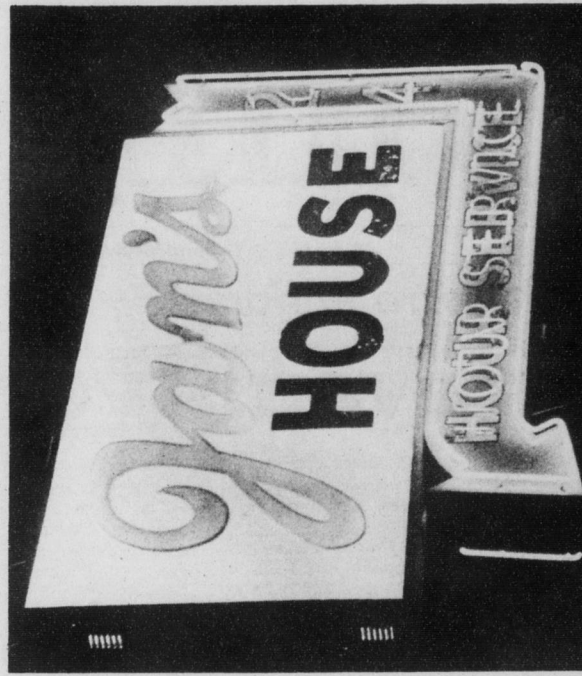


Bill, sporting a new look and sans beard, presses the burger patties with his flying flipper.



Nighthawks

By Brian Carey
Photos by Buzz Nail

11:22

The meager offerings of the night's earlier meal having been digested, hunger awakes, bringing with it thoughts of steak and eggs, cheese omelettes, and cream waffles. The night studier arises, grabs the set of keys from the dresser, and heads for Tom's.

Scene: Tom's room, where Tom and company discuss impending tests and the value of education amidst the characteristic aroma of a mellow evening. From school, the topic switches to the meaning of stomach rumbles and how to cure the midnight munchies. A knock, and the group departs to follow their instincts.

Across town, a wild bash breaks up and a few battered partiers head off in search of a sobering cup of coffee and a companion for the vanquished case of Bud.

To the uninitiated, Jan's House (affectionately known as Jan's) is an all-night diner on Market Street, sporting a plain neon sign and encircled by parked cars. To the experienced, Jan's is a panacea, a savior, an activity, a tradition.

A look inside reveals none of these things. Luckily, the diner has arrived between rushes, and seats himself at a typical counter. Salt and pepper shakers, napkin holders, catsup bottles, sugar containers, creamers, and menus line the counter in groups.

A quick wipe with a towel, and the counter is ready for a glass of ice water. The steady customer knows what he wants; Master Burger Plate rolls off his

Master burgers are all in a row, in various stages of make-up: lettuce, onions, and tomato await the hot patties. Bill deftly sprinkles cheese on an omelette and greases the griddle from the butter kettle.

The toaster pops and with two motions the toast is buttered and sliced. Awaiting their doses of batter, two waffle irons sit to the side, lids open. An order is ready; with a speed approaching that of light Bill delivers it to the dazzled customer.

To the famished, speed is essential. Daintily savoring the eggs on the plate is reserved for state dinners; at Jan's, intake velocity is what counts.

Could I have some more coffee, please? Thanks. Could you pass the catsup over here?

at the diner