

DISTRACTIONS

The magazine of creative time mismanagement

April 27, 1988

Volume 1, Number 1



From frat houses to the cosmic center of the universe: an evening in Murf—town

One night in...



The cast of "A...My Name is Alice "

Carolyne Holland●Staff

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All photographs in this issue (with the exception of the cover) were taken between the hours of 5 p.m., April 6 and 2:45 a.m., April 7. All events described in the article took place during that time.

5:33 p.m.

WMOT Studios

Learning Resources Center

Few people on campus listen to WMOT, which is a shame since it's the only Jazz station in the area. Fewer still know where its studio is located, which is fine since it prevents any goon off the street from bothering the DJs.

But writing for a magazine gives me more courage than the goon I usually am, so I barge right up to the second floor of the LRC and ring a buzzer.

Carlos Johnson, who's just Carlos on the air ("I didn't want to use my full name, since it sounded kind of corny") opens the door. He's surprised, but we've caught him at a good time since National Public Radio's news show "All Things Considered" is on — all Carlos has to do is turn a few dials and say "We're Jazz 89, WMOT in his radio voice every half hour.

I've always wondered about that radio voice. Are you born with it, can you buy it ("Hi, I'm Shadoe Stevens. Have you wanted an unnaturally deep and well-modulated voice just like mine? Well here's your chance."), or do you just work at it? Carlos says he worked at it; he started in radio while he was still in high school. Sounds pretty good to me.

The WMOT studios are small (though of course they probably didn't count on a DJ, a chubbo editor

and a photographer all clumping around in here) and dark, with shelves full of records and a few compact disks. The equipment here is to WKDF's studios as the equipment at *Sidelines* is to *The New York Times*. In other words, no cappicino machine, no computerized phone; basic city. But it works.

The station does takes requests, if it can fit them into the format (mostly oldies, a few "new age" and fusion cuts and the occasional jazz vocal) but Carlos' doubts if they can play the 20-minute Keith Jarrett piano solo I want. I settle for Mark Isham and think dark thoughts about the influence of *thirtysomething* on my own life.

CB

6:15 p.m.

Rax

Some Wednesday evening, right before you leave Murfreesboro while embarking on the Trail of Tears, that nostalgic and soul-disfiguring white man's guilt trip, peer quickly to the side on your way out of town. You might see, gesticulating wildly in Rax's parking lot, the inimitable Uncle Alligator. Resplendent in green and yellow fur, he stands soothing his broken snout.

Uncle, a.k.a. Bobby Jones, is 16 and an inmate at Oakland High. Tonight's inhabitant of the Rax gator suit, he is far more affable than one would expect from a person coerced into performing as a cheap substitute for the nappy clown at McDonald's.

Flagging down vehicles on the roadside can be a hazardous task. "I've been flipped off before," Bobby admits. Returning the "digital salute" is difficult for someone using bulky paws, but Mr. Jones has occasionally managed retaliation. Advice to exhibitionists: Uncle has never been mooned.

Uncle Alligator's vision is hampered by the confines of his uniform, which resembles a Godzilla parody minus the spiny back and Gene Simmons'-like trick flame.



The Murfreesboro Court House

Sandra Rennie●Staff



Frank Conley●Staff

Chemical Dependency practices "I Want To Kill My Mama," in the Musicians Warehouse.

Murfreesboro

"I've stepped on kids because I couldn't see them," Jones confesses without a trace of remorse. However, he quickly qualifies his statement, and one can infer that Uncle Al lives for the kiddies.

Indeed, children are flocking to the gator's side. Two toddlers venture outside the restaurant to touch their idol. Their zealotry wanes at the last second, though, and they are content to reciprocate waves. To some, the emotional attachment proves overwhelming. "There's a kid in there right now who started crying when I came out," Jones recounts with that same lack of compunction.

The care and feeding of gators is an uncomplicated thing. Bobby's suit is well insulated from the pernicious winds. So well, in fact, that he is occasionally tempted to steal soft drinks to truncate the heat. Not that he actually does such things, mind you, but the urge remains. Jones refuses to acknowledge that employee theft is a festering problem at the roast beef temple, insisting that, at worse, workers "sneak a sip of Coke or something."

Conscious of his state's heritage, Jones volunteered for the job, at which he alternates with whomever else plucks the assignment every week. Extremely hospitable, the multi-faceted Mr. Jones can run a register with the aplomb equal to that of his monster-suit modeling appearances.

In one word or less, Jones describes the pre-dusk Murfreesboro this Wednesday as "everyday living." Begged to elaborate, Jones remarks "That's life." Which is to say, that is isn't life at all — not at least until nightfall.

DS

6:21 p.m. An Unidentified Residence Hall

An RA has just informed us that it is forbidden for us, being females, to walk the hallowed hallways of the male residence halls without permis-

sion. In other words, he doesn't quite believe us when we tell him we're with *Distractions* and are working the campus beat. Makes you wonder how many other people have used that excuse.

We decide not to give up that easily so we crash an RA/Hall Directors meeting to request official permission — the government may hold the market on Red Tape, but MTSU is fast closing in. We thought we would miss out on the spontaneity of busting into somebody's room unannounced and turning the flashbulbs and microphones on them. However, Tim, our photographer, informs us that our ideas would be great for a free lecture entitled, "Invasion of Privacy: How to do it."

KH

6:45 p.m. Campus Parking Lot

There is no parking problem on campus. Guess Charles Pigg was right.

KH

6:50 Casual Male Outlets Limited Mall

Outlets has always seemed like the Mall from Hell to me. Malls should be flashy open places to spend huge quantities of money on things you don't need. Outlets is dimly lit, full of off-brand fast-food vendors and market stands set up in the open areas like a post-apocalyptic market place. If malls are the town squares of the 21st century, this is an attempt to ghettoize that square. Plus the video games bite.

In Casual Male, John Wicks, assistant sales manager, is trying to sell us something, anything. I don't blame him since the place is empty. There are masses of winter clothes for sale and the gloves are especially cheap, uh, inexpensive.

It's dead now, but John says "when we're busy we're hellaciously busy."

Then, when John finds out we're from student publications, he eases up and talks like a normal human



Howard Ross ● Staff

(L to R) Paramedic Judy Jones tends to Robert Lee Ganes as M.A. Brown observes.



Carolyne Holland ● Staff

The bar at Tycoon's a few days before it closed its doors for the last time.



Sandra Rennie ● Staff

Billy Glass, with basketball, gets a ride from Timmy Garrett.



rather than a sales thing. He tells us he was a film major. Now I can classify him. Whew, nothing like some stereotyping to ease the mind.

"I really want to direct," he says. You never hear film guys saying they really want to work lights.

Of course, MTSU dissolved their film program a few years ago, when it looked like actual feature films might be made in Nashville; now we wouldn't want to teach those little thugs anything useful. John switched to Mass Comm and is getting ready to graduate soon. I suggest "Death Mall: 1999" for his first feature. Roger Corman should love it, and he could film in Outlets. Maybe even blow the place up. Blow it up real good.

CB

7:05

Bags, Bags, Bags

I don't think that's actually the name of the place, but that is what they sell. It smells like a leather warehouse, which it basically is.

Pam Davis, a freshman mass comm major (is everybody at MTSU a mass comm major? Or are all the business majors at frat houses tonight?), who works there says she's use to it. I just can't get over the impression that someone is grazing wet cattle in the back room.

Just down the row from the bag store is Socks Galore, who I think was a character in "Goldfinger." I feel like David Letterman with all these one item stores: "So that's it, all you sell are thermonuclear warheads?" "Yes Dave, that's why we're called Just Thermonuclear Warheads." "No fall-out shelters or lead lined mailboxes." "No Dave, just thermonuclear warheads."

Socks Galore has stockings and shoelaces also, though. And I think I see some tights on the wall.

While I root around in the tube sock bin and Michael Jackson sings about starting with the man in the mirror, a little girl stalks Sandy, the photographer with me. The girl follows Sandy, making sure to stay out of her pictures. I don't know if she's playing a kind of tag or if she's afraid of having her soul stolen.

In the store, like every other store in Outlets, when I ask people where they're from they always say "out of town." Does that mean Murf-town residents are too smart to come here or we're too embarrassed to admit it when we do?

If Outlets is hell, Old Time Pottery is the ninth circle of hell. Lots of old people from, yep, out of town, a huge special on Tupperware (100's of them, all shapes and sizes) and hundreds of ribbons.

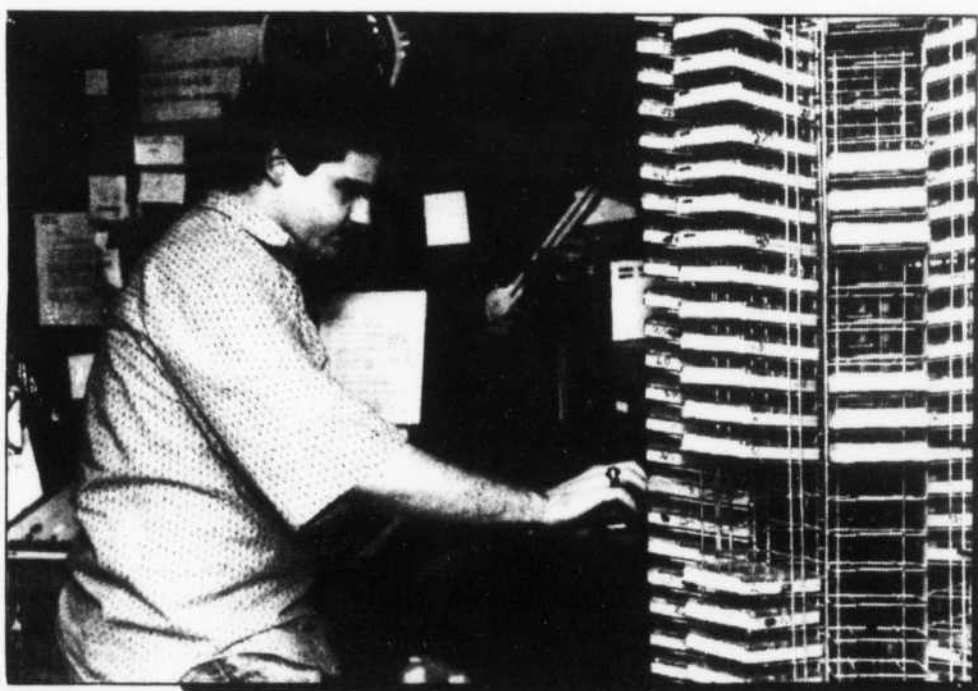
Most everything here is useless, but the compulsion to buy is strong. A friend of mine says he came here once, filled up a cart and then just left it at the door: shoppus interruptus. Could take years of therapy with Betty Furness to clear that up.

This is the place, however, to get those ceramic grayhounds you usually have to pay \$125 for on The Wheel of Fortune. But no Pat Sajack or Vanna White here.

In Electronic Express, back in Outlets, a kid on a Casio CZ-2305 and two other keyboards sounds like an entire synth-pop band. He's playing something that sounds familiar, but I can't quite name. Suddenly, bingo! It's AXEL F! Put that boy on the next RIMusic album.

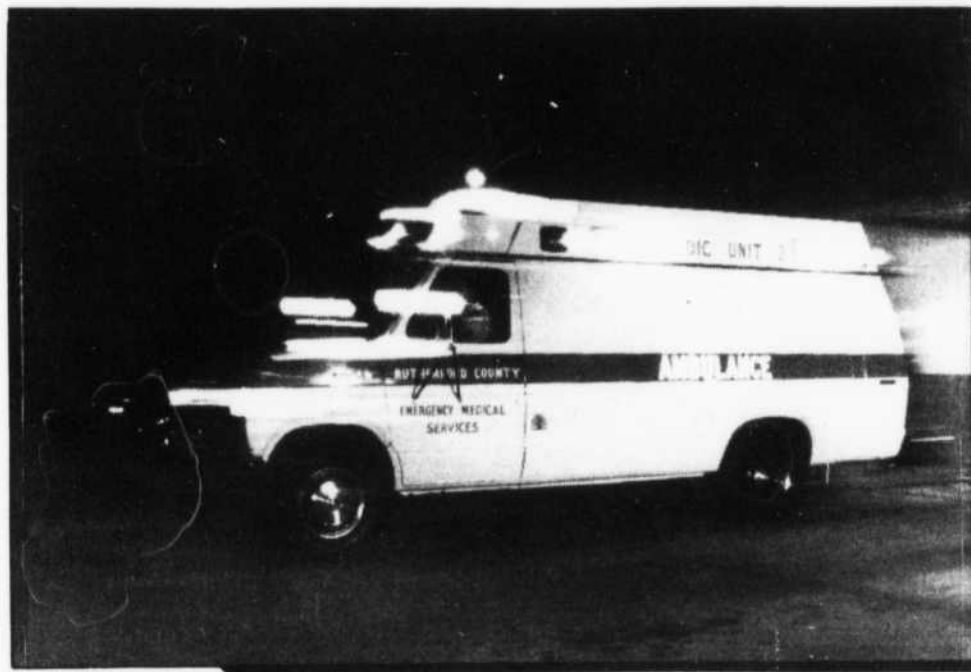
Besides the young Keith Emerson, the speakers in the store play the best music of the evening: Smitherens, 10,000 Mainacs and Joni Mitchell. I wonder if they could sell beer in here?

CB



Carlos Johnson, an announcer at WMOT, readies a cassette announcement.

Sandra Rennie ● Staff



Howard Ross ● Staff

An ambulance from the Rutherford County Ambulance Service rushes out on a late-night call.

7:20

Musicians Warehouse

The band Chemical Dependency (no relation to Suicidal Tendencies) is practicing. The sound is thrash hard-core: raw, baby, raw! However, since neither Frank nor I sport a shaved head or own a skateboard we cannot truly appreciate the scene.

A few minutes later David Adcock braves the ultimate haircut, yep, we're talking creative razor use here. Jill Puckett from Riverdale and Bog, the master of hair, do the honors.

DD

7:50

Stalled Car Gulf Station

Officer Ken Vaughn is trying to start Carolyn Reeves' van as another cop car goes screaming by. She says she drove here and then the car just died.

While Vaughn fiddles with the cables, Carolyn's son, Shane drives up. When I ask him for his name (can't use someone's picture without their permission) says "I'm Richard Reeves son," which doesn't make any sense (until I find out from the police that Richard Reeves is a city councilman).

Vaughn adjusts the jumper cables. Nothing. One more time. Then, when Shane turns the key, the van starts. Nice.

CB

8:10

Krogers Broad St.

As we attempt to take photos, the manager refuses us with some vague talk about "permission from the national." Frank and I are pissed. He tries to rationalize the situation by saying the female manager is power hungry.

We will not be the last *Distractions*' team thrown out of Kroger's that night, but I'm proud to say we are the first.

DD

8:35

Pike House

Frank and I go into the frat house where there are several guys and one chick sitting on two couches watching guys beat the living daylight out of each other.

I feel like I've intruded on some sacred scene. These people are not very friendly, though the presence of a photographer around while they pummel each other may explain that. Me, I just want the hell out of here especially after a guy gets slammed into a wall and then shrugs it off like it didn't hurt. The poster for the Pike Fights says "Are you a man or a mouse?" but I'll settle for just being a human being. Too macho for me babe.

DD

8:37

Dell Junction

Every Wednesday night is "Win, Lose or Draw" night Deli style (which means no Vicki Lawrence, let alone Burt Convey). Everyone who participates can get a pitcher of beer for \$2, and if you guess 6 drawings you get a free pitcher.

If you're good at deciphering scribbled drawings and lines, you could have a pretty good night and lose that ability with the help of your winnings.

The best part of the whole thing is listening to the people: "Red, red, red foot, red shoe! The Man with one Red Shoe!"

Besides the fun of the game, the Deli also has great sandwiches and soup. But it's worth it just to meet

? p.m.

Somewhere on Campus

When my buddy Ranger Chris asked me to do a repeat performance in this most illustrious of publications, I was thrilled. Then Chris said to me, "Mike, the most important job goes to you. I want you to wander around campus aimlessly all night and tell us what happened." Oh joy, I thought, my big break. But I was willing to give it the old college try.

I left my humble abode at Smith Hall and started walking to Murphy Center. Along the way I passed three joggers, four squirrels and a dog. When reaching my destination I was told by a security guard that I was not to enter Murphy Center because there was a dress rehearsal for the Miss MTSU pageant going on. "Hi there," I said. "I am walking around aimlessly for *Distractions*." To which he replied, "Find your jollies somewhere else, fella." Well, so much for plan one.

Next, my tour led me to The Keathly University Center. Upstairs to the game room I went in my never ending search for adventure. I saw several people gathered around a video game called "Double Dragon." This is the most violent game I have ever witnessed. The object is to literally beat to death several men who have kidnapped your girlfriend. You, and your buddy if you use the two-player option, fight your way through Italians with knives, blacks with bats, and big green guys with big green fists using baseball bats, oil drums and boulders. That wouldn't be so bad except that in the end, when you and your partner find her, you have to fight each other to see who gets her. The perils of war, boys and girls.

Not much else happened at the game room. Tommy Davis, a freshman RIM major, lost a "loser-eats-a-booger" match in eight-ball against "Frezno" Jones, a sophomore psychology major.

Leaving the KUC I traveled to the tennis courts to see who was playing. A hot match was already in session between the "Champion of Time, Space, and Dimension" Vladd Johannes and "Mr. X." The stakes were high — a case of Schaefer Light. Mr. X won in straight sets. Vladd elected to take out the goalie.

On the way to my next destination I saw a group of Biology majors in black cloaks carrying wooden stakes and crosses toward Wood Hall. When questioned they mumbled something about vampires and devil worshipers among the living. What a bunch of happnin' fellas.

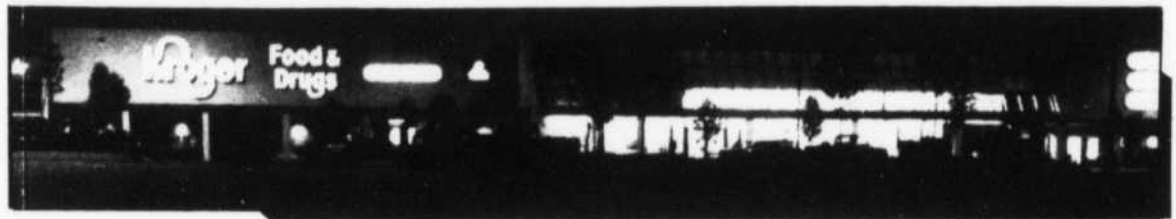
Next I went to the MTSU version of Mount Olympus, the only spot on campus in which one can see it all at once — the bench at the center of Peck Hall. It was late and I figured the natives would be restless. I was glad to have found a seat right in the middle. I waited. I waited again. I fed an insomniac squirrel. Then I gave up and went to Murphy Center again to interview some joggers or something.

Once there, I found only one jogger, an aged gentleman by the name of Roger Harris. He didn't have time to stop because he wanted to run eight miles before the ROTC people showed up. I noticed in his Walkman the world premiere album of a relatively new artist, Reginald P. Jarble. I asked if I might listen for a while.

What a performance! This guy could sing everything from "Beast of Burden" to "Eatin' Goober Peas." His voice very nearly danced over the speakers. I was almost in tears when I flipped the cassette and heard his incredible version of "Papa Don't Preach." It was the closest thing I have had to a religious experience in a while.

By now the morning sun was hurting my eyes so I trudged my way back to good ole Smith Hall and my long-awaited, much needed sleep. Perhaps tonight I'll go check out those vampire babes at Wood.

MR



Mike Johnson ● Staff

The Kroger on Tennessee Blvd., where four *Distractions* staffers were told they could not take photographs due to company policy and were asked to leave.

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people, or just to watch. And if you get good enough at "Win, Loose or Draw," maybe you can meet Burt Convey one day.

KD

8:42

Church of Christ N. Tennessee Blvd.

"Let us be uplifted in God's name," is the prayer as we walk in, trying to be as quiet as possible. When Sandy sets up her camera, the unfolding tripod legs sound like big sheets of aluminum being rolled down a hill. The camera shutter's long exposure clicks sound like an old elevator door.

In the back row, a boy and girl hold hands, a few people whisper but most keep their eyes up front. After a few minutes, the boy lets go and the girl puts her hands in the pockets.

It's been a cold day, mostly cloudy, though it cleared up towards late afternoon. About half the congregation, however, seems determined to pretend it still feels like spring, no matter what the reality of the temperature. They wear their post-Easter best and look fine until after the service when they cringe as they open the doors. The other half is still reconciled to the reality of the winds outside and still look winterized.

The hymn "Soul Winner for Jesus" begins, as a small girl starts to cry. Her mother tries to quiet her, then jerks her up with that motion familiar to all parents and children. She pulls her into the lobby and continues to stop the tears, first with reason then with threats, most of which include the phrase "wear you out." Finally she gives up, and they sit down in one of the two glassed-in rooms at the back of the church. From there they watch the rest of the service, while the girl goes from screams to sobs and finally to little gasped breaths.

The church is the only well-lit building we are in all night long and the two photographers with me, Sandy and Mike, take advantage of the situation. I stand in the back and try to be as inconspicuous as a man with a notepad in church can be.

As the hymn ends, there is a call for anyone "ready to make a change in their life." But no one comes forward and the service soon ends.

Nothing was declared. No one was saved. I just feel like I walked in on someone else's party.

After church, the congregation spills from the pews and halls into the lobby. They shake hands, nod heads and a few backs are slapped. Then they go out the doors, get in their cars and go into the night. And so do we.

CB

Frank Conley ● Staff



9:20

This Is a Test This Is Only a Test

You know those identical streets running rows between Mercury Plaza and the hospital that the discerning (read: white) driver doesn't journey through but around? Um-hum, the projects. They are desolate now, hardly anyone out at all.

On the back steps of a church, two ladies talk, framed in the arching glow of an overhead light.

From street to street, the silence is unchanging. Maybe it's too cold to be out and about. A jogger would say that the breeze is "brisk."

Notice to recreational psychopaths: In the 1988 Hit-and-Run Is Fun Handbook, the value of a bumpercrunched jogger has been upgraded to 25 points. Just sling the body on your hood and carry it to any validation station. This season's top scorer will receive a dinner for two with Geraldo (pronounced "ego tripper") Rivera catered by Chef Boyardee. Lucky guests will feed on hemlock and lithium with Rivera, who is serving a lifetime sentence at a maximum-security prison after being hoodwinked in a recent interview with Charles Manson.

Though Manson incessantly toys with his mustache and rants maniacally while serving as host of the "Geraldo" show, no one has detected a change. Possibly, this is due to the obfuscation of the swastika Manson carved on his forehead prior to his last appearance before a parole board. The aberration, which Manson swears is an acne scar, has been converted to a birthmark reading,

"Jello Biafra loves Gene and Jezebel" by Acadmey Award-winning makeup artist Rick Baker.

Sensing a shift in the facial fashion, Michael Jackson has apparently requested that a picture of his chimp "Bubbles" be tattooed on both right cheeks. Amidst the upheaval, Squeaky Fromme becomes a receptionist at the Betty Ford Clinic.

DS

9:30

Holiday Inn Holidome

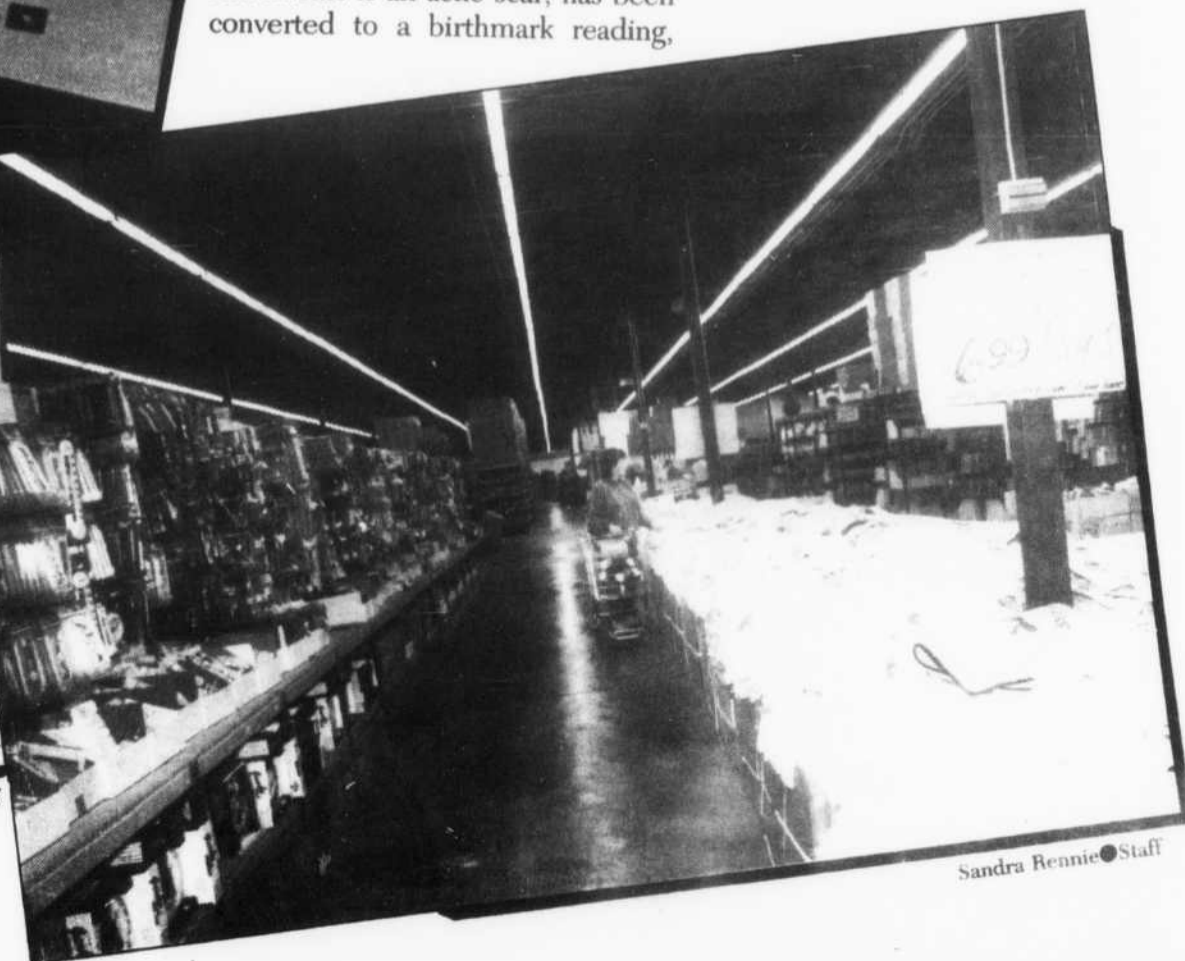
The Holidome smells like a combination of chlorine and donuts, probably because a pool and a restaurant occupy most of the space in the dome, which is actually more like a ill-lit, roofed-in lobby area. The "dome" is almost deserted, with one family in the exercise room, two guys in the pool (hot tub to be exact), three kids at a video game (Time Pilot, I think) and one very quiet family eating.

The family in exercise room is by far the friendliest dome inhabitant. They are the Shiplays, on their way back to Indiana from visiting relatives in Atlanta. Their three kids demanded to stop at a Holidome and here they are, taking full advantage of the modern exercise equipment. If you ever feel the American dream is dead, head to a Holiday Inn right now.

"Stop pedaling if you feel faint, dizzy or short of breath," is the copy on the Bally Lifecycle in the exercise room. As one Shiplay child rides the cycle, his younger sister keeps getting thrown off the treadmill, which is un-



Sandra Rennie ● Staff



Sandra Rennie ● Staff



Bill Steber ● Staff

derstandable since she's not quite tall enough to reach the controls to slow it down.

Over the speakers, Ray Parker Jr. then Carly Simon — Holidome muzack. Mike says the staff should come out here some time to have drinks. Only if I can bring some tapes for the intercom.

CB

9:41

Hobgood School

Close to Hobgood School, a young man is walking alone. As the window is rolled down on the churning Volkswagon, he stops apprehensively. There is no unalarming way to handle this. Man-on-the street interviews are typically conducted in neutral zones with the man on your street.

"Can we talk to you?"

"No." He begins to back away.

"No?"

"No."

That's over. He did as he should have, of course, which is a shame because he seemed like a nice guy.

DS

9:44

Time Saver Gulf Memorial Blvd.

This is the city. Murfreesboro, Tennessee. I work the night shift in a record store, getting people to rent movies no one else will watch. My name is Ridley. I wear a nametag.

I am sitting in Bill Steber's dove-gray 1985 Ford Escort, listening to the Butthole Surfers on his factory stereo. While noxious diesel fumes engulf the car, Bill and I begin our

preparations for the night ahead. After all, you don't just venture out into the 'Boro on a Wednesday night without at least two packs of beef jerky and the phone number of a medium-priced attorney.

The first thing to do is take stock of all tangible assets. While you don't need much money for a night on the town, you might need more than the three cents and orange guitar pick that constitute my cumulative wealth in the world at this moment. Luckily, I ran into Bill Steber, whose four-door Ford, Amoco gas card and six dollars in pocket change could easily be converted into liquid assets like cokes and bananas. By way of epic foreshadowing, I don't mind telling you that at the end of the night I still have my three cents. Bill does not fare so well.

The next step is to decide where to go. You don't want to go to any of the so-called "music clubs" in town. Mainstreet ceased being a good showcase for original music several years ago and now serves mainly as a discount meat market for drunken RIM majors. Jabb's, which used to make great chicken sticks but now serves frozen pizzas from the Pleiocene Era, is a breeding ground for second-rate heavy-metal guitarists. (This doesn't include Guillotine — don't ever change guys. E.J.'s is my personal favorite because it has great hamburgers, a decent pinball machine and better bands than anywhere else in town. But on a Wednesday night the mood just isn't right. (Occasionally Jabb's and Mainstreet will come up with a winner, but not as often as E.J.'s. If there's a decent band in

town, ask any of them if they've played at E.J.'s. It's like learning how to play "Smoke on the Water.")

That leaves you with a number of options. For awaiting you in the 'Boro is nothing less than the vast panorama of human experience, and most of this garden of earthly delights can be sampled for under fifty cents a shot.

JR

9:51

Memorial Blvd.

When last we met, Bill Steber was filling his car with diesel while we discussed what to do. We decided to wing it. We headed off down Memorial Blvd. in search of the Parking Lot Nomads.

See, when you're seventeen and bored in Murfreesboro, you have a limited number of options. You can get a bottle of Mad Dog for about four bucks and savor it on the merry-go-round at the Campus School Playground. You can go to Jabb's with your quasi-Hitlerjungen friends and play skinhead, 'cause it's the only club in town high school kids can go to. You can play pool at Gameland. You can get drugs: it's not that hard. Or you can be a Parking Lot Nomad.

They sit in pick-up trucks bearing Rebel flags and group their vehicles like a wagon train expecting a charge. KDF is the radio station of choice, 'cause it plays a steady stream of homogenized rock that talks about rebellion without actually being threatening. The Parking Lot Nomads sit out here along Memorial



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Bld. in clusters. Most nights they sit out and talk and hustle, and sometimes the group o'er in front of Curtis Mathes will holler over to the group in front of Maternity Dressware. Once I saw two groups pretending to stretch a rope across the street. They didn't seem to look at anything in particular.

They stay out until late at night, maybe 11 or 12, but tonight we don't see them. The wind is a little cold...the lots are empty. I hope they stayed inside because they wanted to.

Suddenly a black cat dashes across our path from the TSC parking lot. The cat looked Bill straight in the eye and then fled. "We ought to be sensitive to omens like this," Bill says.

JR

9:55

Town Square

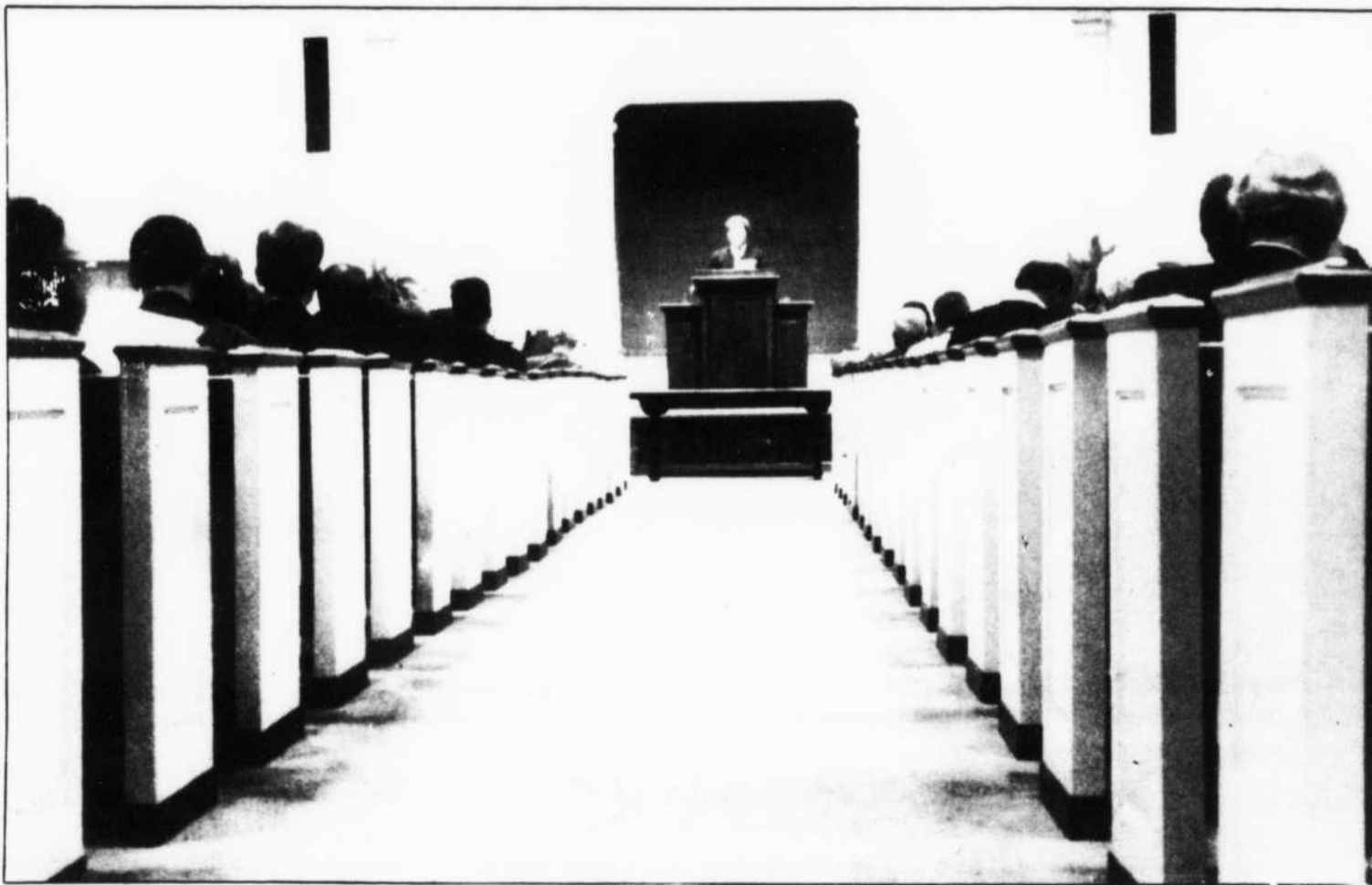
Similarly bucolic is the Square, where most stores are open from 5 to 7 a.m., though some iconcolasitic shopkeepers persevere until mid-morning or so. Activity here is a void; the energy level is null. Not even a shuffling wino to accost. A janitor waltzes into a building about a block towards Lytle, but he is too far away to pin down.

DS

9:58

Corner of Church and Main

Only a sculpture erected on the corner of Church and Main possesses a certain magnetism. Entitled "Figural Passage No.31984," it pre-



Sandra Rennie ● Staff

The congregation of the North Blvd. Church of Christ worships during their Wednesday night service.

sents a vision of mother and daughter, more svelte than the duo earlier discovered blockading seats at Toot's.

Crafted (Art is not a craft!) by the university's own Philip Vanderweg, the sculpture is sliced entirely from metal, ponytail and all.

A Nietzschean critic (though the last pure one disappeared with Hoffa, but we'll pretend) would likely categorize Vanderweg's work as Appolonian. The rigid casting of an intense and time-honored interfamilial relationship into a comprehensible and accessible structure connotes a surety of reason.

However, by titling his offering "Figural Passage," Vanderweg indicates an ongoing transformation of role that defies conventional ordering and thus satisfies the opposing Dionysian requirements for emotional rapture that is not subject to intellectualization.

When one apprehends the sideward bend of the daughter's affection toward her mother's presence, one realizes that the transformation is not haphazard but cyclic, and thus ordered. Vanderweg has fused the constructive and deconstructive forces, realizing that Appolonian reasonableness does not exclude Dionysian entropy.

But yes, it is art.

DS

10:00

Jabb's International Cuisine

Tonight, Jabb's is hot! The crowd is large and there's that unmistakable

club atmosphere.

Tables are scattered in the dark, with people standing against the wall or mingling with friends. Some hang around by the bar simply watching the band. Neon signs break the darkness and music echoes throughout

the whole building.

The singer of the opening band has the courtesy to remind the crowd of where they are, "you're not at Mainstreet, you're at Jabb's." Of course, if you've forgotten where you are, maybe its time to go home.



Wayne Cartwright ● Staff

Tommy, a waitress at Toot's, takes time off from Hula-Hooping to talk to a child.

After the opening band, "Cruel Blue," tonight's headliner, takes the stage and really rocks. The crowd enjoys the music and electricity generated by the band.

The great thing about Jabb's is that anyone can get in. If you're over 21 you receive a red stamp on the top of your hand; if you're not, no stamp. Of course, if you read the last issue of *Distractions*, you're familiar with this process.

Thanks to Jabb's, minors can at last join in night club life and not feel left out.

KD

10:05

Sigma Chi House

Another fraternity house. Frank and I enter the yard and follow the thump of "You've Got the Look." We find a gathering in the back of the house. There it is — the do it yourself disco, just add flashing lights, beer and loud music to your standard garage.

Suddenly, I am approached by three friendly guys asking me if I remember them, what I was doing and one wants to take me to dinner.

Hey, if this is what the Greek scene is all about then I'll take it.

Everyone merges for a group picture. Frank isn't hip to this, but it is a change of pace to see people so happy. "We haven't really gotten started yet," pledge Thad Johnston said. Yes, but this is where my evening ends.

DD

10:05

Buster's Place Murfreesboro Rd.

The first thing we hear when Bill and I walk through the door of Buster's Place is dead silence. The small group of people talking at the end of the bar under a dim ceiling lamp all grow still suddenly, as if we have interrupted a private conversation. There is a moment of uneasy silence, and then a deep, slightly raspy voice says, "Evenin' boys." And that is our introduction to Buster Pugh.

Buster sits at the bar that bears his name, joshing the waitress, Rhonda, and holding court over the small group of regulars left this late on a Wednesday night. Jars of eggs floating in jalapeno-flecked wine conjure an unsettling pre-natal image while Steve Earle videos play overhead on a color TV. A pinball machine clanks distantly in the corner, and the entire scene glows red with the saturnine neon countenance of Spuds Mackenzie, the Dionysus of the 80's, whose

eyes blaze with forced party mirth.

Bill and I walk into Buster's expecting a scene out of a spaghetti western, with people staring at us and measuring us for steak cuts. The truth is, however, that nobody pays much attention to us, despite Bill brandishing his camera at Rhonda as if it were an Uzi. And Buster is one cool guy, the kind who is real friendly but looks like you wouldn't want to cross him in a fight. He lets Bill take his picture wearing a pig-shaped Razorback helmet that hangs on the wall. Buster takes his place behind the bar, adjusts his snout and strikes a relaxed pose. "I can't tell the difference with that helmet," cracks one customer.

Bill buys a Bud Light, our first expenditure of the night (\$1.25) and we leave at about 10:40 with people laughing and telling us to come back any time. Buster's place is my favorite bar in town, and Buster is known across the state for his hamburgers, which don't cost more than about two-fifty and will make you think you've died and gone to Red Meat Heaven. We would have stayed longer, but we have promises to keep and Bill's \$4.25 to spend.

JR

10:18 Toot's Again

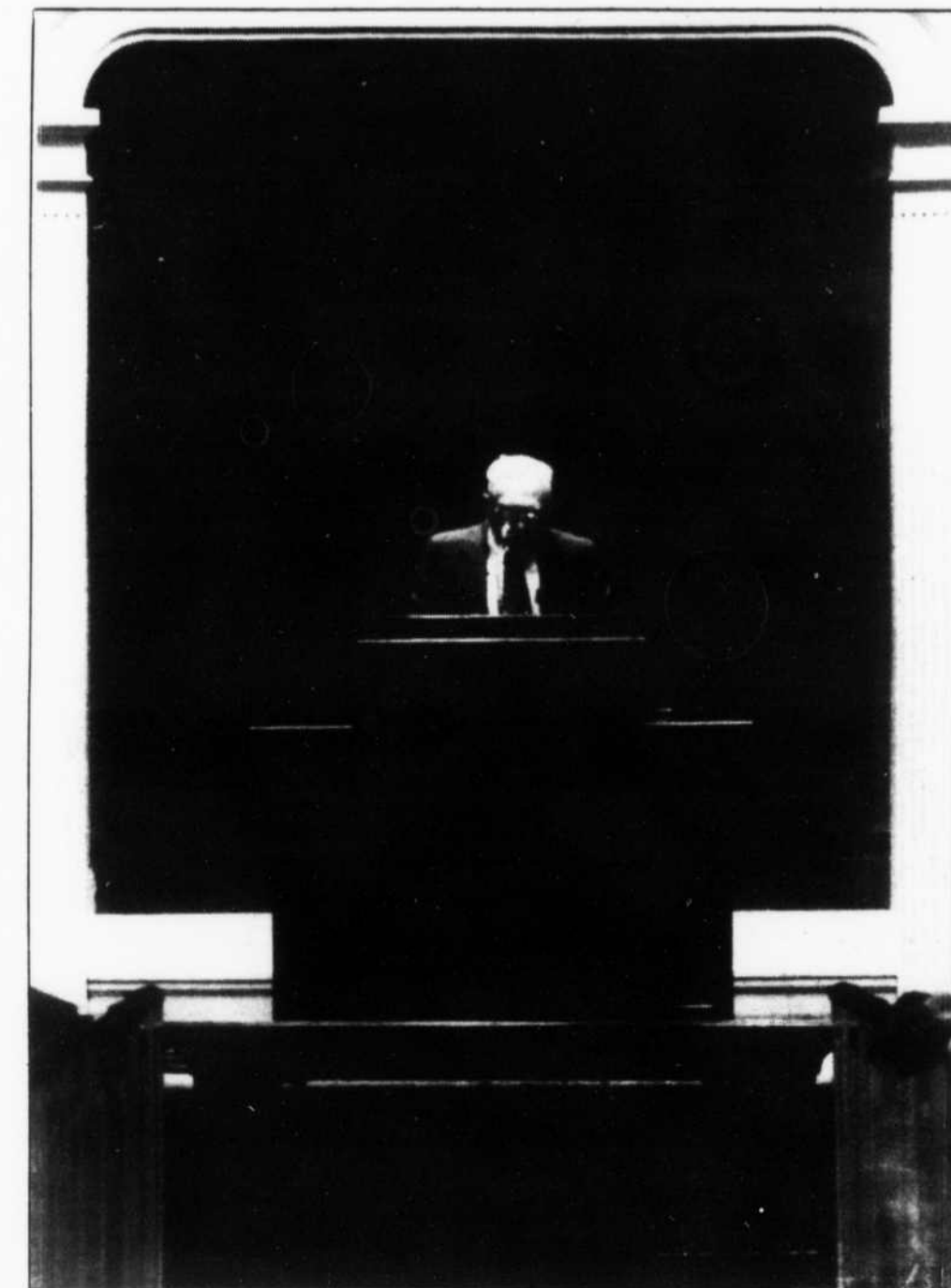
With less than an hour to go before closing, the crowd has thinned a tad. Some young ladies seated against the far wall are clamoring for a male Hula-Hooper, in particular, the manager.

Hula-Hooping is Toot's safe sex surrogate for the nude tabletop dancing that defines the clubs in Nashville's Printer's Alley. Acclaimed hoopster Sharon O'Brien is performing on a table for some guy from Wisconsin who said his name was Dan Norm.

Sharon, an accounting major says her life is "PARTY!" which sounds goofier in print than it does live, but rest assured, her commitment is firm. She likes the money but "I love the company. I love the environment." The environment is infused with pheromones as shellfish & sud-drenched patrons solicit waitresses for table-hooping.

All the waitresses, except the one with back problems, are required to Hula-Hoop, says Sharon. "If you don't know how, they give you one to take home until you learn," she reveals, laughing amid the tumult.

Persons skeptical of the ladies' talent be forewarned: Hula-Hooping is not the only prerequisite for a successful career at Toot's. "You've got



North Blvd. Church of Christ

Sandra Rennie●Staff

to know how to waitress," Sharon insists. "Otherwise, customers will cuss at you."

For Sharon, Hula-Hooping is a family ritual. "My mother is an expert. She can Hula-Hoop from her neck to her waist down to her knees and back up. She Hula-Hoops sexy, too. I've had her on a table in here."

Beyond their reputation for Hula-Hoopla, Toot's incidentally serves food. Oysters are the instrument of choice for those attempting botulism. (Not to say that their appetizers are worse than any others. Just talk to the kitchen staff at Shoney's).

Their "seafood salad" is a euphemism for a quasi-shrimp concoction plopped on a leaf of lettuce. It's good anyway, but it lacks the appeal of their premiere entree: Buffalo Style Chicken Wings.

For those with a barbecue sauce fetish and/or cholesterol addiction, the 15¢ chicken wings are irresistible. "We're here for the chicken wings," admits Tom Leatherwood and Rhonda Jones, regulars at the emporium. When you see the wingspan, though, you realize why Toot's can

afford to charge the same fee for pitchers of Bud or Michelob. (\$3.95 (half-price if you bring in a picture of Marlon Brando. Free if you produce a shot of Chris Elliot doing Brando)).



Buster and Rhonda at the bar at Buster's.

Bill Steber●Staff

Ms. Jones will say only that, "It's cold outside," when responding to what strikes her in particular about Murfreesboro.

Leatherwood bypasses the query, noting sweetly, "I'm just glad she decided to come here with me."

Originally from Memphis, Leatherwood believes Toot's is tops in Murfreesboro, though it does not compare with Shelby County's finest.

Nothing in downtown Memphis closes at 11," he sighs, fondly recalling famed clubs like Silky Sullivan's and Captain Bilbo's.

Memphis clubs, legend has it, serve mixed drinks in 55-gallon drums brimming with toxic waste and gin.

"Close," Leatherwood observes. "One of them comes in a gallon paint bucket filled with Mad Dog 20-20 and P.G.A. A friend and I split three of those one night. I woke up the next morning with an empty keg of beer in my room that we must have picked up from somewhere on the way home."

Sharon drops by. "Is there anything else you want to know about me?"

"Is there anything else we should know about you?"

Perhaps not. Dan Norm is gone now, but Tom and Rhonda remain; she sits patiently quiet.

"I wonder how much trouble I could get her in," Tom muses. "You see, she's actually got a boyfriend here." He hisses as he draws out the obscenity boyfriend for emphasis.

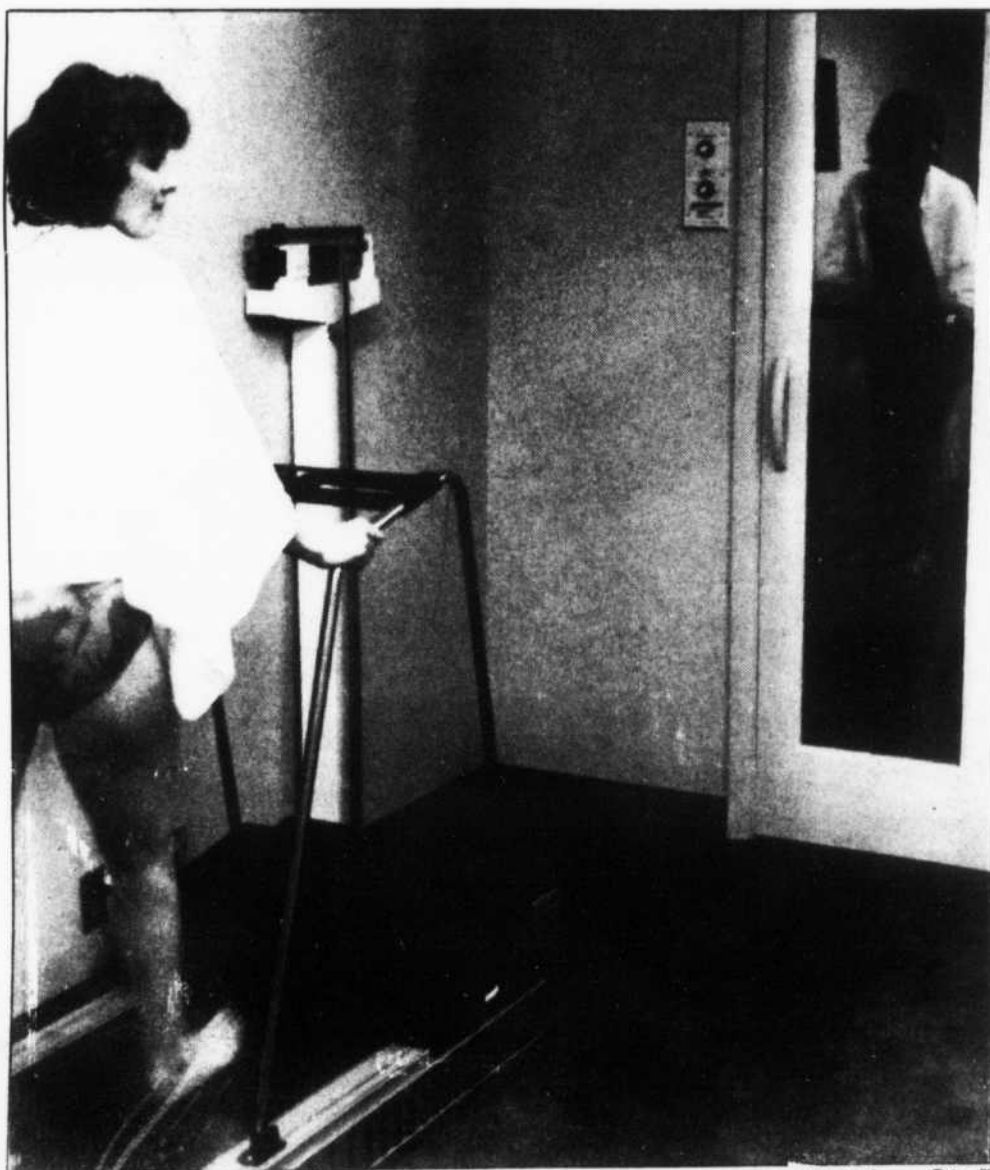
"I've been hesitating to tell you. She just broke up with him. He's very much the jealous type."

As they pose for pictures to rub someone's nose in, Rhonda provides a single word summation of Murfreesboro. "Boring." Ahhh, she doesn't mean it.



Tim, a bartender at Mainstreet, mixes a mean one.

Helen Comer●Staff



Pam Shiplay tests the exercise equipment at the Holiday Inn Holidome.

Mike Johnson●Staff

Platinum-blond waitress Tess ("I hate my last name") Brown says she wasn't named after the book.

"I heard she was a big ole' porno star."

Thomas Hardy's Tess was not quite the equal of the heroine in the Roman Polanski film, which this Tess has in mind.

On some nearby stools sit a pair of way off-duty cops (at least one of the waitresses said they were cops) looking like landlocked versions of beachcombers. They are nice guys, seemingly, but they "are not drunk," they insist emphatically. Is it true all cops become Irish?

Relax, guys. Officers of the law sometimes develop a phobia that they are not allowed to act like everybody else in contemporary society simply because they wear a uniform part of the time. Don't worry about it.

DS

10:45 p.m.

Uncle Sandy's Fireworks Shelbyville Rd.

In spring, a young man's fancy turns to firing bottle rockets out of the open windows of his car. Bill and I are above such juvenillia, of course, but that doesn't stop us from checking out the scene at Uncle Sandy's Fireworks, Murfreesboro's primo teenage ammo dump.

I feel obliged to relieve Bill of some of his money, so he and I search the aisles for the most firepower available for your entertainment dollar. We nearly come to blows over the Plum Flower and the Spinning Silver Dragon, both of which emit showers of multicolored sparks, but eventually we settle for the sleek design and homespun simplicity of the Screaming Moon Travlers, which come in big packages for 49 cents. Of course, leaving without a Colored Smoke Ball (15¢) and a Double Parachute Shell (55¢) would be unthinkable and we don't want Uncle Sandy to take us for a couple of pikers, so Bill assembles our purchases on the counter like any red-blooded American pyromaniac. We wave to the police car parked under a streelight as the radio at Uncle Sandy's blares "Naughty Girls Need Love Too." We vow to keep this in mind.

JR

10:51

Garden Plaza Hotel

I could live in hotels — cable television, room service, your bed is made for you and there's always a coke machine down the hall. But the difference between a good hotel and a

great one is in the lobby.

I like the Garden Plaza, but the lobby is mostly empty, except for some plants, thus the name "Garden Plaza." Off to the side is a bar/restaurant that appears empty, which is understandable at this late hour.

But somewhere, there are still people ready to break the dateline barrier.

CB

11:00

Toot's — One Last Time

Toot's is officially closed. "Tell it again," somebody says. Tess is spinning tales over by the bar. "I think it was a Friday night," she begins. "Two nights after the hole was shot in the window." Nobody knows who the marksman was. "Chesney's got it too."

Anyway, "there was a guy and a girl in the ladies restroom just screwing away."

What?

"...just screwing away. One of the waitresses came out and told me. We just passed the word. The whole place knew about it. And they're in ther just screwing away. Our manager had to go in there and tell 'em to quit."

They were what?

"When they walked out, everybody clapped and screamed and everything else. The girl was hiding around the corner but she had to come out. Finally she walked out and said 'I didn't do nothing!' It was two people from MTSU."

Just whating what?

"The guy came out with a big ole' smile on his face."

"Big ole'" are unusual words coming from a New Jersey native, but Tess is a RIM major and country music songwriter, so the phrasing is understandable.

She has written over a hundred songs. "I'm about to get published. The song to me sounds like the Sweetharts of the Rodeo."

DS

11:11 p.m.

24-Hour Laundry Behind Kroger on S. Tennessee Blvd.

Like it or not, sooner or later you will end up spending your precious Wednesday night doing laundry some place like the 24-Hour Laundry, one of Murfreesboro's many all-night coin-op laundries that caters to college students.

On this particular night, the only people present are a middle-aged black couple with several baskets of wet clothes and the owner/manager, who reads a *Daily News Journal* section headlined "Good food, good memories." The wind whips the glass

door open and shut like the gate on a ghost-town saloon.

The middle-aged man's name is Gus. He wears a Vita-Moor Supplies Inc. hat, a work shirt, overalls and a denim jacket. He packs wet laundry into a dryer while a ceiling fan ticks overhead. He lives in the Blackman community and says he has been doing his laundry here for years with his wife, who doesn't want her picture taken. "Don't want my picture taken like this," she says, adjusting her hair rake and fingering her pink blouse.

Gus, however, finally agrees to a picture. He stands by the dryer, arms folded and when the flash goes off he smiles. He leans back against the counter and settles there to watch the clothes go around. A row of potted plants wave under the blades of the ceiling fan. When we leave at 11:34, the door still snaps in the cold wind.

JR

11:20

Outside Now

Toot's is now really, truly, officially closed. By the time everyone gets home, David Letterman will be re-running, thanks to the writer's strike. All the streets are slow and quiet. No ambulances, sirens or other emergency paraphenalia.

You might say it's just everyday living; boring and cold, pizzazzless. That's life, you know? Which is to say it isn't life, at least not until morning.

DS

11:42 p.m.

Davis Food Mart

Bill Steber and I are in the midst of a raging philosophical battle. Bill says that he likes "Southern Man" better than "Sweet Home Alabama." I chalk this up to his callow youth and inexperience and am about to whomp him one when suddenly we feel a powerful presence drawing us closer. What is mortal man to do, I ask you, in the presence of the geographical center of the universe?

Yes, friends, Bill and I are sitting outside Davis Food Mart.

Legend has it that once upon a time, some holy men wandered into Davis Food Mart, which is not exactly the best place to go looking for either saviors or virgins. These visionaries attempted to buy Davis Food Mart, the story goes, because their calculations showed that the produce section was in fact the geographical center of the universe, known conduit for good vibes. Unmoved by their theological geometry, the powers that be at Davis Food Mart are said to have politely

but firmly refused their offer. Whether or not the legend is true, Davis Food Mart offers an unmistakable aura, a cross between purgatory and a Piggly-Wiggly.

Davis Food Mart is not the cleanest place on earth. It's one of those places you don't want to enter unless you're wearing a body condom. Everything is covered with a fine and undisturbed layer of dust, as if you are looking through dirty contact lenses. The shelf-life of a package of Lady Macbeth beans, for example, can probably be ascertained only with the help of carbon-14 dating. But nobody goes to Davis Food Mart for food.

The attraction of Davis, instead, lies in its clutter. Buried within the recesses of the store, are ancient 12" black-and-white TV sets, Donny Osmand albums, wicker butterflies, sombreros and a crossbow.

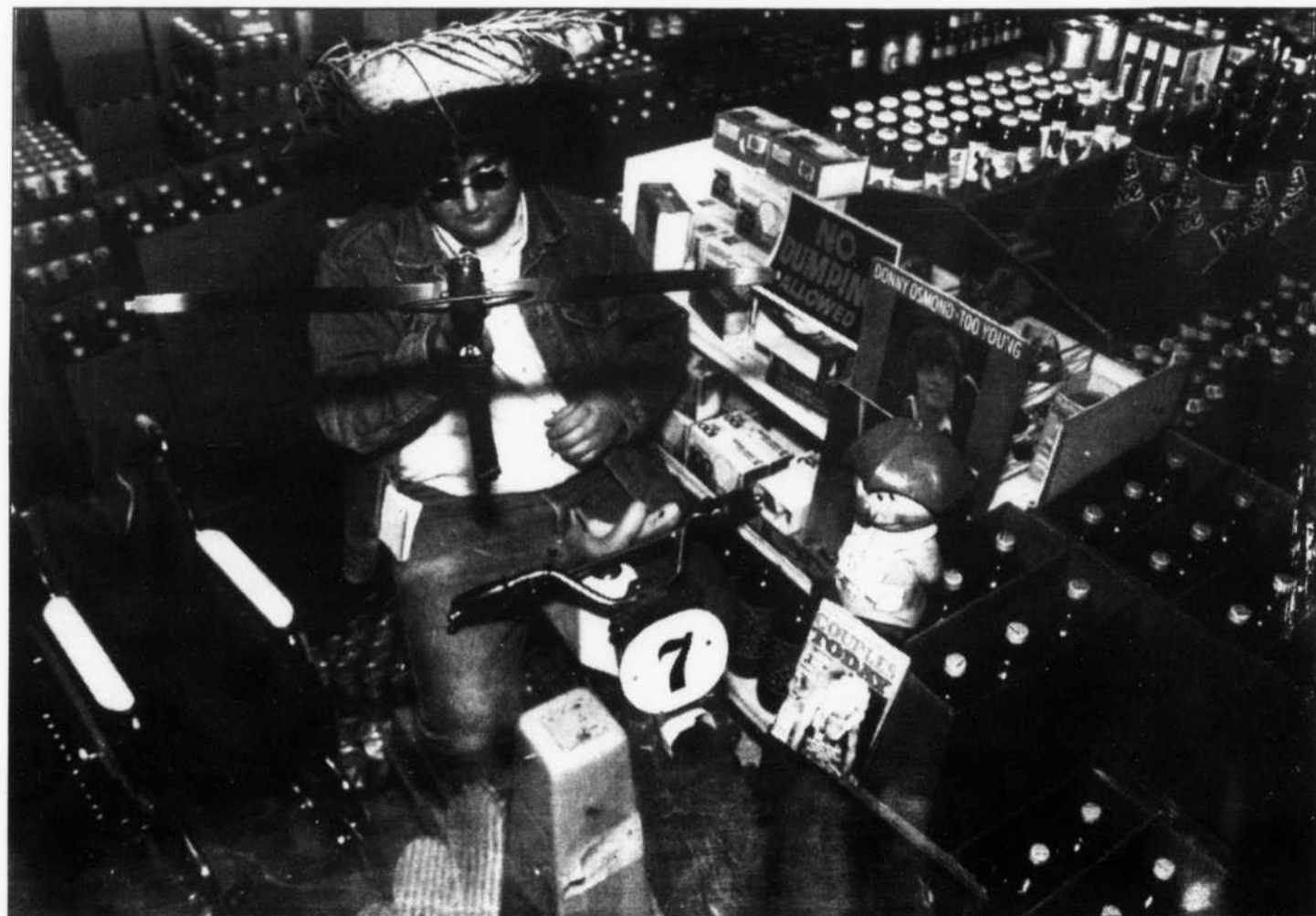
"It's for hunting deer," the man behind the cash register explains.

And the magazine rack is a world unto itself. "Feel my sticky panties," trumpets the strumpet on the cover of *Intimate Acts* magazine, while a publication titled *Family Affairs* promises "loving experiences of a different kind." Don't look at these literary triumphs, however, unless you are prepared to pay \$1.00, a sign Scotch-taped to the rack proclaims. "Don't Break Open \$5.99 Pack Magazines," cryptically reads another sign. "If You Do You'll Buy — including the WEINIE." I wasn't about to ask what the "WEINIE" was, but I suspect I



Helen Comer ● Staff

A member of Cruel Blue sings to all ages at Jabb's International Cuisine.



Bill Steber ● Staff

Jim Ridley shops at the Davis Food Mart.



Nighthawks at the Krystal.

Bill Steber ● Staff

could find the answer in *Kinks* magazine, provided I want to pay a dollar for the knowledge. A well-thumbed copy of *Chic Letters* sits next to a weather-beaten paperback whose tattered cover announces "Novels for the New Woman." Other Davis Food Mart bestsellers include *Flame of Fiji*, a self-help book entitled *The Language of Sex, Power and Aggression* that has somehow ended up in a rack with last month's *Outlaw Biker* and *On God's Squad*, "the true story of Norm Evans."

Late Wednesday night is a time of solitude for Davis Food Mart. While the rest of the world attends a luau at the 'Boro or mixes something with Steve Jones in the basement of the JUB, the store is quiet except for a periodic burst of gunfire from a *Gunsmoke* rerun. In the forty-odd minutes Bill and I are there, only a couple of customers come in, but the exchange of banter between them and Ronnie, the cashier, clearly indicates they are regulars. Ronnie regards us with only slightly more interest than Festus at first, but when Bill and I start rummaging around in a stack of dusty hats, he is more than happy to help Bill drag a wheelchair out of the old produce section.

We buy a banana (38¢) and leave, but not before Bill gets some pictures. About the situation detailed in the picture, I will say only that it is the most embarrassing thing I have ever done, except for the time I tried to bowl overhand, or the time I almost fell into an open grave trying to catch an English adjunct sunbathing. But that's another story.

Oh, by the way, Elizabeth Anderson, your wallet is at Davis Food Mart. Ronnie says you're a regular, but I won't tell anyone. Promise.

JR

11:45 Mainstreet

Every time I've been to Mainstreet, people were standing next to the bar (this way you don't have to walk too far) and crowding the dance floor. The band is good and loud enough to make your ears ring for the next couple of days.

Tonight, however, is an exceptionally rare night at Mainstreet — for the simple fact that nothing is happening. Usually packed with people and reverberating with music, it is practically empty and devoid of music.

KD

12:05 Domino's

Mike and I ride out to the airport, where we find a couple of guys in a side building getting prank phone calls. Not a lot of planes coming into Murf-town at 11:30.

Then we're kicked out of Kroger. The manager says "somebody from *Sidelines* was already here and we told her that you have to have permission a day in advance." He escorts us to the door. The next day I bounce a \$10 check there that will end up costing me \$46 by the time it clears. Barney Kroger can burn in hell.

I guess there's only one place glad to see college students after the day changes.

At midnight, there's single man working at Dominos. But he's working like a demon. This doesn't make sense until several men and women in those cute little Domnios hats (which actually gives you hat head — where your hair looks like it's been mashed down for life) come in, grab pizzas and cokes and run back out the door.

The pizza maker is Tommy Vaughter who not only works fast, but talks fast too. They ought to hire him for a Federal Express commercial.

I've always wondered if they serve anchovies, but felt stupid asking. Not tonight.

"Yes, we do. I don't know why, though," Tommy says. No fish pizzas tonight. Peperonni is the most popular topping. But no pineapple.

The place smells like, like, well, not pizza; more like dough but still with something else added. But I had a couple of Krystal's a few hours ago, and it will be a while until I'm hungry again.

CB

12:28 a.m. Krystal's, Broad Street

Pushing open the door to Krystal's, the major exponent of the late-night fast-food experience in Murfreesboro for people with only a handful of change to their name, Bill immediately identifies the music wafting through the restaurant like Airwick as the garden-variety Muzak found in Private Screenings videos. I compliment Bill on this aesthetic detective work and con him into buying me a Krystal hamurger with onions and extra mustard. This costs 38¢. (The number 38, you may have noticed, has been a motif throughout the evening. Just checking to see if you're awake.)

Our other companions in the restaurant at the moment are a yoke of frat kids who look at my hair and snicker and a gaggle of young frost-tipped beauties we classify as Whitecaps. Whitecaps are a variety of sorority chicks indigenous to late-night hamburger places and multi-level shopping malls. They venture outside the nest alone rarely, but travel extensively in flocks of five or six abreast, usually in an armada of late-model Buick sedans. Whitecaps sport pink breasts accentuated with ruffles and frills trimmed in blazing secondary colors and the presence of men with cameras, especially while eating, sends them hurriedly into flight.

The frat oxen seem rather displeased that we have hastened the Whitecaps' departure, but they clam up when Bill starts pointing his camera at them, timid creatures that they are. They leave shortly thereafter, leaving Bill and I to plan some exterior photos. Bill ostentatiously gathers his photo equipment for the benefit of a pretty cashier, and I check the Krystal box to see if it qualifies for the Wet, Wild and Win Contest. No dice. So Bill and I walk to the door and step out into the chill of a late Murfreesboro evening.

Then things get weird.

JR

12:57 a.m. Krystal's parking lot Broad Street

Bill Steber and I are standing in the middle of the all night Krystal's drive-in lane, dodging traffic with a camera tripod. My bright idea is to simulate Edward Hopper's painting *Nighthawks* with the Krystal's exterior. We are both rather winded, having miraculously escaped death at the hands of a gang of *Sidelines* hoodlums joyriding in a Volkswagen.

I am hollering some incoherent instructions to Bill when we hear singing. We turn and are face to face with a paunch middle-aged man and his gaunt companion.

"Name's Roy Clark, buddy," the paunchy man says.

"Oh, and you must be Buck Owens," Bill says to his friend.

"Heh heh, naw," says the gaunt friend.

"See, you boys got to put some feeling into this," Roy Clark says. "Now here's someone you boys probably never even heard of — Roy Orbison."

"Hey, man, I know Roy Orbison," Bill says, and the two immediately lurch into a version of "Crying" replete with Wayne Newton choreography and a climatic falsetto squeal that would shatter bullet-proof glass.

Please bear in mind that Krystal's is the late-night hang-out for Murfreesboro cops on the graveyard shift, and indeed parked at the entrance to the lot is a Murfreesboro patrolman who measures us for hose lengths. Roy Clark, however, is the kind of consummate entertainer who must perform no matter what the circumstances, and he works his audience, which has swelled to three, with the skill of a pro.

"You folks are beautiful and I mean I'm really into you, I really am," Roy croons to a red-eyed student, who's jaw drops in disbelief. "You boys sure know a lot about good music to be so



Mike Johnson ● Staff

young."

"Hey, I like all that music," Bill replies. "You know, Roy Orbison, Elvis Pres-"

"ELVIS!!!" Roy invokes the name with evangelical fervor. "You're talking now." He swivels his hips to the amazement of the red-eyed student and Bill and launches into a solo. "If yuh lookin' fuh truhble..."

"Ba-DAH-da-duh-DAH," sings Bill.

"...then yuh come to tuh right place."

"Ba-DAH-da-duh-DAH," sings Bill.

By now, Roy is channeling the spirit of Elvis through his convulsing body and running through side one of *King Creole*. The effect, with a new fragment of song issuing every ten seconds, is like being trapped in some nightmare K-Tel commercial in Hell. Listen as Roy performs these Elvis Presley classics as only he can:

"Little Sister": "...don'chuh do whuhcho beeg sistuh duhn..."

"Love Me Tender": "...luhv me troo..."

"In the Ghetto": "...poah li'l baybuh chile's boan ihnigetto..."

Call now and you receive these free instructions on how to be an Elvis impersonator from Roy: "Okay, now you do this," — he shakes his hips to the uh-huh-huhs of some phantom Jordanaires — "then you get this going," — he pumps his hand in time — "and then you give 'em **this**."

He unleashes the full fury of—yes!—the Elivs sneer, hiking up his lip until his mouth forms an isosceles triangle. He and Bill then join in for

a reprise of "Oh Pretty Woman." Mercy.

Suddenly Roy/Elvis turns to me and puts his ham-sized arm around my shoulders. I look into his eyes, and all of a sudden I know what is coming, as inevitable as plastic cutlery at a church picnic. Roy/Elvis gazes philosophically into my eyes, and then, voice resonant with the wisdom of the ages, man to man, he solemnly intones:

"And now...the end is near...it's time to face...tuh finuhl curtuhan..."

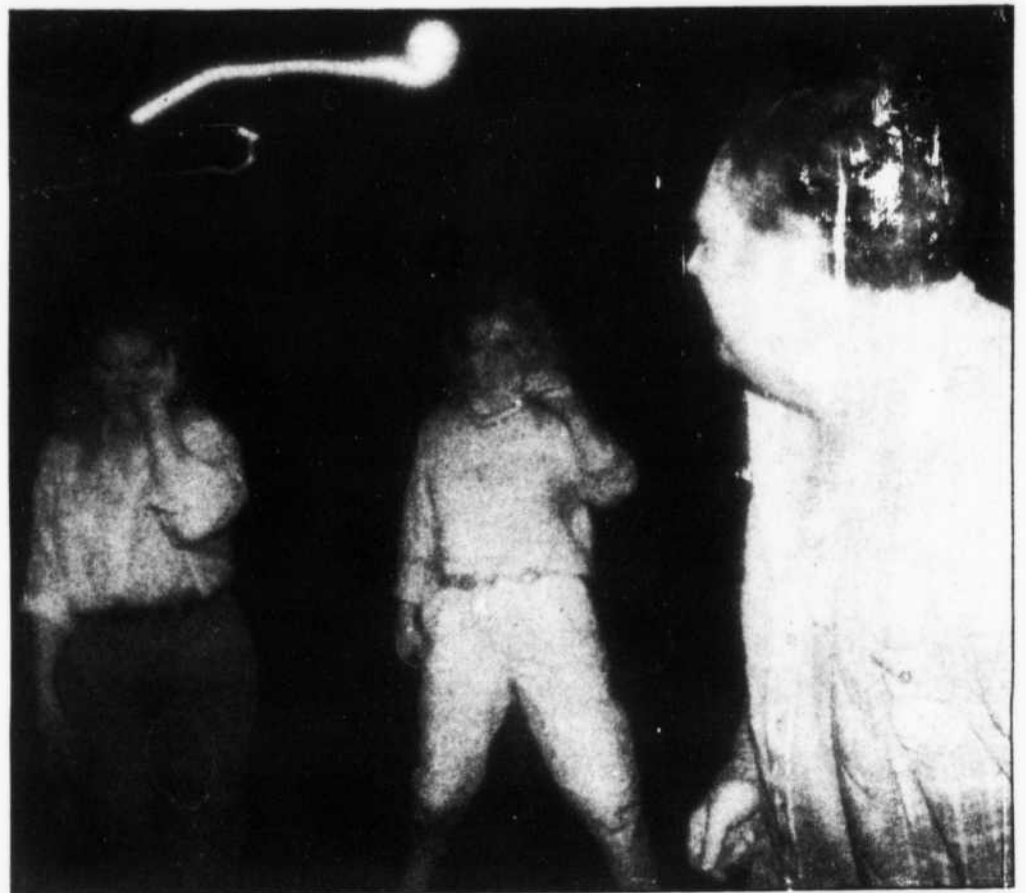
Roy/Elvis turns his gaze heavenward, addressing the Big Guy upstairs. He is beyond us now, just man and His Maker in the Krystal's parking lot, and he enfolds Bill and me in his embrace, the King leaving his flock. He raises his fist to the sky, and Bill and I can not help but be swept along on this wave of Pentecostal emotion. Before I even realize what I am saying I clench my fists and shout:

"For what is a man...what has he got..."

Bill is howling like a cat at the moon:

"...I did it up...and I did it down..."

We are transcendent, no longer ourselves, three souls joined in the King, the blood-cleansing soul of the King, getting real, *real* gone for a change. Roy/Elvis and Bill and I stand in the Krystal's parking lot at two in the morning, oblivious to the stares of policemen and waitresses, shaking our fists and sneering and pumping our hands, until we shout in defiance at the whole of the sky and downtown Murfreesboro:



Roy Clark performs for two late-night visitors to Krystal.

Bill Steber ● Staff

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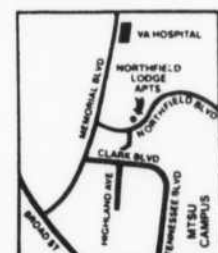
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Bill Steber ● Staff

"And this...much more than this I...did...it...mieeeeeeee ...waaeeeeeeeeee!"

And with that, Roy Clark disappears into the Krystal's to try picking up a married woman from Florida at the counter, thus ending another Drama in Real Life.

JR

1:25
Hwy 96

On the way back to Franklin where I live (do you think I'd be driving to Franklin at 1:30 if I didn't live there?), the road is deserted. I forget to wear my seatbelt, until I see the sign at Green's Autos that says "Buckle Up." It's a little foggy and the yellow lights from the sign are visible over the hill,

looking like a halo.

I started the trip back thinking about tonight and listening to the radio. But my back right speaker is fuzzing out and I've thought about this project all day long. Enough.

Everything tonight seems so separate and unconnected. I want a representative picture of Murfreesboro, but there doesn't seem to be one. To tame this diversity I'd need as many writers and photographers as there are people in this town. But isn't diversity a good thing?

From the air, by glider or small plane, the land around Murfreesboro starts to fit into the landscape around it. The Stones River empties into Percy Priest, highways run to the horizon, neighborhoods settle into geometric patterns and clearings and woods alternate below you.

Even farther up, the landscape blends and bends out of focus. It doesn't matter how you see things on the ground, here only rivers or forests or urban areas stand out. The rest fades.

And as I drive home, only able to see the road in front of me, the events of the day and the people I've seen and the places I've been and all the other cliches I could use to describe my travels fade into the darkness behind me.

People are getting ready for bed, watching others sleep, making love, fighting, crying, drinking, digging around in refrigerators, wondering

how they'll pay the rent, listening to the radio, watching television, reading, working on reports, smoking cigarettes, getting stoned, driving around, talking about the future, thinking about the past, putting the cat outside, swabbing antiseptic on a cut, brushing teeth, washing clothes and mostly just sleeping.

But I'm starting to sound like a Moody Blues record.

It's very late and I'm a little hungry. There's a bed ahead and maybe something left over from dinner. I'm here and that's there, though, and there's a long way between the two.

CB

2:15 a.m.

**Monument to the Geographical Center of Tennessee
Old Lascasass Pike.**

The evening had come to an end, and, as Thoreau decided after he got sick of incinerating the woods around Walden Pond, the time had come to take final stock of our expenditures:

Bud Light
Buster's Place
1.25

Screaming Moon Travelers,
Uncle Sandy's Fireworks
.49

Colored Smoke Ball,
Uncle Sandy's Fireworks
.15

Double Parachute Shell,
Uncle Sandy's Fireworks
.55

Banana,
Davis Food Mart
.38

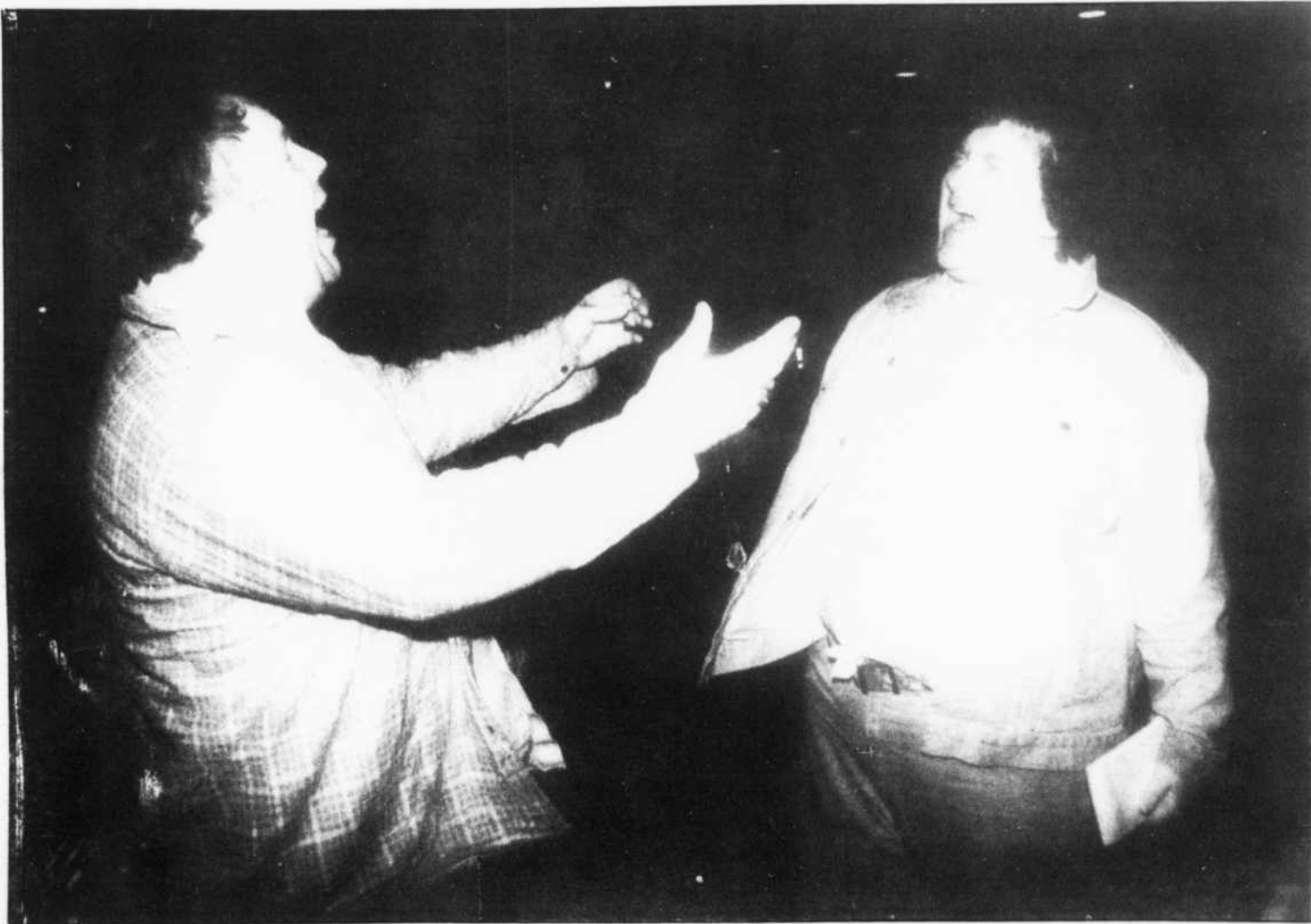
Hamburger,
Krystal's
.38

Sales tax
.25

TOTAL
\$3.45

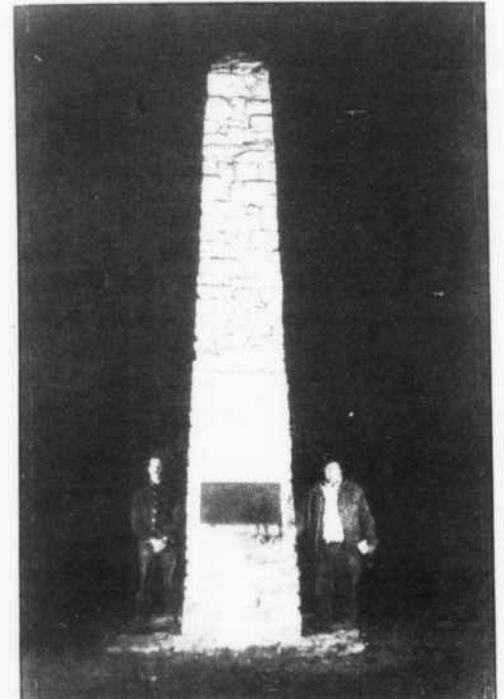
Bill and I still had a few bottle rockets left, and we planned to rouse a certain balding professor of English with a few well-aimed demonstrations of firepower capability. However, we were mellow with the night's journey, and we settled for mimicking his speech pattern in front of Murphy Center before coming to the Flat Rock Monument at the center of Tennessee.

Words so seldom adequately convey the sum and total of an experience. We had survived yet another night in the life of Murfreesboro, Tennessee. Some deeply symbolic yet inexpensive gesture was called for. So Bill Steber and I, Jim Ridley, set the remnants of a half-eaten 38¢ banana and a Double Parachute shell at the base of the monument, lit the fuse and ran like hell. The time was 2:38



Bill Steber ● Staff

Roy Clark and Jim Ridley partake in the spirit of the King, Elvis Presley, R.I.P.



Bill Steber ● Staff

a.m. in this quietest of Thursday mornings, and we were exhausted.

And still I felt like shouting: MTSU grads, learn your trade! Sing whatever's not well-paid! Work all night on a drink of rum! Life is what you make of it.

And this, much more than this, I did it my way.

JR

Letter from the Editor

This is a little unexpected.

There was only supposed to be one issue of *Distractions* this semester. While no one held up their lighters and yelled "Free Bird," there was enough popular support to convince me, and, more importantly, Tony Stinnett to try another issue. As you may have noticed by now, there is only one story in this issue. In addition, there are major changes in the masthead and design. That's part of the freedom I hope will be part of *Distractions*. Another change is the number of "outside" writers on this issue. One of my primary goals with this magazine is to attract writers who need an outlet besides the traditional campus publications.

This is a start.

I put more work into this issue than any other project in my life, but since my bid for godhood fell short, I needed help. And I got it. Jim Ridley and Bill Steber are the heart and soul of this issue; publishing their work makes this worthwhile.

Doug Stults, Sandra Rennie, M.A. Brown, Howard Ross, Mike Johnson, Marla Osburn, Mike Reed, Kathy Slager, Jackie Solomon and especially Hugh Shelton, Deirdre Davis and Laurie Jobe Watts can all say "And I helped."

I'd also like to thank the folks at Warner Communications for making cable television a reality and Dr. Pemberton for inventing Coca-Cola, the official non-alcoholic drink of *Distractions*.

The idea for this issue came to me while I was sitting on Uncle Dave Macon's gravesite, eating Pope Taylor's Bar-B-Q and drinking a quart bottle of Budwiser, the official beer of *Distractions*.

Obviously, it's a rip-off—parody—deconstruction—tribute to the popular "Day in the life of..." books.

But more than that, it's an attempt to capture why this town is different from any other. Elsewhere in this issue, I talk about photographers stealing souls.

I'm not kidding.

While doing this issue, we managed to glimpse both the mundane and that which surpasses all understanding. And we've tried to bring it all back home.

If you look at Murf-town a little differently next time you're out, well, maybe we did our jobs.

And isn't that what they call art?

Naaaaaaaaa.

Chris Bell, Editor—10:08 p.m., 4/25/88



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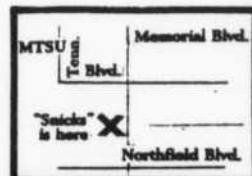
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