

# Taking a stroll down Franklin Street

By DIANA FLORENCE and TIM LITTLE  
Staff Writers

It was a night like any other in downtown Chapel Hill. The students were out, the food was plentiful and the beer was cold. Everyone on Franklin Street seemed to be having the time of their lives — everyone, that is, except Silent Sam.

For more than three-quarters of a century, Sam has been condemned to silently watch Franklin Street night life pass by him. But now — for Sam's sake — it's time to find out what all this Franklin Street hoopla is about.

### Franklin Street fare

Early in the evening, the bustle of Franklin Street crowds is primarily in the dining and special-item food spots. And each restaurant and ice cream shop has its own distinctive mood.

At the Rams Head Rathskeller, fondly known as the Rat, people enjoy eating hot meals such as spaghetti and pizza in the cavern-like surroundings that give loners, friends or lovers a feeling of seclusion. Graffiti by Tar Heels past and present decorates the walls and tables.

"I think the Rat has the best lasagna in the world," said Shea Carter, a junior music major from Charlotte. "And the casual atmosphere allows you to be yourself."

Unlike the private getaway of the Rat, some Franklin Street eateries are traditionally known for their openness. One such place is Spanky's.

"I've always loved Spanky's because it's a great place to take anyone," said Paul Deavers, a sophomore business major from Charlotte. "I've taken my girlfriend, my parents, and it just has a perfect atmosphere for any situation."

Located on the corner of Franklin and Columbia streets, Spanky's offers a dinner menu including entrees like shrimp scampi and nightly specials of chicken and steak.

But Franklin Street's collection of dining hangouts doesn't end there. For a taste of Chinese, there's the Golden Dragon and the Dragon's Garden. For something sweet and cold, Swensen's, Baskin Robbins 31 Flavors Ice Cream and Ben & Jerry's have taste-scintillating scoops for everyone.

And what would a main street be without a fast-food restaurant?

"Sometimes I really don't want to sit down and eat a big, hearty meal," said Sean Mitchell, a junior journalism major from Fayetteville. "Subway and Hardee's are perfect for when I want something on the go."

### Big-screen attractions

But dining out is only the beginning. "The best thing after a good meal on Franklin Street is a nice movie to watch. It's great that the theaters are conveniently there on either side so that you are only steps away from a lot of entertainment," said Julie Greene, a junior psychology major from Charlotte.

The Varsity Theatre, Carolina Blue and White and Ram Triple provide some of the best in big-screen entertainment every night.

The Varsity is usually known as the "alternative" movie theater, since it shows many lesser-known films. For many Chapel Hill moviegoers, this proves to be a pleasant switch from big-time, popular movies.

"Sometimes I like to see a movie at the spur of the moment, so I just walk up to the Varsity to see something original and different," said Wendell McCain, a sophomore economics major from Charlotte. "It's available on any night of my preference, and I like that."

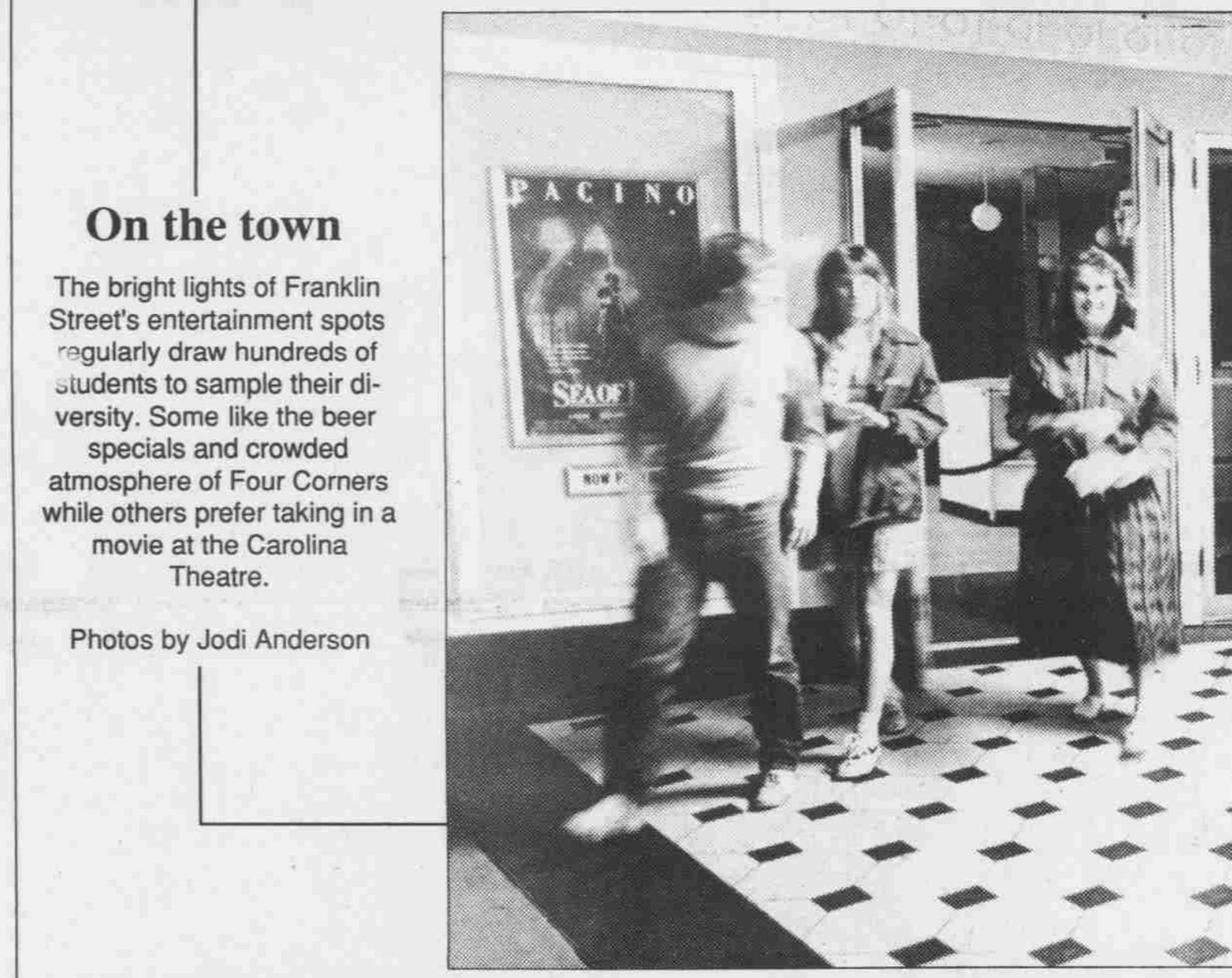
The larger theaters, the Carolina Blue and White Theatre and Ram Triple, show the main attractions that play across the country. Both places have often been a "home away from home" for students.

"Ever since I was a freshman, there seemed like there was always something interesting playing, so I'd go to the movies and hang out with the guys," said Scott Corrigan, a senior economics major from Greensboro.

"It's also a good place to see girls. It's amazing that there are a lot of girls who do the same things with their friends," Corrigan said. "Movies definitely have to be part of the best things about Franklin Street at night."

### Bar-hopping

And after that 9:30 movie lets out, it's time for the ultimate in Franklin Street night life — the bars.



### On the town

The bright lights of Franklin Street's entertainment spots regularly draw hundreds of students to sample their diversity. Some like the beer specials and crowded atmosphere of Four Corners while others prefer taking in a movie at the Carolina Theatre.

Photos by Jodi Anderson

After all, beer isn't just for breakfast anymore. And it's not just for 21-year-olds either. Take Babs for instance. She hardly looks 19, but she's blond, has a fake i.d. and flirts shamelessly with any fool carrying a hand stamp. There ought to be a law.

But what's so great about these bars anyway? Couldn't you go to say, Durham, and have just as good a time? According to Jonathan Roth, a graduate student at Duke Business School, it can't be done. "We come to Franklin Street because the people here are nicer, the girls are prettier and the atmosphere of the bars here can't even compare with the ones in Durham."

The Franklin Street bar scene is a unique mixture of traditional hang-outs and new bars vying for business by

using countless drink specials and assorted gimmicks.

Sometimes the gimmicks work, as in the case of Players with its membership requirement and Thursday night 50-cent draft special.

Other times they don't. The reputation of bars that have occupied the same location can make or break a place's success. "I come out to Players on Thursday nights because I've always come here on Thursday nights here since it was Purdy's," said former student J.R. Reid.

The timing of a new bar's opening can affect its success as well. "The problem with On the Hill is that it opened this summer when no one was really around, and so now they have to work extra hard to distinguish themselves to let everyone know that they are here," said

Chad Boswell, a junior journalism major from Cashiers.

But all the drink specials in the world cannot ensure a popular following. Essentially, it is the established hang-outs that make students put down their books for a night on the town with friends. One such institution is Four Corners on East Franklin Street.

Four Corners is where many begin their evening. "It's the launching pad for the journey down Franklin Street," said Jimmy Wright, a sophomore business major from Miami. On a typical weekend or Wednesday night (there's a \$2.50 special on pitchers of beer on Wednesday), the line to get into "4 Cs" is well out the door.

Why the attraction? According to Nick Efthimiou, a senior advertising major from Dallas, it's the atmosphere. "The narrow set-up of the bar area really packs people in tight, and I guess being that close together kind of forces everyone into a friendly, casual mood," he said.

The evening's frame of mind will determine the next stop. If you're in the mood for live music, then Magdalena's La Terraza or Cat's Cradle on West Franklin Street are the places to go.

It could also be the up-and-coming Franklin Street Bar and Grill where — according to Prentiss Vallender, a sophomore international studies major from Washington, D.C. — "You can find good people, good times, cheap beer and no sweat."

If the weather is good, it could be He's Not Here. "It is a great place to come because the atmosphere is so casual," said Scott Petermann, a junior chemistry major from Valdosta, Ga. On Tuesday nights hundreds of coeds dressed to kill are all packed onto the large outdoor patio area in search of one thing: the \$1.50 bucket-sized Carolina blue cup filled with their choice of available draft beer.

If dancing is what you have in mind, the place to go is Players. According to Todd Rush, a sophomore biology major from Kernersville, "Players is always a lot of fun because the girls look good and if you run out of things to talk about, you can always ask her to dance," he said.

Although Thursday is its biggest night, the weekends have been drawing large numbers, especially since this summer's addition of a pool table and Fozzball.

Unfortunately, N.C. law mandates that all this fun end at 2 a.m. At closing time, the good times continue out onto the sidewalk for another 45 minutes or so.

### Satisfying midnight munchies

But your night on Franklin Street doesn't end here. Now it's time for some late-night munching at the several after-hours eating establishments. These include Hardee's, Subway, Time-Out, Pepper's Pizza and Hector's.

As a matter of fact, some of the wildest things happen at these places after the bars have closed.

Paul Wiester, manager at Hector's, said he has worked the late-night shift for six years and has seen it all. One of Wiester's funniest experiences happened on a jam-packed night when about 120 people were in and out and around the restaurant.

"I was cooking and this guy walks in, stands up (on the table) in the middle of the room — must have been some frat pledge — drops his pants and starts blessing us with what God blessed him," Wiester said. "He left but came back and did the same thing about 20 minutes later. We got out chrome spray paint, but missed him."

Everyone has a favorite late night spot and will defend it passionately.

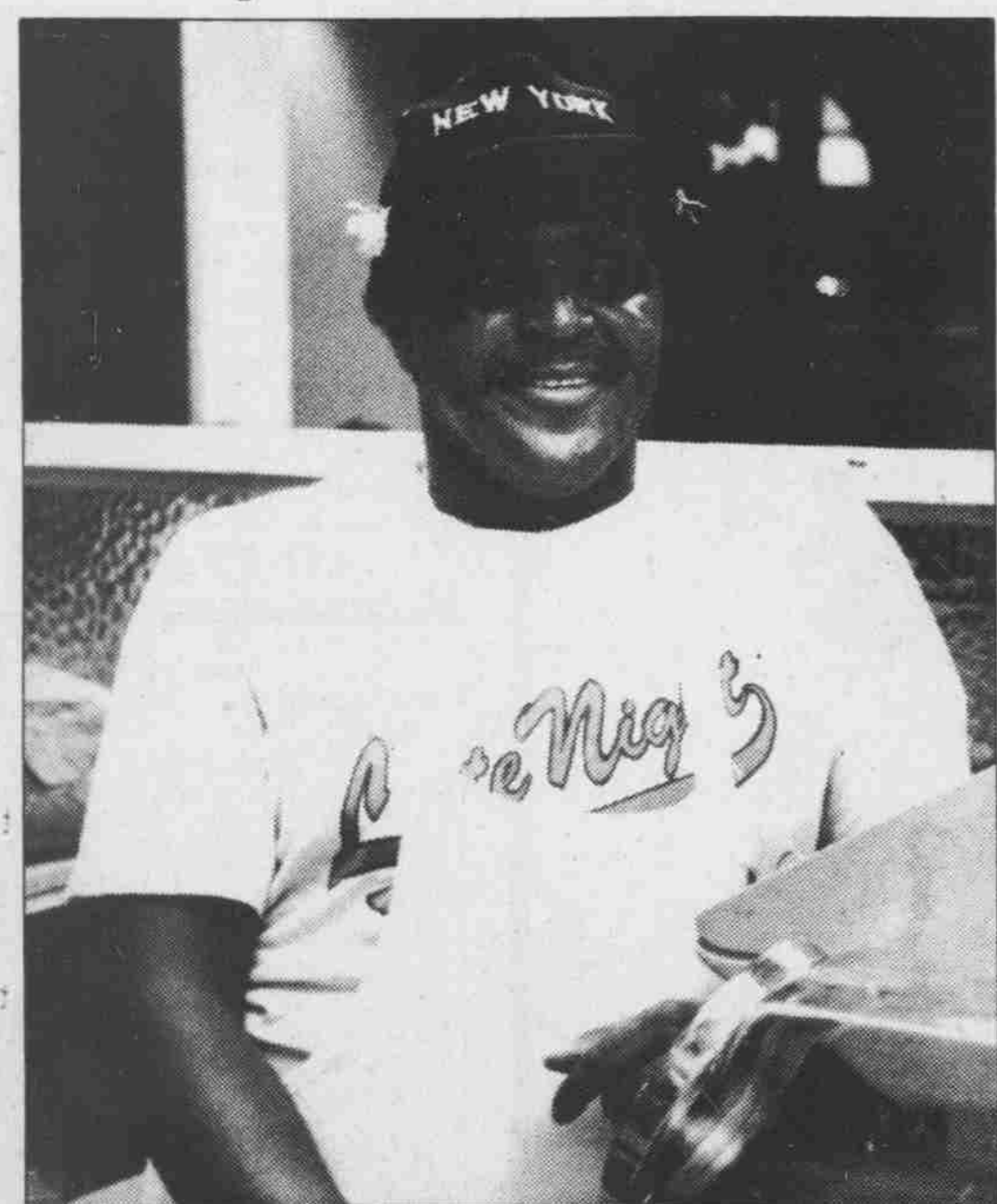
According to Frances Brady, a junior English major from Dobson, "Pepper's is the place for me because I'm a vegetarian."

But perhaps the most die-hard patrons are those at Hector's. "Hector's is it," said Steve Jones, a senior history major from Ocala, Fla. "It's got the tradition, the variety and most importantly, the Double Cheeseburger on Pita and the best greasy french fries in Chapel Hill. The only thing it needs is to be open 24 hours."

After that last bite, students crawl back to their rooms and the street lights dim as the night life, like all good things, comes to an end. And although Sam will always be confined to his lonely station, at least he won't feel bad in the morning.

Staff writer Wendy Grady also contributed to this story.

# Billy: Time-Out's legend lives for the late shift



Billy Penny says there's nothing he doesn't like about his job

By JESSICA YATES

Assistant Arts and Features Editor

It's 9 p.m. — not a busy hour at Time-Out restaurant — and night-shift worker Billy Penny is relaxing in one of the chairs, amused by all the attention he's getting and chuckling because someone else is doing his work tonight.

Billy is well-known to fraternity brothers, Granville residents and anyone else who is often out in the middle of the night. He works every night except Wednesday from 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. at Time-Out.

He operates the cash registers and helps prepare the food, but his reputation for being tough yet entertaining is what earns him a permanent spot on the list of people to see in downtown Chapel Hill at night.

Billy, who is known by most students by his first name only, is off work tonight, but he has shown up simply to sit back and enjoy the show — something he doesn't do often. He chats with the customers and teases the cashier. "It's like a family here," he says.

Despite the odd hours, Billy says he enjoys working the night shift. "They let you do whatever you want ... cuss students out, jam in the back," he explains. "It's the only place you don't say, 'can I help you?'"

Most restaurants don't allow such a down-to-earth attitude toward customers, as Billy knows well. "In other places, you got to be nice," he said. "But not here." He has lived in Pittsboro all his life and has worked in other restaurants in the Triangle, but he has

remained at Time-Out for five years.

"There ain't nothing I don't like about it. Have to put up with drunk college kids, but ..." he shrugs. "They don't fight, just do a little pushing and I say 'that's it — take it outside.'"

So why do people go back to see him?

"Entertainment!" Billy says, laughing.

Evidently, Time-Out can be a real riot. Billy remembers one Halloween night when "someone rolled in a casket and left the casket in here. Someone was saying, 'Let me out! Let me out!'"

"I went home," Billy says nonchalantly. "I don't know how he got out, but I say if they got themselves in, they can get themselves out."

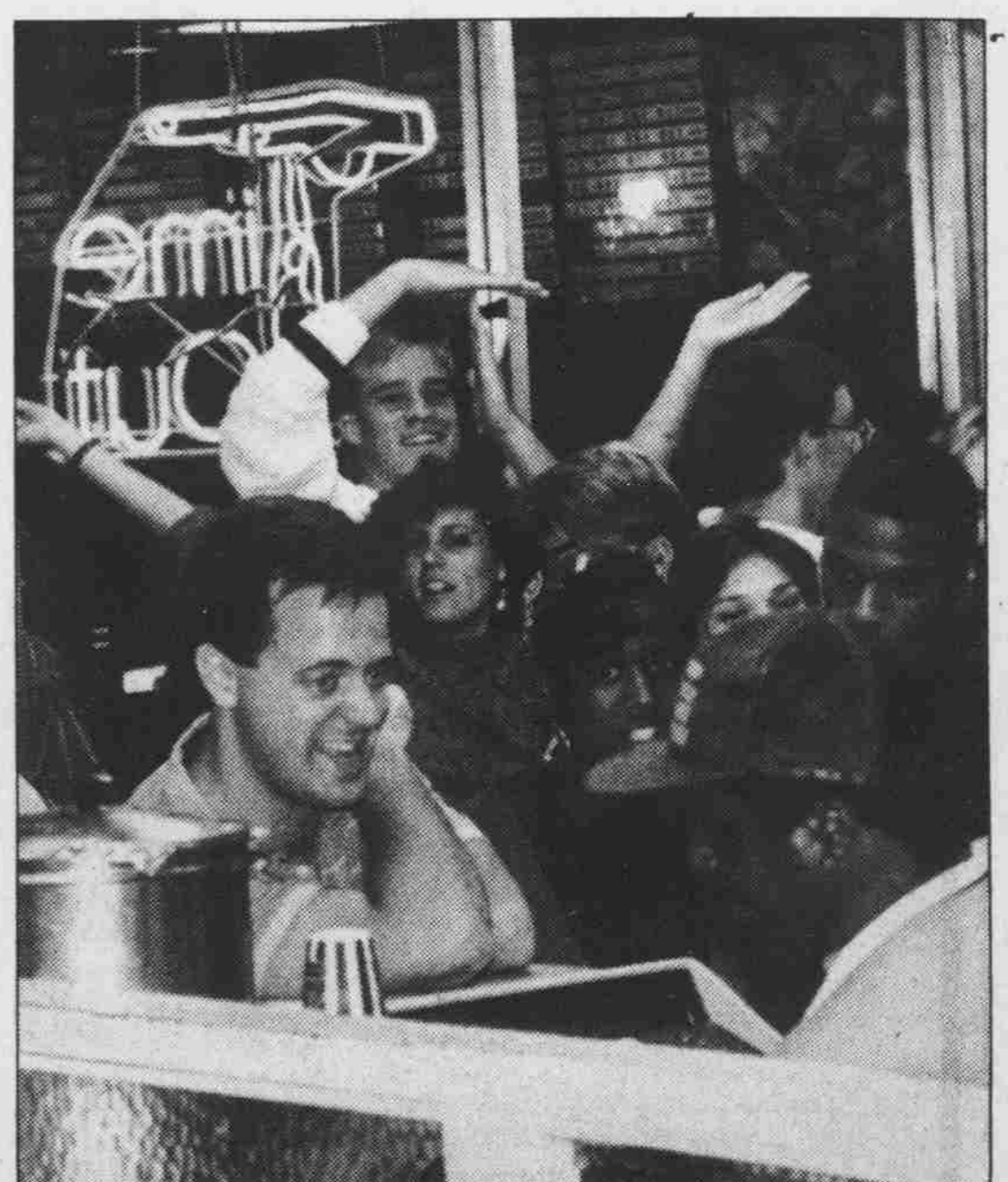
In spite of the occasional prank, Billy says he enjoys the students, but he has no favorites. "You like them all," he says.

Maybe he's partial to the athletes who drop by?

"You get to meet all the old and new basketball players, get invitations to basketball games," Billy says. He goes to football games too, although he admits, "I didn't buy a ticket this year, didn't want to waste the money."

But during this interview, the week before the game with N.C. State, he was wishing the Tar Heels good luck. "I just hope the football team wins. They can beat State. State just have a big head."

Sure, Billy.



Students pack Time-Out on Friday night in search of food and fun