



The White Stallion, formerly called The Sugar Shack, is a bar on Wellborn Road frequented

by some of the residents of College Station's black community.



Lucille Young, who works at a recreational facility named Lincoln Center, helps entertain

the dozens of black children that come to the center every night.

Welcome to ...

by ANDY WILLIAMS

Battalion Staff

Albert Clark is playing pool in a bar half a mile from Texas A&M University.

That's not unusual — he says he plays there a couple of times a week.

But tonight he's playing with an Aggie. A white Aggie.

That's unusual. Dora Washington runs the White Stallion, formerly the Sugar Shack — the old name is still on the front of the building. Before tonight, the last white person in her bar was probably there to inspect it.

Clark is a character. He is shooting mediocre pool in a four-player game. Between shots, he dances with his cue to the wailing of B.B. King, which blares from the jukebox, and the whistles of trains, which come from just across Wellborn Road.

Someone sinks an eight-ball, losing the game and leaving six or seven balls on the table. Clark's eyes shine. He sidles up to the Aggie.

"I don't always shoot the best I can," he confides, " 'cause if I did, wouldn't nobody play me again."

Then he turns back to the table and sinks a ball a shot until just the cue ball remains. Balls leap off cushions as many as four times before dropping into pockets. The con is over, and so is the evening.

Clark's no hustler. He says he doesn't play for money. Besides, he's not always successful at concealing his spectacular ability.

"Oops, I pooked that one anyway," he says, laughing after sinking a shot he meant to miss.

The bar Clark amuses himself in is part of a black neighborhood south of the University. The area is bounded, roughly, by Wellborn Road on the west and Welch Boulevard on the east.

No one seems to be sure how blacks came to the neighborhood. But Lucille Young, who works at a city-run recreation facility called Lincoln Center, has a theory:

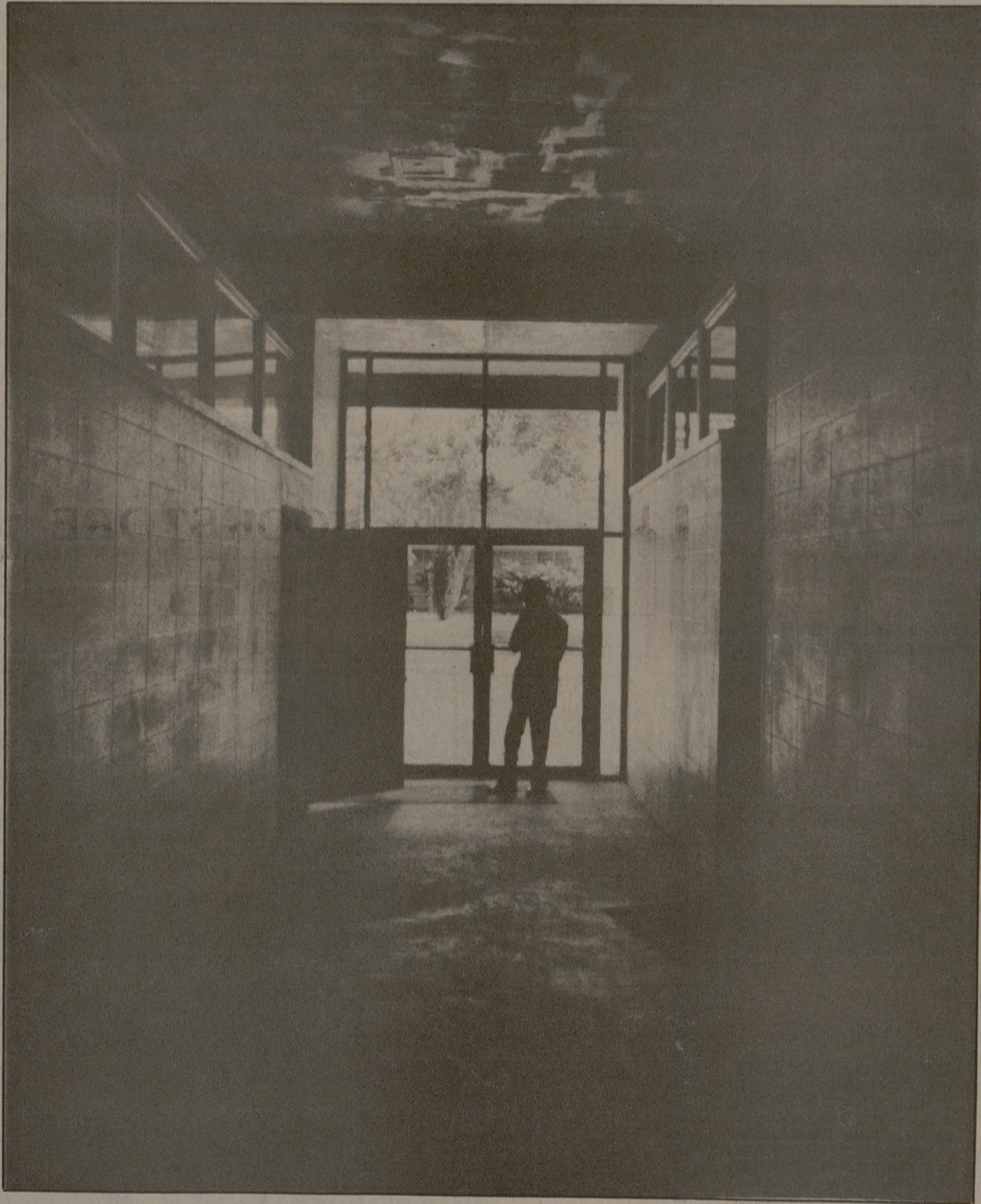
"A long time ago, when blacks used to be pushed to the back, this was the back."

The neighborhood doesn't have an official name. Young says local blacks call it the "Other Side" because it's across town from two other black areas.

Texas A&M students live around the edges of the Other Side, but rarely in it. The contrast in cultures is clear. On some streets, new brick duplexes sit next door to battered wood-frame residences.

The blacks' houses are generally small and in poor condition.

Census figures from 1970 show that the average house in College Station that was owned by a black was worth only about a third as much as the overall average — \$6,900 for blacks, \$18,500 for the general population.



College Station's tax assessor's office rates the quality of houses on a 10-division scale. The worst houses get a grade of 2, the next best 2+, the next best 3, and so on. The highest category is 6+.

Most of the houses in the Other Side are rated 3, 3+, and 4.

Houses rated 3 have, for instance, minimum insulation and floors of single or double pine on wood joists.

Houses rated 4 differ in that they have adequate insulation in their roofs and walls and have sub-floors of pine or plywood that are finished with hardwood or asphalt tile.

Most houses in the Other Side range from 700 to 900 square feet. Based on the city's schedule, the worth of a small house in the Other Side, not counting its lot, is only about \$11,000.

Lots are also assessed at low value, largely because city officials figure the Other Side is an undesirable place to live. The unit value per front foot, a measure of the worth of a lot, is lower for land in the Other Side than for any other in the city.

Evelyn Henley, a secretary in the tax assessor's office, says this is a major reason for low property values in the area.

A comparison of two similarly sized and aged houses, one in the Other Side and one in white Southwood Valley, shows that the house in the black area is worth 70 percent as much as the other, but that the land it sits on is worth only 20 percent as much.

Housing is only one area in which the Other Side's poverty is apparent. Streets are also poor. Street lights are rare.

But there is help. Some of it comes from the federal department of Housing and Urban Development. Its funds have been used for improvements in street pavement, housing, sewers, and so on.

Jane Kee, community development planner for College Station, explains that standard metropolitan areas with populations of 50,000 or more are entitled to a block grant each year from HUD. College Station received \$336,000 for this fiscal year.

And some help comes from the city. In 1978, for instance, the Parks and Recreation Department bought what had once been College Station's black school and converted it into Lincoln Center. This has a gym, a meeting room, and a game room, and is the only such facility in the city.

Now dozens of children, almost all of whom are black, come to the center every night. And their grandparents come at noon to be fed through a senior citizen's program.

Blacks in the Other Side still don't lead an easy life. But, as Lucille Young might say, they're not as near the back as they used to be.

... the 'Other Side'



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Photos by Dave Tollefson

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