

inflation

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"Things have changed a lot," said Reid Tuvim, who graduated from UNC in May. "Rent has gone out of sight. My brother lived here three years ago in Kingswood Apartments, in a two-bedroom apartment, for \$185 a month. Now it costs almost \$300.

"Students don't have that much money to spend," he said. "At least, I didn't. More and more students are living three and four to an apartment, because you have to if you don't want to pay everything you have for a roof over your head."

Besides rent and college-related costs, some merchants said inflation was adding to an already higher-than-average cost for students living in Chapel Hill.

"They say prices are going up at 18 percent now," said Jeff Porterfield, a senior from Burlington. "That means I have to have either 18 percent more money to spend, or I have to be careful. And I don't have 18 percent more money."

John Woodard, manager of Sutton's Drug Store (at 58 years, one of the oldest businesses on Franklin Street), said he thought students were getting smarter about shopping.

"Students, I think, are being more particular," he said. "They're not spending their money as foolishly, on impulse; instead, they're looking for bargains."

"If I had to pick a word to describe them, it would be 'frugality.'"

At restaurants, patrons are ordering less and making sure they eat everything they order. "Doggie bags," muttered a waitress at The Continental Cafe on Henderson Street when asked how the economy had affected business. "They all want doggie bags."

"There just isn't as much impulse buying," said a salesman at Roscoe-Griffin, a shoe store in University Mall. "Not as many people are buying what we call frill shoes. It hasn't hurt business very much; it's just that when people buy, they're buying to last. They're making sure they're getting the good stuff."

At grocery stores, merchants said their total volume of sales were slightly down from 1979, although higher prices meant revenues were roughly the same. "Where people would buy a 10-pound bag of sugar last year, they're buying a 5-pound bag now," said a cashier at A&P Food Store on West Main Street in Carrboro. "We used to get a lot of \$50 and \$60 orders that are now \$10

and \$20 orders."

The cashier said that shoppers were buying more generic or "no-name" products. This spring the store expanded its generic section to include household products such as paper towels, toilet paper and other non-food items.

At Fowler's Food Store on West Franklin Street, a clerk said sales of non-food items had fallen off. "When shoppers come here, it's to buy food," he said. "The frills, the coolers and other non-foods are being passed over."

"They'll always buy beer, though."

Owners and employees of service-oriented businesses, such as automobile repair companies, said they had noticed a growing trend towards do-it-yourself work. "I've been here seven years," said Wayne Clayton, a repairman for Alexander Ford at 600 Carr St. "I have not seen so many requests for how to perform routine maintenances as we've been getting."

A cashier at Huggins Hardware, 107 E. Franklin St., said fewer students came into the store to browse. "There's more of a feeling among people that they aren't going to spend money on something unless they absolutely need it."

Good for business

Hard economic times have meant more, not less, business for some Chapel Hill merchants. Students are drawn to some stores because they offer everyday items at discount prices. Some products are enjoying newfound popularity as the economy worsens.

"When things get bad, sales get better," beamed a clerk at the Chapel Hill Cycle Shop on Franklin Street. "It's been a terrific sales year so far."

On the next block, students queued up to buy books—not textbooks, but literature, contemporary best-sellers and nonfiction—at The Intimate Bookshop. "Business is up from last year," a sales clerk said. "Books are a good buy. They're cheaper than movies, because they last longer than three hours. And the second read is free."

Business also is good at the K & W Cafeteria at University Mall. Much of the restaurant's business in the past has been from older, non-student Chapel Hillians, said cashier Ellen Whitaker.

Wine and roses

One type of business least affected by an

economic downturn, judging from the statements of merchants and students, was entertainment—related business.

At Chapel Hill's bars, owners and employees said they saw little or no decline in the amount of student traffic. "The recession doesn't bother the bar business too much," said a bartender at Harrison's 147 1/2 Franklin St. "If people get bad off, they'll pay for a drink if nothing else."

Sam O'Malley, co-owner of Troll's, 157 E. Rosemary St., agreed. "When it's time to cut back, beer is going to be fourth or fifth on the list," he said.

Although both the Ram Triple and Carolina theatres have suspended their late shows for the summer because of fewer students, managers of both said attendance during the academic year was steady.

"There are two ways of looking at it," said Ram manager Stan Miller. "First of all, the people who like to go to movies are saying, 'Wait a minute. Do I really want to see this movie, or am I going just for the sake of going?'"

"But at the same time, there are other people who realize we're in walking distance of campus so it's not too expensive—maybe not as expensive as going out on the town. With the gas crunch and things like that, this type of

entertainment has an advantage," Miller said.

One graduate student from Winston-Salem summed up the statements of several students interviewed.

"I drive a lot less," she said. "I find myself eating at home more, and when I go out to eat with friends, a lot of times I'll just have a salad. I don't run the air conditioner."

"But that doesn't mean I can't enjoy life. I try to save money, to not spend it unwisely. But when it comes to things I enjoy, I'm not going to give them up."

"We all need to have wine and roses sometime."

A salesman at the Record Bar at University Mall, agreed. "People are getting choosier, more cautious," he said. "They're after quality, both in the physical record and the music."

But he said sales were at about the level of last year. "This is the type thing that many folks don't want to give up. If you don't eat at a restaurant for a few nights, you've saved enough to buy some music."

One other business reporting good sales was Swensen's Ice Cream Factory in University Square. "Give up ice cream?" asked a store employee incredulously when asked if sales were hurting. "Who'd want to do that?"

by Garry Trudeau

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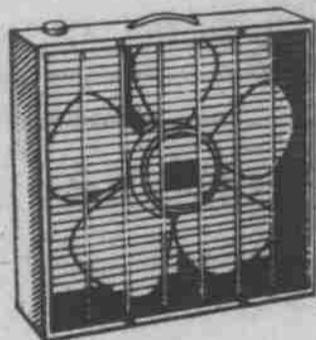


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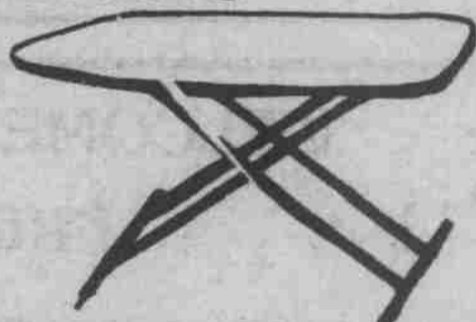


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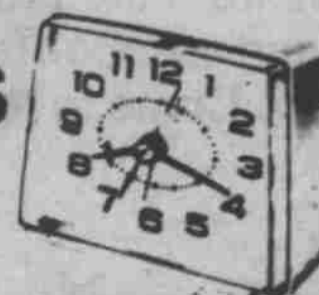
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