEXAS SENATE... HE WILL CONTINUE TO DO SO...

SENATOR BILL MOORE, '40, IS THE ONE PERSON MOST RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DYNAMIC GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF TEXAS A&M TO ITS PROMINANCE AMONG THE NATION'S COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES



SENATOR BILL MOORE

is Chairman of the prestigious and powerful State Affairs Committee. His position helps him protect the integrity of the Permanent University Fund... so vital to Texas A&M and its opportunity for educational excellence. Senator Bill MOORE is a member of the influential Finance Committee, the Legislative Budget Board and the Free Conference Committee, all of paramount importance to Texas A&M since these committees have major roles in financing Texas A&M and its activities.

SENATOR BILL MOORE'S

leadership is responsible for establishing the Texas A&M College of Medicine... the Institute of Comparative Medicine... the Sea Grant Program... the Texas Veterinary Medical Laboratory... the Energy Resource Program... Cyclotron Institute... the Texas Real Estate Research Center... and many other programs which have been vital to the increasing stature of Texas A&M University... Texas A&M today is Exhibit A to the dedication of Senator Bill MOORE's dedication and devotion to his Alma Mater and to the youth of Texas.

AGGIES, KEEP SENATOR BILL MOORE VOTE MOORE
WORKING IN THE SENATE FOR YOU AND TEXAS A&M
SATURDAY, MAY 3