

Remembering The Co-ed

"You used to be big in pictures."
"I am big, it's the pictures that got small."
— Gloria Swanson to William Holden in the 1950 motion picture, "Sunset Boulevard"

AUGUST THIRTIETH
OPENING NIGHT

"I Was A Male War Bride"

Motion pictures will get smaller in Boiling Springs if the town council, as expected, votes in the next two months to franchise cable television, bringing first-run movies to local television screens.

That entertainment change would be the biggest in Boiling Springs since August 30, 1948 — when pictures still were big, and the biggest picture was at the brand-new Co-ed Theater.

"I remember as a little girl part of going to town on Saturday was going to the Co-ed for a nickle and a dime."

The little girl grew up to be the town clerk, Margretta McKee, and her Saturdays at the Co-ed are shared in memories of many other residents who grew up here in the '50s and '60s. The Co-ed was Boiling Springs' first movie theater — and its first victim to television.

Practically every town had at least one movie house in those pre-television days. Shelby had four now defunct: the Carolina, State, Webb, and the Washington. Lawndale had the Piedmont Theater.

"Boy, do I remember the Piedmont!" laughed Kays Gary. The *Observer* columnist recalled it as the site where teenagers were initiated into kissing, and, it was rumored, more: "It took a lot of courage to go in there," Gary confided.)

"We opened in August, 1948," recalled "Welly" Hamrick, a Boiling Springs contractor who with his partner Fred Plonk built the theater on land Hamrick had inherited. "At first we were going to call it the Community Theater, but Fred decided on the name Co-ed."

The Co-ed wasn't bashful about promoting her charms. The full-page ad in the *Shelby Star* set the scene for the theater's opening 2 p.m., Aug. 30, 1948:

"The trumpets sound. . . melodious music peels forth. . . lights are dimmed. . . curtains roll back. . . and you get a preview of one of the most up-to-date theaters in Cleveland County."

The Co-ed promised its patrons seats "correctly inclined"; and for 35 cents (children paid nine cents) you could see the following: news, a cartoon, a short, a serial "G-Men Never Forget," and the main attraction, "Feudin', Fussin' and A-Fighin'" starring Donald O'Connor.

Business was good, Hamrick recalled. "Our biggest all-time grossing film from the general public was 'I Was A Male War Bride,'" a Cary Grant comedy.

The Co-ed also has the distinction of having made more money off Shakespeare than Cary Grant. The theater arranged with Gardner-Webb

College for a special showing of "Hamlet" at \$1.50 a ticket when the usual admission was 40 cents.

"We really cleaned up," Hamrick smiled.

Hamrick took over the day-to-day operation of the theater after Plonk sold his interest to Dr. Wyan Washburn. Duties included trips to Charlotte's "Film Row," a series of offices on Church Street where hard-boiled representatives of New York and Hollywood studios dickered with the Cleveland native over film prices:

"Oh, they'd ask for \$25 or 40 per cent of the gate," recalled Hamrick. He laughed. "I'd tell 'em my front office in Boiling Springs wouldn't stand for such a thing."

Watching Hamrick bluff the Charlotte bookers was a future movie mogul at that time miscast as a sweeper at the Cliffside movie house. Earl Owensby, then a boy and later the chief executive of the EO Corporation, would join Hamrick for the ride to Charlotte.

It wasn't the distribution costs, however, that did in the Co-ed; it was that new invention, black-and-white television.

"Just about the time we started doing well," Hamrick recalled, "television came into our area and business got weak."

Not that the Co-ed didn't fight back. Hamrick

installed a lens for Cinemascope, trying to fight the small screen with a wide one.

"We spent \$1800 on the cinemascopic equipment," Hamrick said. "And that was when money was money!"

"I may be wrong, but at that time I believe that amount of money would buy you a new Buick."

But small, independent theaters were as obsolescent as fins on a Buick. Hamrick sold out his interest to Dr. Washburn, and after several changes in management "Doc rented the building to two college boys who wanted to open a restaurant." The business still operates as The Movie House Restaurant.

None of the previous owners or managers could remember when the Co-ed showed its last film. Like an aging dowager, the Co-ed simply was seen less and less by the public; at last, one day someone notices she's absent.

For "Welly" Hamrick, though, there is still an occasional memory of when "music peels forth," "lights dim," and "curtains roll back":

"Every now and then I'll be driving through some small town," he says, "and I'll see some theater boarded up, and I'll get a lump in my throat. I'll think of the Co-ed closing, and I'll know what they're going through."

GARDNER WEBB COLLEGE LIBRARY

The Foothills View

"We See It Your Way"

THURS. MARCH 18, 1982

BOILING SPRINGS, NC

\$7.00 Per Year Single Copy 15 Cents

Panther "Pretty Good" Break-Ins Hit Two

Break-ins Friday and Saturday nights at a Boiling Springs residence and business resulted in losses over \$2500 reported to police.

G.T. McSwain's warehouse on West College was broken into Friday night, according to police, and 11 air conditioners are reported missing.

The air conditioners, "still in the boxes," are worth approximately \$2500, according to Boiling Springs police officer James Clary, who is investigating.

The boxes apparently were taken out of the warehouse through the back door, Clary said. A bolt there was broken, the officer said.

The next night a burglary was reported at Varsity Square apartments about 9:45 p.m. Saturday. The front door of an apartment was pried open, according to police, and a radio and an automatic handgun were reported stolen.

The resident of the apartment was not home at the time of the reported break-in. Police estimate the value of the items taken at \$165.

To prevent break-ins, Boiling Springs and Gardner-Webb police departments jointly are sponsoring "Operation Identification" this Saturday. The departments will have eight engraving tools available for the public to mark valuables, making them less likely to be stolen.

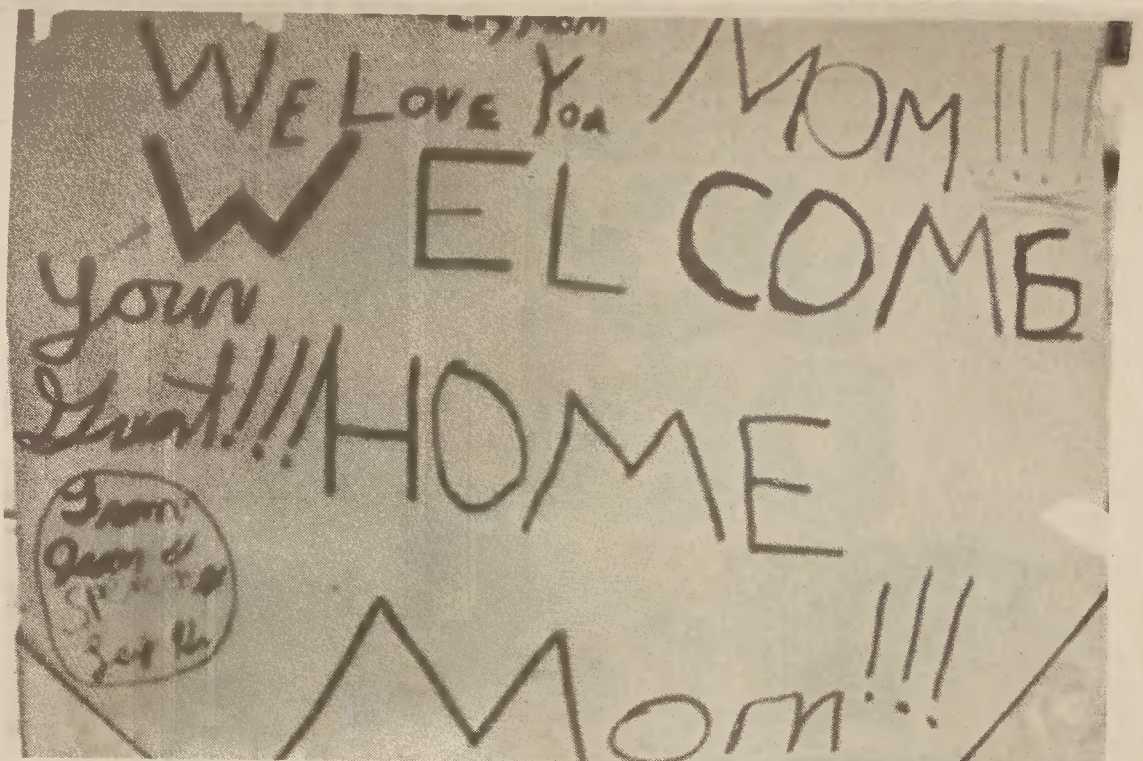
Radios, televisions, wheelcovers, and practically any item can be engraved with the owners' driver's license number, according to Officer Clary. Engravers will also be signed out to the public for use at home, Clary said.

"Operation Identification" will last between 9 a.m. to noon at the Charles I. Dover building on the Gardner-Webb campus Saturday, March 20.

In other news:

"I feel pretty good," said Mike Panther Wednesday morning. Panther, 17, underwent six-hour surgery Monday to repair spinal damage he suffered in an early-morning car wreck Saturday near Boiling Springs.

Oh, Boy!



Greetings from her three sons on this home- ferson Hamrick, born Feb. 26. The four boys and made sign met Kathryn Hamrick at the door when their parents, Kathryn and Cline Hamrick, run a she brought home their new brother, Miles Jeffrey dairy farm on College Farm Road.

At The Cross Roads. . .



"I saw him at the cross roads." "I heard it at the cross roads." "It happened at the cross roads." People and news traditionally have gathered under the road signs at Boiling Springs, and beginning this week

The Foothills View will bring you news of Boiling Springs gathered under our heading "At The Cross Roads." If you have an event you'd like to publicize, or a person you'd "just plain like to do some bragging on," send us the information at PO Box 982, and look for it "At The Cross Roads. . ."

— The Editor

"Where are the new heros?" asked a Shelby newspaper editor several months ago. In Boiling Springs, we can answer, at the home of Roscoe Barker.

In a dramatic rescue, Barker pulled to safety the occupant of a burning mobile home last Friday, after noticing under the heading "At The Cross Roads." The victim, Shag Dedmon, is in a satisfactory condition at Cleveland Memorial Hospital with second- and third-degree burns. Had Barker not pulled Dedmon out, he would have remained where

he fell, inside the burning trailer, a few feet from a door where Barker spotted him.

The View congratulates this brave man.

Congratulations also are in order for Becky Proctor and Derek Greene. Becky, the daughter of Drs. Dan and Lonnie Proctor of Gardner-Webb, and Derek, the son of Mr. and Mrs. Randall W. Greene of Shelby, were selected as James P. Porter Presidential Scholars from Crest Senior High School.

The program enabled the two to study government in Washington the week of Jan. 10-Feb. 6.

Crest Junior High is not lacking for honors either. The ninth grade band went to state contest March 5 and made a "superior" rating. Superior is the highest rating possible.

"Hope Lives Eternal in America" was the topic of the speech home delivered by Dr.

Craven Williams, president of Gardner-Webb College, at the monthly meeting of the Flinthills Chapter of the DAR. Mrs. Reba McSwain was welcomed as a new member.

History also lives in the Cleveland County's Historical Museum's exhibit on Polkville. The exhibit will be shown March 14, from 2-5 p.m., and includes such unusual items as a vinegar pump, a glass turkey compote, and a "tin" canning machine.