

Photo by Rob Whiteside

The courthouse is another feature of the town of Graham, home of the Cinema Theatre.

Theater

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pattern for the movies he shows. The owner avoids horror films and "B" movies because they tend to draw rowdy audiences. "I'd rather not make any money than to have to contend with them," he says.

"I want a family theater," Matthews says. Despite his support of families, however, the owner doesn't allow babies in the theater. All it takes is "one baby in there hollerin'," says Matthews, to destroy the movie for the rest of the audience. The owner also frowns upon talking. "I'm real funny about people behaving," he says, "I guess that's the old school teacher in me."

In his five years as owner-manager, Matthews has thrown out an estimated 1000 customers for talking and other problems. He always gives them their money back, though. And he hasn't had to call the law in two or three years. "I don't want anybody here unless they're here to watch a movie," Matthews says.

Unique messages successful

But Matthews isn't above having a little fun. To find out, just call the Cinema Theatre and listen to the recorded message. Matthews started lightening up his recordings on Christmas Eve one year.

In a special message telling customers that the theater was going to be closed December 24, Matthews joked that Santa Claus

was using the facility to store some of his toys. The message was a hit; and the rest, as they say, is history.

Now he's in a bind. "I rack my brains," says Matthews, who often has trouble coming up with an entertaining message. His daughter says he sits forever trying to come up with something funny. Usually, though, he produces a classic. Consequently, Matthews has gathered quite a following. In fact, he says a man in Nebraska calls each week to hear the new message.

Other repairs planned

Matthews doesn't have any really big plans for the theater, although he will continue making repairs. He wants to put new seats in the balcony, where he'll remove every other row of chairs to allow for additional legroom.

He also wants to add a new heating system. Eventually, the admission price probably will be raised to \$2 for every movie. Already Matthews has raised the prices for select shows so he can get them sooner. He's also raised the price of concessions, although he provides free drink refills to try to make things easier on the customers.

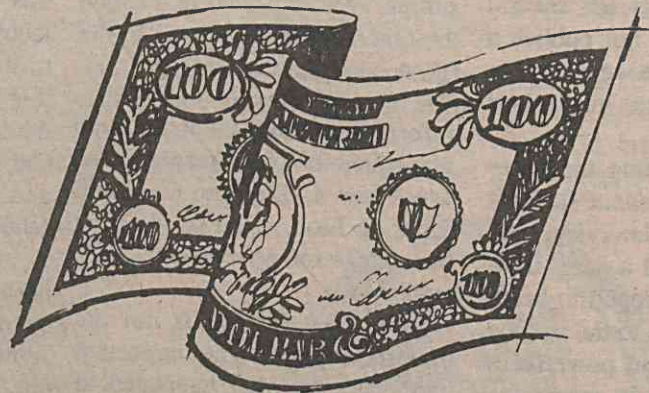
Most of all, though, Matthews wants to continue to put on a good presentation at a good price. It seems his philosophy is working just fine: "Give people quality at a bargain and you'll do alright."

\$500 REWARD

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