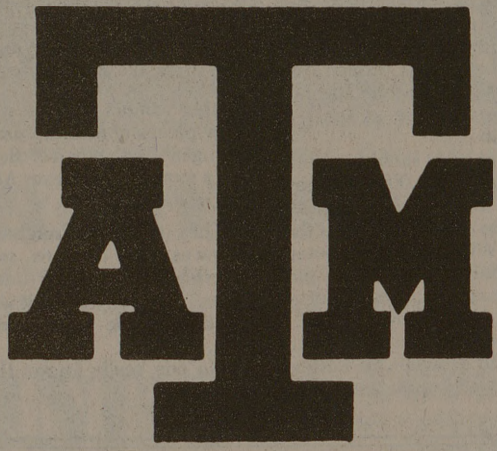


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GIG 'EM AGGIES!

Summer slump

Decrease in enrollment can mean trouble for area merchants

By JANA L. SIMS
Battalion Reporter
Citizens of Brazos County, students of Texas A&M University — suppose that tomorrow you awoke to find one-fifth of the businesses in the county had disappeared?
The hordes of fast-food restaurants that fill your impatient empty stomachs had shrunk into a Burger Doodle on the other side of town. The grocery stores on most blocks had vanished, leaving a few scattered here and there. Your feet itched all

weekend because your favorite dance hall had packed up and left no forwarding address.

Perhaps you might feel like some of the local merchants do when summer arrives — and one-third of the Texas A&M enrollment leaves.

Averaging the enrollment for the fall and spring semesters of each school year and then comparing them to the average enrollment of the two summer sessions for the past 10 years, enrollment drops an average of 38.7 percent when the summer rolls around. (Or, if you prefer, fall enrollment swells an average of 276.6 percent when September knocks on summer's door.) Quite a change in population.

Or look at the 1970 Census and U.S. Department of Transportation Urban Transportation Study figures, which includes students at Texas A&M. The estimated population for the Brazos Valley in 1980 is 106,500. Enrollment this fall at the University was a record 33,499. The average enrollment of both summer sessions this past summer was 11,350. The difference in the two student figures is 22,149, or 20.8 percent of the estimated population for our area.

When one-fifth of the population of Brazos County "disappears" every nine months, what does it do to the merchants?

"Summer? — That's the time when you run out to the street and pull people in," James Busse, manager of University Flowers, said with a smile. He said summer is "bad news" when it comes to business.

Busse estimates that students make up 75 percent of his shop's business and with the onset of summer, one-half of University Flowers' business drops off.

Busse said that University Flowers, which has been open about three years, keeps shorter hours in the summer to compensate for the lack of business, but the shop tries to

keep the same number of employees.

"If we can help them through the hard times (summer)," Busse said, "they'll help us through the hard times (fall)."

But the "hard times" of summer aren't enough to discourage University Flowers from staying open. Busse said he thought the shop broke even this past summer and said those

mercer said that University students' impact on business has been great historically, but recently the impact has been lessened. He said the local economy has been able to diversify because of industrial development. He cited the production of new plants such as those built by Texas Instruments and Babcock and Wilcox.

Nevertheless, an in-house study

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involved with the shop just accept that summer is a problem and try to make the best of it.

Looking at local trade as a whole, the Sales Tax Analyses which are reported quarterly by the state comptroller's office show that in 1979 the gross sales increased an average of 12.2 percent each quarter in Brazos County. But broken down into categories based on the type of sales, the figures reveal a different pattern in some cases.

Gross sales for general merchandise stores increased \$5.8 million, but between the second and third quarters — the two quarters that contain the summer months — gross sales increased only \$355,000.

Gross sales for food stores increased \$6.2 million from January to December 1979, but sales decreased by \$137,000 in the second quarter, and decreased again by \$647,000 in the third quarter.

Automotive dealers and gas stations reported gross sales of \$17.3 million for the first quarter of 1979, \$21.1 million for the second quarter, decreasing to \$20.3 million for the third quarter and rising again to \$23.3 million for the fourth quarter.

A spokesman for the Bryan-College Station Chamber of Com-

merce said that University students' impact on business has been great historically, but recently the impact has been lessened. He said the local economy has been able to diversify because of industrial development. He cited the production of new plants such as those built by Texas Instruments and Babcock and Wilcox.

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The Chamber spokesman said the summer impact is not as great as it has been for two reasons: 1) A lot of students have jobs here during the fall and spring semesters and leave in the summer, and 2) There has been an increase in graduate students — some who have spouses that hold jobs and take roots here in the summer.

Bernie Gessner, owner of the 8-year-old Aggie Cleaners in Northgate, said in the Bryan-College Station area, "the peaks and valleys are mountainous."

He said 75 percent of his business is college related — Texas A&M faculty or staff — if not actually students. Add this to the fact that the cleaning business is typically slower in the summer, and Gessner said his business drops two-thirds in the summer.

Gessner said he is forced to look for institutional business in the summer, which includes "calling churches to see if they need their choir robes cleaned."

Aggie Cleaners stays open the same hours in the summer, but em-

ployees in the production side of business must work fewer hours when their workdays end when the summer is done.

"The big problem is psychological," Gessner said. Business drops the summer, he said, and then approaches and "the roof caves in."

B.J.'s Package Store, a liquor store owned by none other than B.J. Swensen, has been in business three years. B.J. said summer to him means trying to "survive." He said his business drops by 30 to 40 percent in summer like "everybody's in the same boat."

Phil Callahan, who has owned Swensen's Ice Cream Factory for two years with his wife Jane, said the reason they didn't want to leave Northgate is because of their dependence on students.

"We wanted to appeal to the tire community," he said, and effect on his business is not as great as he thought it would be. He said that late night business (from 9 p.m. on) is not as good as late business is Texas A&M students. Also, Callahan said, sales are at a level in summer because there is no football weekends with everyone coming in town.

Managers or owners of Carroll's Baskets and Wicker Curiosity Shop and the Texas A&M Curiosity Shop said their businesses are affected just slightly by summer. Kay Allen, the new owner of Beer Garden, said business is about 60 percent in the summer.

Art Hickle, owner of AR Photo Art, estimates that 40 percent of his customers are Texas A&M students. In the summer, he said, business increases by about 20 percent, but is a combination of the lack of students and the fact that summer months are normally slow in photography business.

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Private eatery is Peking's first

United Press International
PEKING — Good food and private business are quietly being revived down a narrow, dusty alleyway in the heart of communist China.

A mother, anxious about the future of her two unemployed sons, made culinary history this month

when she opened her own restaurant. It is the first privately run restaurant in Peking in nearly two decades.

Except for a brief period in the early 1960s when small private food stalls made an appearance, all restaurants in the capital had been operated by the government since the communist regime was established in 1949.

Recent economic reforms have lifted some of the restraints on "individual economy" — private business.

It was a humble beginning for Liu Guixin, 47, the jovial, plump mother of five and proprietor of a three-table establishment that occupies what once was the family's living room.

Mrs. Liu said it took 1,100 yuan (\$660) to set up the shop. Her husband borrowed from his employer, she had some savings and the bank loaned her half the necessary capital expenditure.

Then it took Mrs. Liu six months of wrangling with government red tape before she finally opened the eatery at No. 47 Quihua (Jade Flower) Hutong, one of the countless residential compounds of old, grey-brick huts where real life goes on behind the splendor of the archways and palaces.

She said she decided to open her own restaurant because her two youngest sons had waited for two

years for the government to give them jobs. Millions of young people are without employment in China because there are too many people and too few jobs for people with specialist skills.

"I thought it could help the government and help my two sons," Mrs. Liu said. She now is free from their employer, paying one monthly wage amounting to \$20.

The only thing that distinguishes her house from those of her neighbors is a handwritten sign above the front door. It says "Yuerbing, guon" — the restaurant that pleases its customers.

She said she cooks more than eight different courses, including exotic items as bear paws and swan nest. Her specialty is duck, made eight different ways.

Soup, a main dish and rice cost cents at her place, and usually more than 60 cents at a bigger, state establishment.

"Workers with jobs nearby have great difficulties finding a place for lunch," she said. "Now they're here."

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