

features

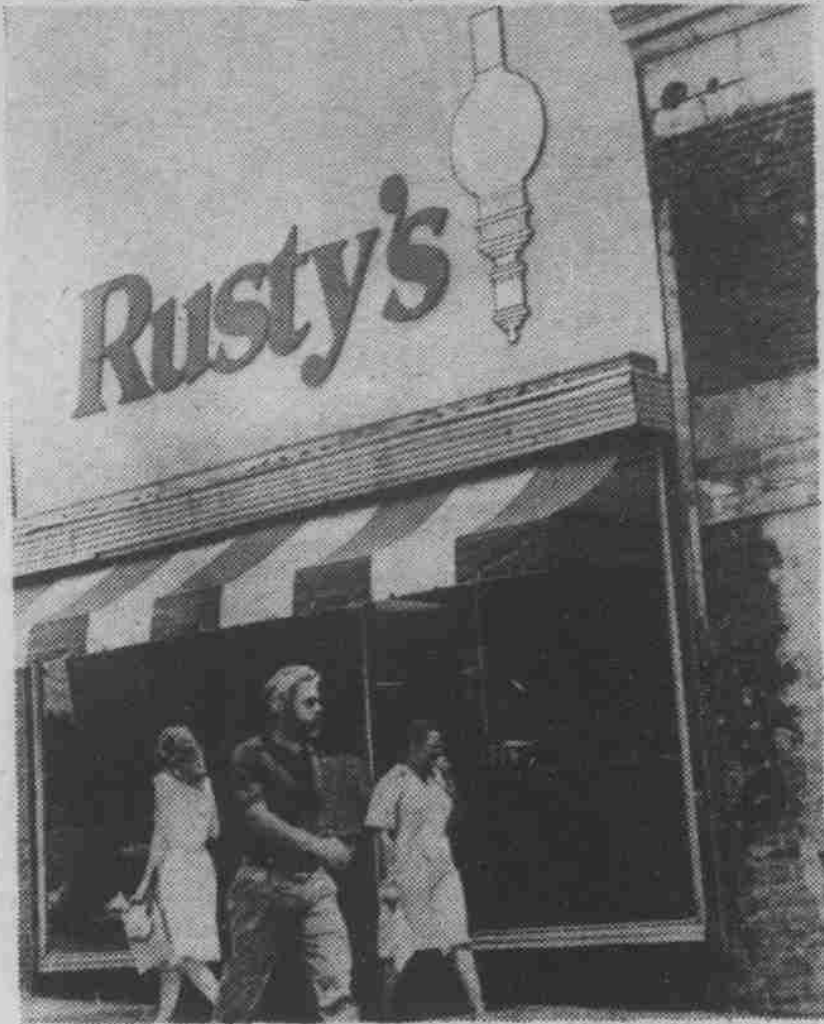
Rusty's

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single theme of dress. It is the style worn by Jim Hunt workers, droves of them, hanging onto rails, draped over seats. Tonight, like most Thursday nights, Rusty's is theirs. Almost everyone in the compact restaurant either works for the governor's office or with the 1980 re-election campaign.

And on it goes, streams of talk flowing as freely as the Thursday night beer. It is talk of the bureaucrats, by the bureaucrats and for the bureaucrats.

Located in Raleigh's Fayetteville Street Mall, within



Staff photo by Elliott Warnock

Entrance to Rusty's in Raleigh ... location attracts state workers

sight of the governor's old office, Rusty's is the perfect place for the workers to meet, relax and discuss office or state politics during the Thursday evening happy hour. But it does most of its business during its Monday through Friday lunch hours, 11 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

"We do most of our business then," says Cac Hoyle, co-owner of Rusty's with Jim Manly. "The mall basically shuts down after 3 p.m.; there's not much night business downtown."

Hoyle and Manly opened Rusty's Jan. 3, 1978, taking a shoe store, "tearing it to pieces and starting from scratch," Hoyle says. The partners both graduated from Carolina after first attending Virginia Episcopal School in Lynchburg. Hoyle graduated from Carolina in 1975, Manly in 1976.

"When we first opened, we just sort of stepped into a vacuum," Hoyle remembers. "The mall was in its origins, only beginning to be renovated. A restaurant seemed like the right idea at the time. It's been a real education."

From humble beginnings out of the shoe store, Rusty's is now "doing real well, mostly because of the mall," according to Hoyle. But he hastens to add that the shop's attractively priced menu, buoyant staff and innovation have aided in pulling in the lunchtime crowd in droves.

The menu, built around a few standard items, such as burgers and BLTs, continually shifts its look, adding a vegetable quiche here, dropping a pizza there, all in the attempt to keep the same group of workers coming in day after day.

"Over 80 percent of our business comes from state government workers," says Hoyle. "If there's a state holiday, and the offices are closed, it doesn't pay us to open. (Rusty's is not open at all on weekends.) Being imaginative with the menu really helps to pull the people in."

In they come.

They jam into the 20-by-120 feet restaurant, rubbing elbows and casting glances around in all directions, trying to see whom they know and who knows them. It is the place in downtown Raleigh to keep business going over the lunch hour.

So many people crowd into Rusty's during the lunch hours that Manly and Hoyle try to use every inch of space.



Staff photo by Elliott Warnock

Afternoon happy hour is a crowded time ... spirits and politics flow freely

Even the walls have their extra purpose, displaying the work of local artists. Some artists wait for months to get their works on Rusty's walls.

Despite the massive lunchtime crowds, it is the Thursday night happy hour that gives Rusty's its growing reputation. As the government people tank up and begin to talk, a certain charge fills the air, as if the energy of politics expands the walls, adds a bit of color and spices the food.



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