

The Rat

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them feel at home."

So special was that friendship with one customer, Bill Ludwick, that the big table in the front room bears a plaque dedicated to his memory. The Ludwick family had been coming to The Rat for years for food and beer before Carolina home football games, and they always sat at the same table. Ludwick died two years ago, but

the plaque captures his memory: "To the memory of Bill Ludwick, who loyally occupied this table through Tar Heel seasons, both good and bad, for many faithful years."

Another impressive group of people to visit The Rat, beside the regulars, includes Andy Griffith, Ronnie Howard, James Worthy and Michael Jordan — and they

are just a few of the famous people who frequent The Rat.

It's the regulars, though, who carve graffiti all over the tables and walls. There's not a nook or cranny where a knife or key hasn't made its imprint. Every accessible piece of wood in the restaurant proclaims someone was here and was in love with someone else who was also here.

The Rat is not without its own creativity. The backs of each table have words of wisdom inscribed on them. "The more things a man is ashamed of, the more respectable he is," says one booth.

"That's the nature of women . . . not to love when we love them, and to love when we love them not," says another.

All the tables are placed uniformly throughout the dimly-lit restaurant, so that there is an emphasis on atmosphere. Art adorning the old-fashioned walls is hard to figure out, but adds greatly to the overall feeling received from a visit to The Rat. Memories of yesterday, including autographed footballs and autographed basketballs, also add to the atmosphere, not to mention the tradition. Pictures of former

UNC superstars give way to reflections about past seasons and numerous championships.

Other than the main dining room, there are four "special" rooms scattered about the place, each with its own unique personality.

The "Circus Room" is a good spot for the kids. Mirrors are everywhere, and brightly painted animals cover the walls. The "Train Room" is the home of The Rat's most popular table, which gives a clear view of the Franklin Street sidewalk above. Next comes the "Lautrec Room" (as in Toulouse), which was painted in imitations of the artist's famous murals. Finally, there comes "The Cave," which looks exactly like it sounds.

Another important room to The Rat is the bar, located to the immediate right as you walk in the door. Smith said The Rat was originally a bar and that food was not served until the mid-50s.

Pitchers of beer, very popular on football weekends, are \$2.95 for the small and \$5.50 for the large. A mug of beer is \$1.10, domestic bottled beer \$1.35 and imported bottled beer \$1.75. Wine and mixed drinks are also available upon request.

Whether you visit The Rat as a student, alumni or visitor to Chapel Hill, in this writer's opinion, it will be one of the most enjoyable and memorable meals you will ever eat. I would also bet that you'll feel the urge to return — even before you open the heavy wooden door to leave.

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