State and Local

Aggie enjoys running Texas-style bar in Austin

By Kris Leabo

Special to The Battalion
If the Texas A&M Class of '88 is like most other classes, its members are probably wondering about where their lives will be going after graduation.

Ten years ago, so did Bill Forrester, Class of '78: But he never thought he'd be the owner and operator of the Texas Showdown Saloon, a popular Texas-style beer joint on Guadalupe Street (also known as "The Drag") just north of the University of Texas campus in Austin.

That's because Forrester didn't get his degree in business or management as you might expect. In-stead, he graduated from Texas of a saloon keeper? A&M's School of Veterinary Medi-Forrester admits cine and spent nearly five years as a job as a veterinarian, but adds (with veterinarian before getting into the bar business.

This drastic career change obviously wasn't part of his original plan at all, but those who know him well have learned to expect the unexpected as far as Forrester is con-

When you talk to Forrester, you realize that everything about him is

He speaks with a heavy Texas drawl, drinks Texas beer (from out the opportunities around other Shiner, of course), eats Tex-Mex college towns in Texas, Forrester food (hot!) and loves to dance the

Born and raised near Ft. Worth, Forrester attributes his decision to come a veterinarian to his rural

Veterinarian gives up practice to become saloon keeper "If I'd worked (as a vet) in the country, maybe Kerrville or somewhere like that, I'd probably still be

"This is such a cross-section of individuals in here. It's remarkable how completely individual everyone is."

— Bill Forrester saloon owner

At that time, of course, Forrester had no idea that in just a few short months he would be a part of it all.

Eventually his friends decided that Austin would indeed be the right place to open their bar and after a short search found a good location close to the UT campus.

It was recently a closed punk-rock nightclub fondly remembered among Austin's new-wave crowd as Raul's, which was as famous for its bizarre decor as well as its unusual

In one short summer, however, the bar was transformed into the ultimate Texas beer joint.

Although Forrester never even saw the original club, he says today there are still some Raul's die-hards who blame him for their club's demise. He just laughs.

If Forrester doesn't particularly have a taste for the bizarre, he certainly has an appreciation for it. All that remains of the original club is a wall mural of some giant sewer rats which still exists behind the Showdown's new wooden walls.

As grotesque as it was, Forrester

maintains it would have been a

shame to destroy it. 'If you look between the cracks in the boards over there behind the dart boards, you can still see parts of it," he says.

Forrester's actual involvement in the Texas Showdown Saloon didn't really begin until the bar had been open a few months and was on its

His friends who had opened the

Showdown were ready to return to their other jobs out of town and needed someone in Austin to run the bar. That was in the summer of "They called me and wanted to

know if I knew someone that might want the job," he said. "I thought about it for about half-a-second and said 'Yeah, me!' I think I even surprised myself!" The transition from veterinarian

to barkeep wasn't immediate, how-

During his first year, Forrester still kept appointments at the clinic in the mornings and spent the rest of the day — and night — working at

how I survived," he said, adding that his work schedule often ran from 8

Finally, in 1983, Forrester quit his job at the animal clinic and committed himself to running the Texas Showdown on a full-time basis.

The Showdown, which Forrester describes as "a neighborhood bar people drive to," boasts what is probably the largest group of regular customers in Austin, with nearly 300 personally assigned beer steins

hanging above the bar as proof.

A quick inventory of the customers at the bar confirms this. It seems there's a representation of about every size, shape, color and style. But while Forrester is busy, noting the differences among the individuals, he is not so quick to see what they all have in common — their friendship with him.

Besides having a certain flair for cold beer, many of the regulars go to the Showdown because they say it feels like home. The atmosphere is family-like — it's almost like being in Forrester's living room. And the customers think of Forrester as family,

Susan, a Showdown regular for about five years, says that Forrester is like a father figure to lots of the female customers there, referring to his practice of tactfully heading off obnoxious men at the pass, so to

Jones, who holds stein number one in the "stein club." He's been going to the bar since the first day the

Showdown opened its doors.

Although he says he wasn't the original owner of number one Forrester was - it was ceremoniously given to him by Forrester on his birthday a few years back because

that's the kind of guy he is." Birthday parties and entire bar outings are also a regular tradition at Forrester's bar.

This year Forrester is organizing his Seventh-Sixth Annual Lucken-bach bus trip for the Showdown reg-

The seventh-sixth annual?

"One year we went twice," he says He remembers when somebody once told him "You know you're a Texas Showdown Vermin (a term of endearment) when you get on a bus at one bar and drive 75 miles to drink at another bar.'

So how does an Aggie like Forrester fare in a Longhorn town like Austin? Actually, he loves it.

"I'm a loyal Aggie, of course," Forrester says, but he adds that he really likes the traditional rivalry between the two schools

After spending the last six years just a stone's throw from his rival, Forrester really believes the people who go to these two schools have a lot more in common than they think.

cause to Forrester, Austin and College Station both mean the same thing - good friends.

Bomb decimates car, kills driver in Fort Worth

FORT WORTH (AP) — A bomb attached to an automobile exploded Thursday on a northside street, killing the driver and scattering car parts along the roadway, fire officials said.

"People around were saying they believe it was parked and a male was inside," Lt. F.D. Tacker of the Fort Worth Fire Department said.

The bomb exploded shortly before 2:30 p.m.

near the intersection of Loop 820 and North Beach Street, shooting flames high into the air and scattering parts for about a one-block area.

ment, the Fort Worth Police Department's bomb

Tacker said investigators from the fire depart-

squad and the federal Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms went to the explosion site.

The car was engulfed in flames when firefighters arrived, Tacker said. The victim was trapped

Don Peacock, a fire marshal, said investigators on the scene are still trying to gather pieces of the

"I just talked to investigators awhile ago," Peacock says. "Looks like it might have been a pipe

"One of the medical officers told one of our people that the guy had gotten out of his car to

get a glass of iced tea and when he got back in it exploded."

There were unconfirmed reports that someone in a passing vehicle may have tossed the de-

Police said the victim had stopped to eat at a small barbecue restaurant, and the explosion occurred near the establishment.

"They say this guy stopped out there at this little barbecue stand and went back into his car and sat there a little while, and then it blows,'

Police charge local resident for setting fire to buildings

A College Station man charged with setting fire to two area buildings remained in the Brazos County Jail Thursday in lieu of \$30,000 bond.

Leo S. Thomas Jr., 39, of 3001 S. Texas Ave., was booked into the county jail March 14 after being charged with arson in connection with the March 13 fire of an abandoned house on Miller Lane. Additional arson and burgulary charges were filed against

Thomas on Tuesday following a College Station Fire Department investigation into the March 8 fire at the Rock Prairie Baptist

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doing it now," he says.

Instead, following graduation,

Forrester spent a year working near San Jose, Calif. before returning to

Texas to open his own animal clinic

three years building a steady cli-

want to trade in a perfectly secure job with a bright future for the life

a big grin) that he simply thinks

spending his days in a bar is a lot

According to Forrester, here's how it happened:
Some of his friends from A&M,

who already happened to be in the bar business, were planning to open another bar similar to the one For-

rester liked to hang out in when he

was busy trying to sell them on the

"I told them they were missing the boat," he said. "There was nothing

like what they had in mind here in

idea of opening up in Austin.

While his friends were checking

was still in college

He then spent the better part of

So why in the world would he

Forrester admits that he loved his

in Austin with one other partner.

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