

# Local

## Solution sought to Northgate bar crowding problem

### Patricia Street wall for overflow may be answer

By SUZANNE HEMBY  
Battalion Reporter

"Stepping out" for many students at Texas A&M University usually means going to one of the Northgate bars.

Many people are concerned about some problems surrounding these bars: the Dixie Chicken, the Thirsty Turtle, the Alamo and Duddleys Draw.

The main problem is that when there are so many people at these bars, the crowds often flow out onto University Drive. A solution would be to move the bar's front doors to Patricia Street in back of the businesses.

Don Ganter, one of the Dixie Chicken owners, said he is "all for closing off Patricia Street" on the weekends and giving the people an

Thirsty Turtle to 1966 and Duddleys Draw to 1959.

Another problem Northgate businesses could face is what to do in case of a fire. Many of the bars are overcrowded, especially on weekends, said Fire Marshall Harry L. Davis.

Davis said the danger with overcrowding is that too many people in the businesses tend to block fire exits. He said on March 6 he issued one of the bars a citation for overcrowding. Fines for this offense can be up to \$200.

Ganter said the Dixie Chicken has been cited once, but "it (the citation) was thrown out of court."

Davis also said he wasn't sure what the legal capacities for the buildings are because the Dixie Chicken has been expanded and because records are not up to date.

Most of the owners know the legal capacities. Ganter said the capacity of the Dixie Chicken is 275. Sebastian said the legal capacity of the Alamo is 150, and he limits the number of people he lets in.

Benning said, "We try to keep limits on people. Duddleys Draw has a capacity of about 200." He added that Duddleys Draw doesn't have much standing room. "Our tables don't leave much room for standing customers."

Mogford said the Thirsty Turtle doesn't have an overcrowding prob-



Staff photo by Jeff Kerber

A typical Aggie crowd jams into the Dixie Chicken, one of several Northgate bars experiencing crowding problems. Some owners

have suggested closing the University Drive entrances to the taverns and opening Patricia Street one block behind.

**A solution to this problem would be to move the front doors to Patricia Street located in back of the businesses.**

area to talk outside. He added that about \$2,000 was spent remodeling the back porch of the Dixie Chicken for this purpose.

Eric Langford, Student Government vice president of student services, said Student Government is looking at the problems of that area, and hopes to suggest some answers. He said the Patricia Street idea would be a solution, and it "wouldn't take much to fix it up."

Jack Sebastian, owner of the Alamo, said he supports the Patricia Street idea. "I've tried to get them (other owners, the city) to do this for two years." He said he cleaned up the Alamo's back area, which included building an 8-foot rock wall and the construction of an \$8,500 parking lot.

Richard Benning, owner of Duddleys Draw, said he is also for the Patricia Street idea. He said steps should be taken to light the back area and clean up and block off the street with barricades. He added that the owners offered to pay for this, which would cost \$5,000, but the city has other ideas for the area which include making it into a mall area, complete with benches and a roof over the street. This would probably cost taxpayers about \$130,000.

David Mogford, owner of the Thirsty Turtle, said his business is set farther back from the street than the other bars and doesn't have access to Patricia Street. Therefore, he doesn't support the idea. He said he feels lights should be added to University Drive because it's extremely hard to see people in the street.

The City of College Station is concerned with the bars breaking city ordinances.

City Planner Albert O. Mayo said most of these businesses violate at least one ordinance. These establishments were built before the city ordinances were written, he said, therefore they are classified as a non-conforming use, which exempts them from the ordinances.

"The Alamo was the first building built in College Station," said Sebastian. "I had to completely re-do it." He said it was built in 1926.

The other buildings are not as old. Terry Holliman, who works in the College Station Tax Office, said the Dixie Chicken dates to 1967, the

**The only problem with Northgate is that it is a downtown to college students, and because of the "gas crunch" many students walk over to the businesses instead of driving somewhere else, causing a problem with people being out in the street.--Don Ganter, a Dixie Chicken owner.**

lem and that he doesn't know the Thirsty Turtle's capacity.

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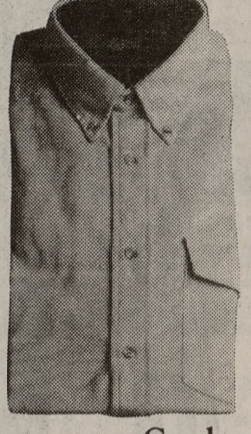
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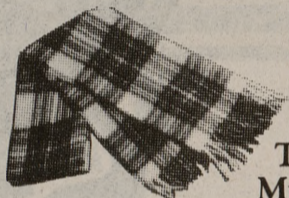
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