

Preserving the past

Campus Theater stars in new role

by Jena Atchison

On Northgate, at the corner of University and Boyett, the Campus Theater, closed since 1985, has represented a bit of nostalgia among its contemporary neighbors in business.

Although it has recently been purchased by Don Ganter, proprietor of the Dixie Chicken and other establishments, the building is not being changed, Ganter said. It is being refurbished and turned into a club.

Ganter finalized the deal with former owner, Bill Schulman, in May 1987. He said the deal was made in November of 1986 on a handshake.

"I had been thinking about the place for a while," Ganter said. "I was driving by the place one day and I saw Bill's truck parked in front of the theater.

"I went inside, said he needed to sell me the theater . . . he gave me a price and we shook hands on the deal; that was it."

Ganter said he will not change the front of the building, just clean it up. Decorations will include old movie posters and other things that will keep the building the same. The name of the club will be The Old Campus Theater.

"It seems mind boggling to build a beer joint and pretend it was never a movie theater," Ganter said. "I've taken an old theater, built in 1939, and am turning it into a rock 'n' roll

dance club for college students."

Inside the building is one large room. It will not be partitioned by walls, but a balcony overlooking the dance floor will constitute the upper room.

Remodeling will include installation of a bar downstairs on the floor and upstairs in the balcony. Ganter said the balcony will be extended to the shape of a horseshoe. Within this area will be pool tables and other games.

Since the bottom floor was previously sloped, Ganter said he leveled it to three separate tiers. The first two will include the bar, tables and chairs. A dance floor will comprise the bottom tier.

A stage, at the back of the theater, will serve as a platform for live bands. Ganter said the theater will periodically feature live bands, most of which will be local.

At times when there is not a live band, the club will play rock 'n' roll music from the '50s, '60s and '70s.

When asked if he was going to advertise the club's opening with a promotional gimmick, Ganter replied, "No, I think that's silly. It doesn't take talent to give something away.

"The talent comes in getting people to come to a place and buy drinks. We're not trying to hide anything. We have a theater and we need some good solid rock 'n' roll. It'll be a good place to dance."

Ganter said The Old Campus Theater will open at the beginning of the spring semester, probably on Jan. 2.



The Campus Theater building, which has been vacant since 1985, is being renovated and turned into a rock 'n' roll dance club called The Old Campus Theater.

Presenting the present

Friendliness found at 'coffee house of the '80s'

by Jamie Russell

An old man known as John walks in wearing a faded red plaid shirt under a pair of Dickies overalls obviously worn through the years. He is carrying a coffee mug stating "Don't mess with Texas" in his jittering hands.

Marie Weichert, the morning manager, is working behind the counter like she does six mornings a week.

"Good morning John," Marie says. She calls all of her regulars by name.

John knows 27 cents will fill his mug with some piping hot black coffee and his mind with a friendly thought from Marie.

A cowboy, dressed in Wrangler jeans, a "Dallas Cowboy" T-shirt, and a belt with a large silver buckle, wanders in past the cases of soda and beer stacked eye level in the middle of the shop and heads for the refrigerator where he grabs two bottles of orange juice.

Marie, with not a word transpired, grabs a pack of Winstons from the wall of cigarettes behind her and lays it on the counter for him.

"Mornin' Marie," he says. "How much I owe ya?"

This is not the ordinary coffee shop of the past when one would go in to sit, relax and drink a cup of coffee in a diner atmosphere — this is the "coffee shop of the 80s."

It is a Mobile convenience store nestled in Bryan among houses and

businesses where the people who want to chat must stand ready to dodge hurrying customers.

It is early in the morning and looking out one window one can see the sun rise against a pink-blue sky, and an old windmill misplaced against a backdrop of human-ravaged land. Out the other window stands a local bar — the Ptarmigan.

People are constantly rushing in and out for one thing or another, afraid of being late for work or taking their children to school.

Marie, the "crazy" country girl dressed in Wrangler jeans and a shirt covered by a light-blue uniform smock, has worked there for six years. She has built a friendly relationship with her customers.

"If you do not have relationships

with your customers you do not have a job," Marie says.

This convenience store, located on the corner of Carson Street and South College Avenue, sells a variety of snacks and liquid refreshments ranging from Pepsi to Lone Star.

Marie begins her morning at 5:30, sometimes earlier, especially during deer season.

Besides coffee — cigarettes, cigarettes, cigarettes are what trail across the counter this morning.

"It's just a friendly place to visit," Marie says as she bags a customer's purchase.

With country music playing in the background, regardless of the fast pace, this coffee shop is intimate. The people are friendly and the coffee is always fresh.