

Cosmos Club Is 'Boogingest' In Town

by Cheryl E. Johnson

A quiet, complacent, contemplative man with an easy style of speaking and deliberate mannerisms is the owner of two of the 'boogingest' places in town.

And although he admits, "I like to dance" you will never see **Richard Bowling**, the owner-operator of the **Cosmos I** and **II** night clubs, a restaurant of that same name and the **Florida Street Shopping Center**, shaking a leg or whatever a popular dance calls for moving these days.

The reason for this he says is that "I have a such hard time keeping my employees from dancing that I like to set an example."

The owner of one of two black-owned restaurants in a three-state area and the nations capitol, feels that being a black business man has been a liability because "it is very difficult for a black to survive." He describes his business as "a beautiful ex-

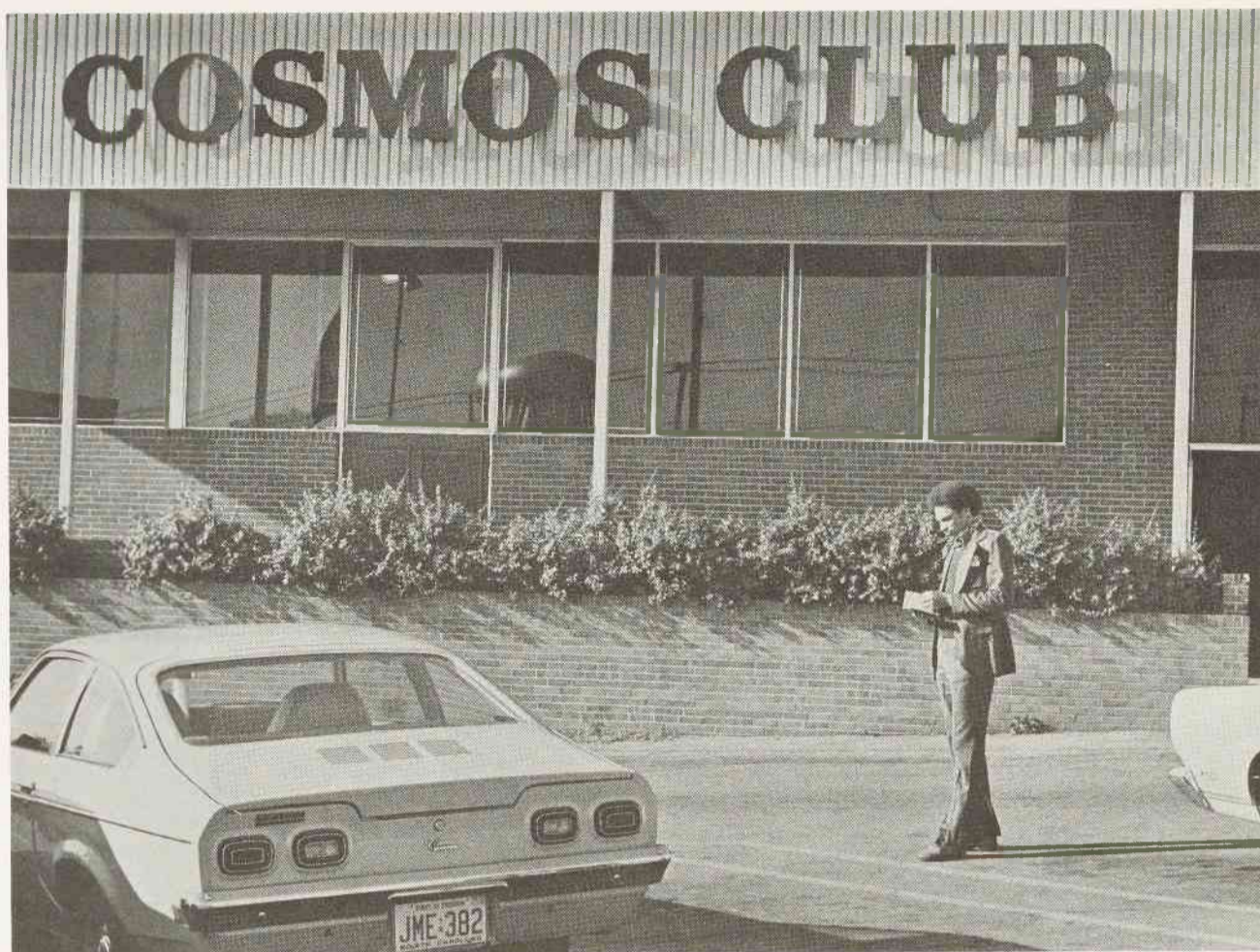
perience" and adds that he is forced into a role as a black business man.

He said, "People ask me all the time 'don't you own that black business in that black neighborhood?' I tell them, well the U. S. Post Office is a little to our east and Bob Dunn Ford is nearby just like the Buick and Chevrolet place, so I guess you could say the neighborhood is black."

The main thing that has hurt the black business man is integration, in his opinion. "Integration brought the migration of blacks into the white community but it has not meant that white people are patronizing black businesses," said Bowling.

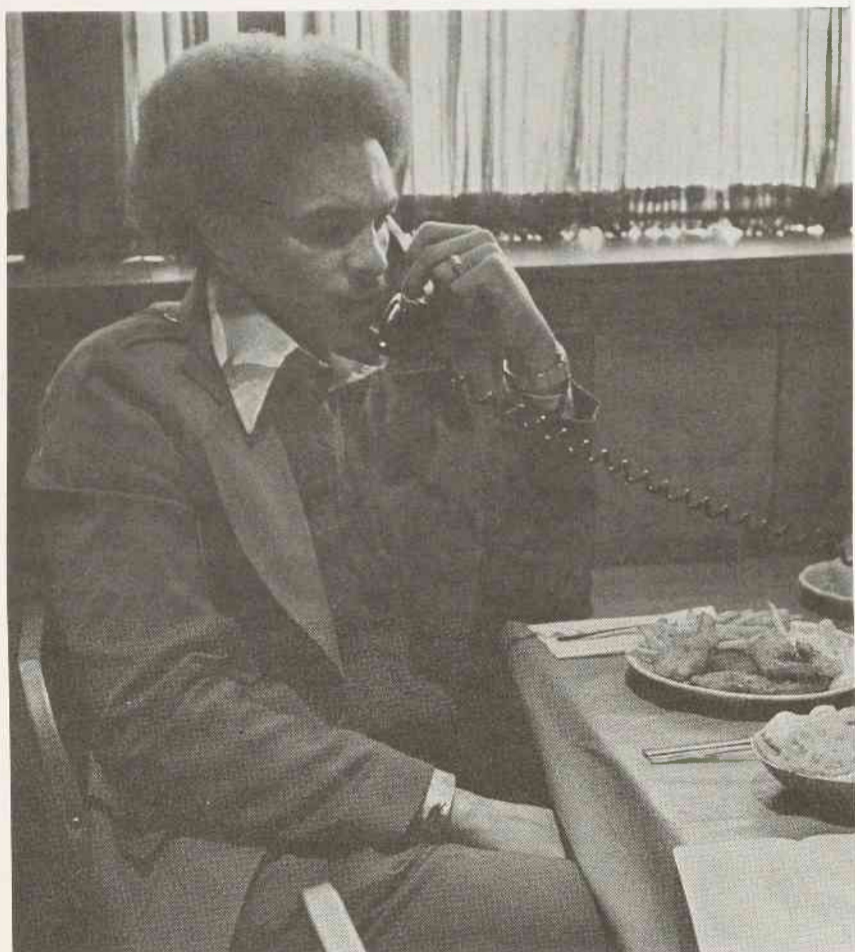
However, attracting whites to the 709 E. Market St. location of the restaurant is not the only problem. Keeping the right image for his businesses is also a concern.

Bowling will wince at the use of the phrase "kid hang out" whenever it is used in a sentence that has anything to



The Cosmos I is the place where quite a few Bennett students and others go to hang loose.

photo by Cheryl E. Johnson



Bowling does a great portion of the business for his restaurant and clubs by telephone.

photo by Cheryl E. Johnson

Kittrell Transfers Have Praise, Criticism at End of First Year

by Cleo Branch

The eight students who transferred last Fall to Bennett from Kittrell, the only Black Junior College in North Carolina, which closed due to financial problems, expressed mixed feelings toward their new Alma Mater, but most comments were positive.

Several students remarked that they felt that Bennett is an adequate school academically. The students said they are pleased with the capabilities of their instructors and they feel that the instructors at Bennett are more concerned with students meeting the requirements of the course.

However, the students also expressed a dislike for mandatory attendance because at Kittrell the students had unlimited class cuts; and there was also more of a student-teacher relationship at Kittrell, according to one student. "Enough time is not devoted to individual students at Bennett," said **Freda Vick**. **Gloria Wiggins**, a sophomore expressed, a more balanced view by saying, "Bad and good instructors are at both schools."

The main adaptation for the students was adjusting to attend-

ing a women's college. "I was accustomed to having guys around," said **Anita Ford** a Special Education major. The social life is not the same as being at a co-ed school.

The students also feel that the surveillance is too tight at Bennett. All the students complained of the gates being shut.

Only two of the students expressed regret at transferring to Bennett. **Patricia Rorrie**, a junior and social welfare major, said, "I regret that I encouraged other students to come to Bennett."

Patricia asserted that during first semester she took courses that were not required in her major which was the result of inadequate counseling by her advisor.

Freda Vick, a sophomore majoring in pre-nursing stated that the recruiters for Bennett informed her that the courses in her major were offered but she learned differently after arriving.

Although the students expressed a number of complaints, they are gradually adjusting to Bennett. The consensus is that the majority of the students will be returning to complete their education at their new Alma Mater.

do with his clubs. He says, "People look at this as a teenager's place but we try not to be categorized" as catering to one group. And he added, "We are for the young, the old, the rich, the poor, the white and the black."

But just like it's hard to get whites to come there it is also difficult to attract the older persons and the rich who want to keep their distance from those less fortunate.

Bowling says his clubs are for "the old who are young at heart, whites who have some soul in them and the kings who want to keep the common touch."

He thinks his clubs have a tremendous impact on the community at large. One reason for this is "we give the blacks a facility large enough to handle their affairs. This gives other businessmen some competition and at a much cheaper price," said Bowling. Whereas black organizations only had the choice of taking their parties to the Hilton at one time, now they can go to the Cosmos I or II.

The Cosmos I has a seating capacity of 280 while II will seat 1,500.

Still the greatest part of Cosmos clientele comes from area college students who go there to experience disco every weekend and sometimes during the club's week night happenings. Bowling defines disco as "a place where music is played."

And from this audience Bowling says his night spots implement "another area of impact." This impact is the unpolarization of the class structure, as he sees it "By mixing poor people, the underprivileged and the working class with college students" who he says "graduate to become the educated working class."

Bowling is sure he is doing a bit of good since he established the Cosmos II on the Southside of town. And the police department reinforce his belief as they have told him that "the crime rate has dropped at Southside since we put Cosmos II there," said he.

He also added that city residents have had a "terrible opinion of southside" and that the area has been hurt "by peoples hard-frozen evaluations of what this section of town is all about."

"Not being polarized," he says, "and providing the place for everyone from everywhere to mingle has made for a much more comfortable atmosphere," said Bowling. At one time when a couple would be dancing and someone would bump into another person, he said one might hear the gruffy quip "man watch where you're going." But now in that same situation he contends that an "excuse me" would be overheard.

His philosophy that the spoken word is a powerful instrument is one of the things a person can sense about this man as he seems to reach deeply into his thoughts before committing himself in sentence form.

He does not tolerate fights at his clubs and recalled a time when a couple of gentlemen were looking in an evil-eyed fashion at those persons going into the Cosmos. He said he thought these men were angry because they did not have enough money to come inside and have some fun like those persons they saw going into the club. Instead of ordering them off he invited them in, showed them the lay out and later let them go into the club free after expressing the idea that he hoped that the next time they came around they might dress a little better for their outing.

And while this charitable part of Bowling is readily discernable it is a little difficult to imagine him grandstanding on anyone but he has done just this on numerous occasions as it became necessary.

One night, he recalls, a young man became upset when his date danced with someone else. When the man began to handle the young lady Bowling said he explained to the man, "When she is here, she is our customer and you keep your hands off her because we are going to protect her when she is in here and I'm not go-

ing to let you ruin our reputation by fighting here." The matter was resolved.

Another incident that roused the otherwise tame looking Bowling was the time a black man became upset because a white couple dined at the Cosmos. When the man began "woofing" at Bowling he said he asked the man one question "Where do you buy your clothes, brother?" The man said from some shop down town. Bowling's next question was why did the man not shop at the perfectly respectable black-owned store that was also down town. His further reply to this person was that if these white people wanted to pour money back into the black neighborhood he would defend their right to do so. And with a shrug of his shoulders and a smile he added, "You've got to have the answers for them."

"We get at the meat of all problems and the cross-roads of solutions to these problems come here," he noted as his green eyes stared at the constantly ringing telephone.

This call was from the local black radio station who had called to play back a Cosmos radio spot. He says he spends more than \$20,000 a year in advertising and that the bulk of his advertising is done through the black media.

"I'm not making more money than last year," he revealed. "We are just taking fewer losses and watching more carefully how we spend our dollar" said he, one of the first blacks to graduate from North Carolina State University in 1964.

Having travelled all over the world courtesy of the armed forces or his first job as an engineer for Western Electric he is considering more travel in the name of "advertising the club," he said and traveling disco. Just that day he had received requests from Rockingham, Salisbury and another North Carolina city to come do some disco.

Since the 37-year-old got into the business four-and-a-half years ago via traveling discos, which is going from town to town spinning discs for different events, he feels

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