

Cinema caters to viewers' tastes

■ Brew & View offers beer, pizza, second-run movies

By DEBRA PRESSEY
News-Gazette Staff Writer

URBANA — If you love pizza, beer and movies, Brew & View is going to be your kind of place.

It's set to open March 1 in Urbana's vacant Thunderbird Theater, offering second-run movies in the evenings for a \$2 admission.

And, setting it apart from other discount cinemas, it will be staffed with waiters and waitresses to serve snacks, drinks and pizza at your seat.

There will be two or three different movies running each night, and for those who want to hang around for the entire evening, a single \$2 ticket will cover them all, says co-owner Barry Schain.

Schain and his partner George

Smiley are leasing the Thunderbird from building owner Ray Timpone.

The 33-year-old, single-screen Thunderbird at 710 S. Goodwin Ave. had been last leased and operated by the George Kerasotes Corp. before it closed in October 1994.

Schain said the beer-pizza-movie combination is a great use for old single-screen theaters that have been beaten out by the new, huge multiplex theaters in their communities.

Plus, they can double as multipurpose entertainment facilities and meeting space, he said.

Movies will be the mainstay of Brew & View at the Thunderbird, Schain said, but he and his partner have lots of other plans in mind.

"We'll do festivals, retrospectives, comedians, bands," he said. "We're available for private parties, conventions, meetings and speakers."

They also plan to open up for

'We'll do festivals, retrospectives, comedians, bands. ... We're available for private parties, conventions, meetings and speakers.'

— Barry Schain,
co-owner of Brew & View

Monday night football and televised Illini sports, luring sports fans with the ultimate big-screen TV of their dreams and somebody to bring the beer.

Schain said he and Smiley have already tried the Brew & View concept in Chicago and found it popular. They opened their Chicago Brew & View in 1992 at 3145 N. Sheffield, near Wrigley Field.

They also own two standard theaters in Michigan and Wis-

consin.

At the Urbana Brew & View, the movie selection and special events will be geared to the college crowd during the school year and families in the summer, Schain said.

Remodeling is already in progress to enlarge leg room, add cup holders at each seat and add more aisle space. About 89 seats will be eliminated, leaving 800.

The concession area is also being redone for food preparation and the addition of a bar and beer cooler — though the owners plan to contract with a local pizzeria to provide the pizza.

Brew & View will employ about 30. The manager, Joe Avampato, managed a Schain/Smiley theater in LaCrosse, Wis..

Movies will run at 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. each night, with a midnight show on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays.

Matinees may be added later, Schain said.



News-Gazette photo by Delfina Colby

Marshall Wise and Hazel Wise, owners of Bracy's Cleaners, 104 N. Fourth St., C, are retiring from the business after 32 years.

Retiring, but with no plans

By PAUL WOOD
News-Gazette Staff Writer

Marshall Wise looks around the small basement business he's operated for 31 years and announces his plans to retire.

"As soon as we finish what's up on the racks," he says.

It looks like a few more days' work for Marshall and wife Hazel, who took over Bracy's Cleaners in 1957 and have kept the business alive by a combination of hard work, hard work and hard work.

Unlike many businesses with streamlined services, Bracy's has offered alterations, repairs and hat blocking along with various cleaning procedures, both under the original owner, who died a few years ago, and under the Wises.

There are no plans to keep Bracy's going — it will revert to being Mrs. Syke's basement on Fourth Street in Champaign, less than a block from a more recent and more spacious cleaner.

"They didn't put us out of business, we just thought it was time," Hazel says.

ONE OR THE OTHER of the Wises, who didn't feel the

PROFILE

Names: Marshall and Hazel Wise

Hometown: Champaign, for both of them.

Age: 'Now I can't recall,' Marshall says, laughing.

Occupation: Soon-to-be-retired cleaners

Hobbies: Fishing, American Legion, family togetherness

Secret of success: 'Hard work,' Hazel says. 'You have to be here all the time if you want to make it.'

Tip for entrepreneurs: 'Don't keep to one neighborhood or you'll get killed. You have to get out there,' says Marshall, who always paid for a big Yellow Pages ad.

How the little guy fares: 'You can't compete with the big chains. They can underprice you any time,' Marshall says.

reveal their ages, has been in the cleaning business since Marshall, a decorated sergeant in the Pacific theater of World War II, mustered out of the Army Air Corps in 1945.

The Wises, both of whom grew up in Champaign, married the next year, and Marshall found work in several different cleaners.

"I must have worked for everybody in town," he says.

Three daughters later, he felt ready to run his own shop — with his wife as partner.

"He had to teach me everything," she says.

"Now she knows more than the teacher," he says.

Working in limited space six days a week for more than 30 years either brings a couple together or tears it apart.

"It worked out pretty good; we didn't kill each other," Marshall

DESPITE YEARS OF experience in cleaning, he did find that owning his own business had some surprises in store. "You learn a lot, about people mainly," he says.

None of their three daughters (Marsha, Margaret and Harriet) chose to join the family business and their five grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren are too young to have the option. That's OK with the Wises. "They've done real well for themselves," Hazel says.

Work and family sum up Marshall and Hazel, her sister Ruby Smith says. "They were never the type to run around, they've always worked hard."

So closing Bracy's for good leaves wide open the question of what to do with the retirement years.

"I haven't thought about it," Marshall says, pensively smoking. "I have a lot of hat blocks if any-

Death's real face is his message

■ Funeral home operator seeks to educate teens

By The Associated Press
and The News-Gazette

EVANSVILLE, Ind. — Michael J. Bluitt knows what it's like to reconstruct the face of a youth who has taken six bullets in a gang fight.

Bluitt, whose family owns three funeral homes in Indiana and one in Champaign, wants teen-agers to see the harsh realities of death.

"The youth have this idea from their videos and music that death is glamorous and it is an honor," Bluitt said.

"But death is not like television where you get a little blood on your shirt," he said. "They

need to know what a kid looks like who has taken a bullet in the head: the blood, the swelling and the disfiguration."

Bluitt's brother, Nathan Bluitt, owns Bluitt-Parker Funeral Home in Champaign, according to Manager Jesse Powe.

Michael Bluitt wants to take his message to schools. He's working with Jackie Hardin, director of the C.K. Newsome Community Center, and plans to have the first presentation there.

Hardin then will help him approach schools.

Bluitt said the reality of death needs to be presented to counteract the effect of drugs and gangs.

He plans to take a coffin with him when talking to students. A mirror will be displayed inside the coffin so that youngsters will see themselves when they look

in. He also wants them to see a body bag and a gurney.

Bluitt said he has seen the gang problem escalate in the Indianapolis area, where he operates a funeral home.

He believes he can influence kids by telling them what it's like to inform a mother that her child has died in a violent manner.

"She is such a bunch of nerves she can't answer questions like the birth date of her child," he said. "It's painful to bring up a child for 20 years and then lose them."

He has had to make youths presentable so that their mothers can see them one last time.

"It's hard to wipe the trauma off the face of a person who has been shot six times," he said.

Bluitt said he's trying to show youths they are not immortal.

We're Glad You Asked!



**Nathan L. Bluitt
Funeral Director**

Bluitt-Parker Funeral Home

**Sincere, Sympathetic Services
704 N. 4th St., Ch.**

Is a Funeral Necessary?

Death is one of the most difficult losses we can experience — especially the death of a family member or spouse.

The wake and funeral services can be “tools” that help us accept the fact of death and permanent separation as the real thing. The wake becomes a time of consolation to those who have experienced the loss — a time for friends to **SHARE** their grief.

The funeral helps us remember the life of the lost one. It provides strength for the family and friends and communicates to all those attending that this life is now permanently separated from ours.

It is my experience that some who do not attend the funeral of a loved and close one suffer more afterwards. The funeral can become the first stepping stone to the rebuilding of our own lives without the presence of the deceased.

Call us if you'd like more helpful information and booklets on the subject of funerals.

Sunday, July 9, 2006

GREAT EXPLORATIONS

Champaign man traveled many paths before becoming Great Impasta owner

By PAUL WOOD

pwood@news-gazette.com

CHAMPAIGN — Long before he became a restaurateur, Harold Allston dreamed of being a chess champion, or the next Great American Novelist.

But a chance job he took at the now-defunct Greater Downtown Food & Beverage restaurant in downtown Champaign started him on a different path.

"Working on the front line was like performance art," he said of his first cook job, making food from scratch in full view of customers.

Now in his late 40s, Allston is a family man with a wife and two children, his traveling days from restaurant to restaurant long past.

His restaurant, the Great Impasta, requires long hours of work, but Allston said he feels like family there, too — the Faracis, the first operators of the restaurant, took him into their family and helped him buy it.

Allston grew up an Air Force brat, living all over the world. As a boy, he studied Russian so that he could understand Soviet chess magazines — his suspicious subscription causing his father to be interrogated by military intelligence.

"Until I knew that, I couldn't figure out why the magazines were all so dog-eared by the time I got them," he says. Apparently, the investigators thought there might be a code in the chess problems.

The Allstons moved to Rantoul and then Champaign when the future restaurateur was nearly finished with high school.

He hung around the Illini Union vending room taking on all comers, and always winning.

"I was addicted to chess," Allston says now.

Steven B. Dowd, a master chess player now living in Alabama, recalled him as a teen "chess prodigy."

Allston entered the University of Illinois to study English and comparative literature,

Harold Allston

Occupation: owner of the Great Impasta

Home: Champaign

Family: wife Nancy Yeagle; sons Langston and Marshall

Favorite books: "The Invisible Man," Ralph Ellison; "100 Years of Solitude," Gabriel Garcia Marquez; "Heat," Bill Buford, is a recent favorite.

Favorite sport: cycling

Who would you most like to meet? Prince

Favorite home as a child: England's Hampstead Heath

Favorite vacation place: Hawaii

Favorite family activity: ride bicycles

with the intention of honing his creative writing skills. Along the way, he gave up chess cold turkey to concentrate on his studies.

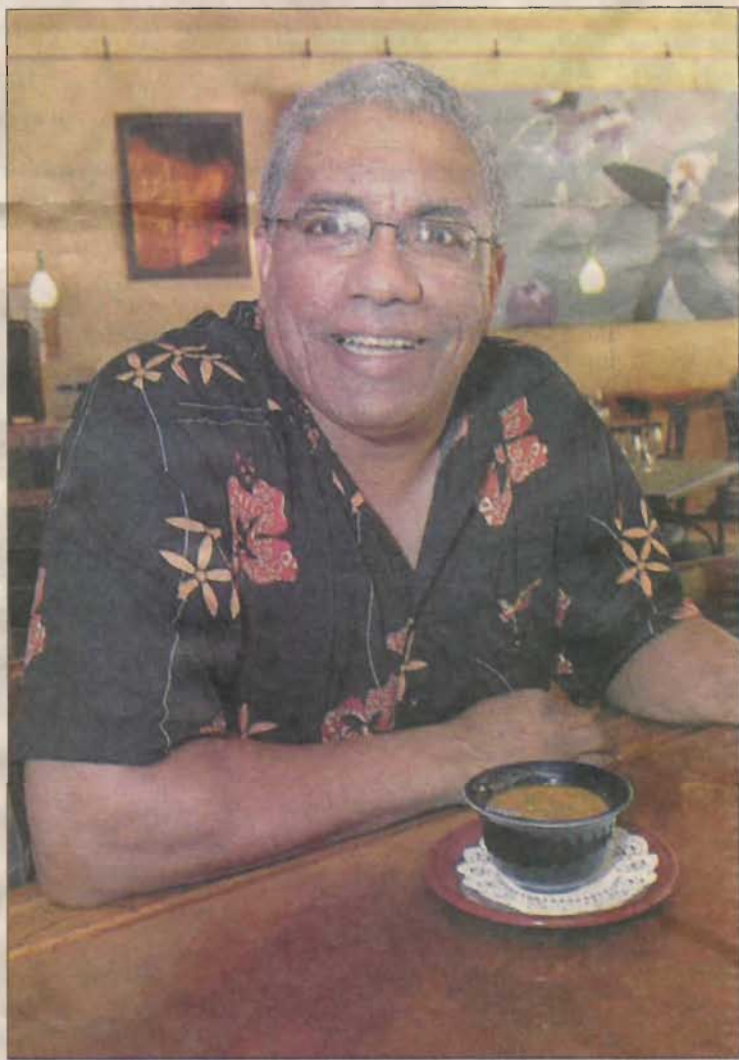
Right out of college, he applied for a New York book-editing job, but had second thoughts. A friend was running a bed-and-breakfast in Virginia. In Hot Springs, golfer Sam Snead was opening up a restaurant, and Allston signed on.

After turns as a chef at the now-gone Snak's Fifth Avenue here and in Bloomington, Ind., he came back to stay as the chef at the Great Impasta, where Piero Faraci was creating northern Italian dishes. Allston added some touches from his Louisiana grandmother, including the gumbo that has been a mainstay of the menu.

Along the way, he married Nancy Yeagle, an occupational therapist, and they have raised two sons, Langston, 14, and Marshall, 9. The family enjoys bicycling together, and Marshall is on a chess team.

His second family, the Faracis, gave him "enormous support" in the 1980s.

The Great Impasta Restaurant was founded in 1983 by Piero Faraci, whose face is stylized in the restaurant's logo. He came to this country from Italy in 1952. The first



Darrell Hoemann/The News-Gazette

Harold Allston, sitting in the dining room of the Great Impasta with one of his favorite soups, began as a cook at the downtown Champaign restaurant.

restaurant was next to Greater Downtown and shared a kitchen and bathrooms.

Allston moved up from cook to manager to prospective owner over the years.

In July 2000, the Great Impasta moved to its present location, three times as large. On its second floor, Allston has added large and well-equipped banquet space in the last year.

"Piero had some concerns about my wanting such a large space," Allston says. But he supported him anyway. Mr. Faraci died in 2002.

Allston also worked at Flora Faraci's book shop, Jane

Addams in downtown Champaign.

"He worked every Tuesday for several years, and I would go to Chicago to buy books," she said.

She said she felt comfortable leaving the store in his hands.

"Harold has good judgment," she said. "He's really well-read, especially with modern first editions of authors like (Don) DeLillo."

Allston, who is on the board of directors of the Crisis Nursery, said he wants to give back to the community.

"It has turned out to be a wonderful place to live," he said.

Commentary

A debt of thanks for years of dedication

As one gets older, death becomes ever more a reality. As a young lawyer, the clients who died, with few exceptions, were either elderly or had been my father's. I knew them, but I did not know them. Now the clients are mine; the friends are mine; the relatives are mine, and many of my peers have fallen by the way-side.

Even if they are older, they are close to me, and the pain is felt more deeply.

Such a person passed away recently at the age of 90. He was a wonderful man, one of eight children. Born in Mississippi, he moved to Texas and in 1932 migrated to Champaign-Urbana. He opened a body shop on East Vine Street — opened it, owned it and ran it to perfection. There was nothing mechanical he could not fix.

I do not remember how old I was when I first met this gentleman, but I suspect that I must have been about 14 because that is when I started working for my grandfather in his beer business during the summer vacation months.

To be sold, beer has to be delivered, and my grandfather John's little fleet of three trucks and a Model A Ford Coupe required constant attention and care. I remember him trying out all of the big garages and finally settling on the gentleman on East Vine Street. It was a decision my grand-

**John
Hirschfeld**
From where
I stand



father never regretted. Day or night, weekday or weekend, the Auto Body Shop would be opened for business if the beer and beverage company needed work performed. The vehicles would often be picked up at 6 p.m., worked on throughout the night, and brought back at 6 a.m. the next day, ready again to ply their trade.

That type of service and dedication may still exist, but I suspect it is rare.

Much of our success in the beer business those early days can be laid directly on the doorstep of the proprietor of 602 E. Vine St. I doubt very much if my grandfather ever properly expressed his appreciation for such dedication. My father may not have either. Fortunately, this gentleman and his wonderful wife later became my law clients, and the three of us had several opportunities to reminisce over his keeping the rolling stock going, often times with little more than Band-Aids and bobby pins.

Frank Hendricks died on Oct. 27, 1992. Both his newspaper obit-

uary and his memorial pamphlet carried a picture of him, looking exactly as I always remembered him: a balding, gray-headed black gentleman with furrowed eyebrows, dressed in his impeccable white shirt and tie with his ever-present cigar stuck in the right corner of his mouth. I could almost hear Frank say, "You want that truck back when?"

Our family and our former business owe Frank Hendricks a great debt of thanks. I will publicly acknowledge it here. I am only happy that I had the opportunity to do it privately before Frank died.

Eulogies expressed before death mean more, I think.

Prominent
Mechanic



of
Mr. Frank Hendricks, one of
Champaign's "A" No. 1 Mechanics,
operates an Auto garage at 602 East
Vine St. He with his brother, George
enjoy more patronage than they
can handle. We cooperate them.

Hendrickses

Frank and Ruth Hendricks, 1908 Joanne Lane, Champaign, will celebrate their 51st wedding anniversary at a family dinner.

Mr. and Mrs. Hendricks were married March 27, 1937, in Cham-

paign.

Mr. Hendricks operated Hendricks Body Shop from 1941 until his retirement in 1978. Mrs. Hendricks is retired from the Housing Division at the University of Illinois.

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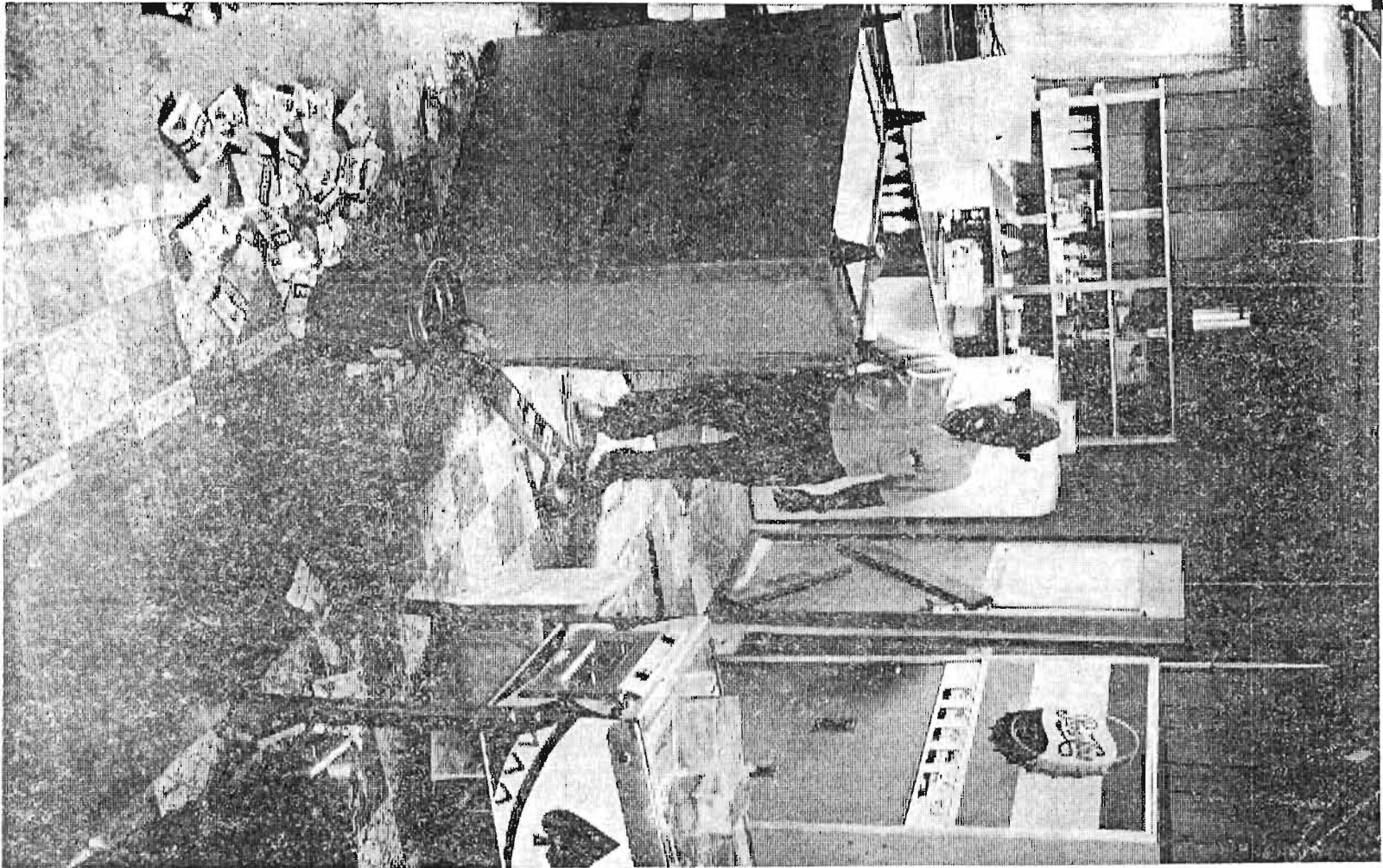
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CANDY STORE VANDALIZED

The candy store that Frank Hendricks runs in conjunction with his auto body shop, at 602 E. Vine St., Champaign, was burglarized Wednesday

night, for the third time in about a year. Hendricks, shown here surveying the damage, said about \$150 worth of candy, food and cleaning

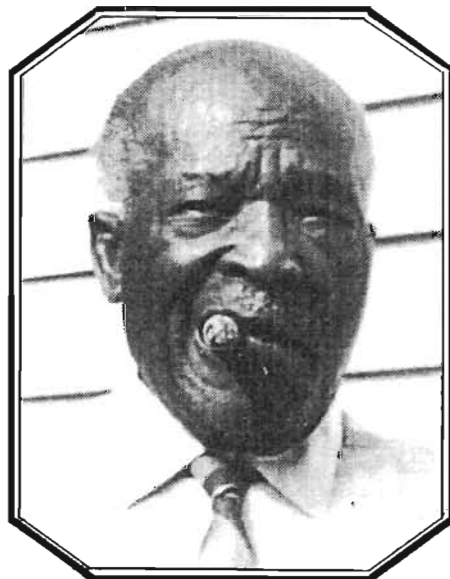
supplies was taken. Burglars also extensively damaged the store, strewn food about and breaking into vending machines for the money.

(Photo by Phil Greer)

Hendricks Auto Body Shop 1941 — 1975

Frank Hendricks, a resident of Champaign, Illinois since 1932, became the founder and owner of the first African-American automobile body shop in the Champaign-Urbana Area.

Hendricks' Auto Body Shop was located at 602 East Vine Street, Champaign, and was a leading employer and on-the-job training center for numerous African-American males in the Champaign-Urbana Community. Hendricks' Auto Body Shop served the Champaign-Urbana Community for 35 years, closing in 1975 when Mr. Hendricks retired.



Mr. Frank Hendricks



" AT Work "

Mr. FRANK HENDRICKS - First African-American owned & operated
Automobile Body Shop in Champaign, Illinois.

JACKSON'S BBQ TO COME



Groundbreaking
story —
Tomorrow

NEWS

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NEWS / EAST CENTRAL ILLINOIS

Finger-lickin' good news on First St.

Brothers with
BBQ in veins plan
new restaurant

J. PHILIP BLOOMER
News-Gazette Staff Writer

CHAMPAIGN — The Jacksons got this thing started up here, this lip-smackin', finger-lickin', 10-napkin kind of southern 'q.' They broke our hearts when they shut it down. Now they're promising to fill our souls and our bellies with a comeback.

Jackson's Ribs and Tips Restaurant and Lounge should open by summer. Groundbreaking, on the site of the original Jackson's Lounge at 116 N. First St., C, is set to begin next month.

"We got our own style of 'q.' No steaming, no boiling, just pit. The way it was meant," said Lawrence Jackson, the son of the original owners, L.C. Jackson.

Lawrence and his brother, Larry Algee, have been working the last four years to get the current prepared as part of

they admit their own style is different than that of the barbecue produced by their father and his brothers.

"There's a little bit of competition. We'll see in the long run whose is better," Lawrence Jackson said.

Still, the original Jackson's BBQ is where they developed their interest in the business. Their uncles Eddie and Willie had been lead chefs at the old Urbana Lincoln Hotel, now Jumer's. Willie Jackson also owned a store on U.S. 45 before opening Jackson's Lounge on North First Street in 1980.

Lawrence and Larry's version of Jackson's Lounge is more ambitious. The store will have a restaurant seating up to 70 on one side and a lounge seating up to 150 on the other. Most of the original Jackson's Lounge will be torn down, and the new version will take in 116 and 118 N. First St.

Bruce Knight, the city's plan director, said the city is still working toward acquiring 114 N. First St., which will be used for an outdoor patio.

"We got our own style of 'q.' No steaming, no boiling, just pit. The way it was meant."

— Lawrence Jackson, co-owner of Jackson's Ribs and Tips Restaurant and Lounge, scheduled to begin construction at 116 N. First St., C, next month



Lawrence Jackson, left, and Larry Algee, right, flank their father, L.C. Jackson, in front of the old Jackson's Restaurant and Lounge next month at the site of their dad's old barbecue restaurant and lounge.

News-Gazette photo by Robin Scholtz

restaurant and lounge should open by summer. Groundbreaking, on the site of the original Jackson's Lounge at 116 N. First St., C, is set to begin next month.

"We got our own style of 'q.' No steaming, no boiling, just pit. The way it was meant," said Lawrence Jackson, the son of one of the original owners, L.C. Jackson.

Lawrence and his brother, Larry Algee, have been working the last four years to get the restaurant reopened as part of the city's broader North First Street revitalization plan. In November, they received the final approvals necessary from the city for what will be a half-million-dollar undertaking and what will also be a cornerstone for the street's redevelopment.

Part of the street is already streetscaped." The Lone Star Lodge is approaching completion and the new Rose and Taylor barbershop is open.

What's missing, the brothers say, is a barbecue place and lounge in the southern tradition.

Their cooking style and flavors they bring to their meats are patterned after another ne-time North First Street fixture — Gene's Hickory Pit, which used to be on the west side of North First Street before the police station was built in the early 1980s.

They talk reverently of what Gene's Hickory Pit produced, and

Lawrence and Larry's version of Jackson's Lounge is more ambitious. The store will have a restaurant seating up to 70 on one side and a lounge seating up to 150 on the other. Most of the original Jackson's Lounge will be torn down, and the new version will take in 116 and 118 N. First St.

Bruce Knight, the city's plan director, said the city is still working toward acquiring 114 N. First St., which will be used for an outdoor patio.

"But since it's designed for outdoor seating, the rest of the project can go ahead," Knight said. "We don't want to do anything to delay the Jacksons. We're excited and glad to see them move forward."

The one-story building will have a brick front and limestone accents with a more historic styling also compatible with the architecture on other new developments in the area.

As their father and uncles before them, Lawrence and Larry hope their menu will again draw a diverse crowd. They plan a variety of daily specials, Sunday after-church dinners, and a variety of attractions in the lounge, including sports nights, DJ nights, karaoke nights and live music.

"We want everyone to feel welcome and comfortable," Algee said. "I think people will like it. Everybody keeps asking when it's going to happen. Now we're ready to start building."



News-Gazette photo by Robin Schol

Lawrence Jackson, left, and Larry Algee, right, flank their father, L.C. Jackson, in front of the old Jackson Restaurant Open Pit & Lounge at 116 N. First St., C. The brothers plan to break ground

The project overall is valued at \$539,000 and is made possible through a combination of resources, including a \$150,000 grant from the city, a \$133,000 loan from the Community Development Corp., a \$133,000 loan from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Community Affairs and a \$53,000 loan from the Champaign County Regional Planning Commission.

The city grant is part of a program for the revitalization of North First Street under which projects can be assisted for up to 50 percent of eligible project costs, meaning necessary code improvements, facade and other permanent improvements.

Knight said that level of city assistance is called for, given the fact that North First Street has been so depressed for so

long. The city brought in consultants to work with property owners and determine the combination of public and private reinvestment that would be required to improve the area.

"We've been working at this a lot of years, and we're finally seeing some results," Knight said. One project is completed, another is approaching completion and the Jackson's project is the third major one to be undertaken.

"We're particularly excited about the Jacksons because they're bringing back a local connection. It's a great place to eat, and they've shown unbelievable dedication," Knight said.

The brothers' initial proposals were rejected, but Knight said they changed plans, brought in more capital, scaled back and "kept coming back."

next month at the site of their dad's old barbecue restaurant and open Jackson's Ribs and Tips Restaurant and Lounge there by summer.

"That level of dedication bodes well for their ultimate success," Knight said.

The brothers said they had four proposals rejected over the last four years. They credited community activist John Lee Johnson, architect John Sevens, business adviser Ed Adrain and former city planner Karen Stonehouse for providing the expertise and motivation to keep them on track.

"It takes a lot of patience and knowing what buttons to push," Lawrence said. "A lot of times, we wanted to back out, but we didn't. It's a gift from God that we've been given this opportunity. Now with the other things going on, we can help liven up First Street like the way it used to be."

A once-busy commercial corridor, the street has remained underdeveloped and blighted

for most of 30 years. Before that, Main Street ran through the viaduct by the railroad station over to First Street. The old Commercial Bank was on the northwest corner of First and University and businesses like Gene's Hickory Pit, Beasley's Restaurant, Rainbow Tavern, the Spider Web, barbershops, a market and other establishments filled three blocks north of University.

When the police station was moved to the west side of North First Street in 1982, a Maryland consulting firm hired by the city predicted an upsurge in economic activity there. The opposite happened.

"People need places to go," Larry Algee said. "We're starting to get there. We're hoping to have a whole new First Street with the best barbecue in town."

Jackson's Ribs-n-Tips opens soon

Building sits
site of old
family restaurant

EBRA PRESSEY

Gazette Staff Writer

CHAMPAIGN — There's more than one way to cook a slab of ribs, but Lawrence Jackson and his brother, Larry Algee, say the very best ribs are barbecued to tender perfection over just the right kind of fire. That is — no steaming, no boil-

When folks visit Jackson's and Algee's new restaurant in downtown Champaign, they'll find ribs hot off a grill that Jackson says looks like a giant pit.

"I think that's the more natural way to do barbecue," he adds. Jackson's Ribs-n-Tips Restaurant & Lounge is set to open in the first week of August in a brand-new building at 116 N. St.

The building was constructed on the same site as the old Jackson's Restaurant and Lounge, which was once operated by Jackson and Algee's father, L.C. Jackson, and their two uncles.

Lawrence Jackson points out everything in the new place,

from the dining area to the kitchen, with pride.

There are both tables and booths inside, and an outdoor patio is being added to extend the seating area. There is also an area for dancing and live music and a bar area that can be separated from the dining area by a rollaway wall.

Being able to separate the bar from the restaurant in the evening is important, Jackson said, because he and his brother want to encourage families to come and bring their kids to eat dinner and feel comfortable.

Along with ribs, rib tips and side dishes, Jackson's will serve pork, beef and Polish sausage sandwiches, chicken wings, catfish nuggets and daily soul food lunches.

The menu for soul food lunches will change every day and include such dishes as ham, pork chops, sweet potatoes, mashed potatoes, meatloaf, round steak and gravy, smoked ham hocks, black-eyed peas, fried chicken, greens, cornbread, cake and fruit cobbler.

Soul food lunches will be served cafeteria-style. Ribs and other items on the main menu will also be available at lunchtime, Jackson said.

Food will also be available for



Robert K. O'Daniell/The News-Gazette

From left, Larry Algee, Jean Algee and Lawrence Jackson stand at the pit of their new restaurant — Jackson's Ribs-N-Tips Restau-

rant & Lounge. The restaurant is to open in August in a new building at 116 N. First St., C.

carryout, and Jackson said phoned-in orders will be encouraged at lunchtime, "cause we know people are short on time."

On Sundays, the soul food buffet will stretch from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. to accommodate the after-church crowd, Algee said. There won't be any alcohol served during that time, but there will be gospel music to accompany the food, said Algee's wife, Jean, who will also be helping at the

restaurant.

Jackson and Algee, both of whom say they perfected their rib-cooking techniques at home in their own yards, will be the barbecue chefs.

Also helping at the restaurant will be other family members, including their father; their uncle, Eddie Jackson; Larry and Jean Algee's two teen-age daughters, Brittany and Tekyra; Larry Algee's mother, Mozell

Avant; and his niece, Sharise Algee.

Algee and Jackson said their father, who suffered a stroke in the mid-1980s, is a part-owner who will help out but won't be actively involved in the day-to-day operation.

Jackson said he wants his father to enjoy the new restaurant.

"Without him, we wouldn't be here," he adds.

The revival of Jackson's has been in the works for several years, and it started with L.C. Jackson urging his sons to reopen the place.

The original Jackson's was operated by L.C. and Eddie Jackson and their brother, the late Willie Jackson, from 1980 to 1992.

Please see RESTAURANT, C-6

Jackson's: Come for the barbecue, but don't forget the catfish

CHAMPAIGN — Jackson's Ribs-N-Tips Restaurant & Lounge seems to be the new community meeting place.

It serves up barbecue, soul food lunches, liquor and evening music and fun.

The new building housing the business was a three-year project for the Lawrence Jackson and Larry Algee families. Friends, city and regional planners, a small business development center and bank lending officers collaborated to make the business a reality. It was built on the site of the original Jackson's, owned by relatives of Jackson and Algee, that operated from 1980 to 1992.

The new, spotlessly clean dining room with tables and booths can be separated from the bar area at night with sliding doors and separate entrances.

A sign outside proclaims the cooks' philosophy: "No steamin', no boilin', just pit the way it was meant to be."

On a Saturday, when I sampled the food, I saw teen-agers, police officers who work across the street, construction workers, delivery people and seniors eating in or carrying out food.

All the "regulars" made a point to nod or say hello and tell me I had to go to the counter to order.

When my friend arrived, we tried to figure out what we wanted from the menu posted on the wall.

We both were interested in the restaurant's specialty, rib tips, but we couldn't figure out why the large and regular bucket were both \$4.99. Up at the counter, the cashier pointed out that there were some very faint numbers in front of the 4.99s. Those numbers made the large bucket, which serves five to six people, cost \$24.99, and the regular bucket, which serves three to four people, \$14.99.

Back at our table, we regrouped and, instead, decided to order a \$6.25 rib tip dinner with two sides; the \$4.25 chicken wings, \$4.75 catfish nuggets and another side of cole slaw, all to share. The \$21.25 total provided enough food for two leftover meals.

The large, pork rib tips were covered with a mild sauce and proved to be a chewy lot with lots of gristle, fat and bone to chew around — just like my friend likes them. I'm more a fan of chain restaurant baby back ribs where the meat falls off the bone.

To add fire, there are bottles of hot sauce on every table.

The chicken wings were also completely different from those on chain restaurant appetizer menus. Jackson's serves up the whole wing. A basket of them are a meal and a half and fried perfectly with little lingering grease.

The beans, potato salad and cole slaw sides came

FAST FACTS

Jackson's Ribs-N-Tips Restaurant & Lounge 116 N. First Street, Champaign 355-2916

Hours: Opens at 11 a.m. Sunday and Monday, Wednesday through Saturday. Closes at 10 p.m. weeknights when business is slow; closes at 2 a.m. Saturday and Sunday. Soul food lunches from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Monday and Wednesday through Friday. Closed Tuesdays.

Credit cards: American Express, Discover, MasterCard and Visa

Reservations: Accommodated for large groups

Smoking: On bar side

Handicapped: Accessible via ramp on south side to side door

On the Web: www.jacksonsribstips.com

Lynda Zimmer visits restaurants anonymously and unannounced. The News-Gazette pays for all meals and does not accept invitations to do a review.

breaded with a crunchy cornmeal and fried, they were cooked just right and did not darken the paper in the basket with grease. I might have added some lemon juice, if it had been available. I did ask for and get some tartar sauce, but those gems were great on their own.

We got our \$1.25 iced tea and soft drink beverages from a self-serve fountain.

Other items on the daily menu are slabs of ribs; pork, beef and Polish sausage sandwiches; and a side of French fries. A full slab with two sides is a pricey \$20.99.

For even more variety, if you can ignore the great smell of barbecue, try a weekday soul food lunch: meatloaf or pork chops on Monday, fried chicken or beef liver and onions on Wednesday, round steak or pigs' feet and tails on Thursday and whole catfish, whiting fillets or salmon croquettes on Friday. The side dishes on the buffet include things like mashed potatoes and gravy, macaroni and cheese, greens, corn bread, sweet potatoes, green beans, blackeyed peas and hush puppies.

Lawrence Jackson, one of the owners, said the plan was to keep his new business on Champaign's First Street open until 1 a.m. every night, but weeknight business had been slow enough to close at 10 p.m.

Now, the restaurant and lounge has added some weeknight activities to boost attendance:

- Monday night football on a big-screen television and \$1 cover charge.

- Wednesday game night with cards and dominos.

- Thursday karaoke and \$1 cover charge.

- Friday recorded hip/hop and rhythm and blues music with a deejay; ladies free before 10 p.m. and a \$3 cover charge for men and everyone after 10 p.m.

- Saturday recorded rhythm and blues and oldies music with a deejay and \$3 cover charge.

- Sunday rhythm and blues and jazz music,



LYNDA ZIMMER

— DINING OUT

but don't forget the catfish

CHAMPAIGN — Jackson's Ribs-N-Tips Restaurant & Lounge seems to be the new community meeting place.

It serves up barbecue, soul food lunches, liquor and evening music and fun.

The new building housing the business was a three-year project for the Lawrence Jackson and Larry Algee families. Friends, city and regional planners, a small business development center and bank lending officers collaborated to make the business a reality. It was built on the site of the original Jackson's, owned by relatives of Jackson and Algee, that operated from 1980 to 1992.

The new, spotlessly clean dining room with tables and booths can be separated from the bar area at night with sliding doors and separate entrances.

A sign outside proclaims the cooks' philosophy: "No steamin', no boilin', just pit the way it was meant to be."

On a Saturday, when I sampled the food, I saw teen-agers, police officers who work across the street, construction workers, delivery people and seniors eating in or carrying out food.

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We both were interested in the restaurant's specialty, rib tips, but we couldn't figure out why the large and regular bucket were both \$4.99. Up at the counter, the cashier pointed out that there were some very faint numbers in front of the 4.99s. Those numbers made the large bucket, which serves five to six people, cost \$24.99, and the regular bucket, which serves three to four people, \$14.99.

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The chicken wings were also completely different from those on chain restaurant appetizer menus. Jackson's serves up the whole wing. A basket of them are a meal and a half and fried perfectly with little lingering grease.

The beans, potato salad and cole slaw sides came in tiny plastic cups. Available for 99 cents each, we recommend the potato salad as the best.

Even though I was in the mood for barbecue, I pigged out on the large catfish nuggets. Perfectly

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— Sunday rhythm and blues and jazz music, steppers dancers and a \$3 cover charge.

Liquor includes 42 mixed drinks ranging in price from \$3.50 to \$7 each, draft beer for \$1.50, and other beers for \$2 to \$2.50 per bottle. ■



LYNDA ZIMMER

— DINING OUT

A helping hand for entrepreneurs

Cleaners credit center's consultants for free start-up help

by **DON DODSON**
News-Gazette Staff Writer

SAVOY — Clarence Jones always wanted to go into business for himself. But he retired from careers in the military and postal service without opening his own business.

Six years after his death, his four daughters are making his dream their own. One of them, LaDonna Drake, has started Jones Cleaning Service, a business that cleans apartments and offices. Now virtually the whole Jones family is involved.

Drake said she's not sure she could have pulled it off without help from Tom Monahan at the Small Business Development Center in Champaign.

"I went there scared, not knowing what to do, what I was going to say," she said. "Rather than sitting behind a desk, Tom put me at a workstation beside him and made me feel comfortable. I'm a minority, and there was no thinking that the business wouldn't fit that I'm not the right type of person to do this. He made me feel like everything was OK."

Drake said Monahan gave her explicit instructions and guidelines for starting a business.

"I did everything he told me to do, and I pulled it off," she said. "I pulled off with a bang."

In less than a month, Drake had cleaned out 60 rooms to clean.

"I went back to Tom, to tell him how



John Dixon / The News-Gazette

From left, Idell Dollison, LaDonna Drake, Inez Jones and Pamela Peoples show off the tools of their trade in an Urbana apartment. The four women have formed a small

business called Jones Cleaning Service that cleans apartments and offices. Not pictured is Sylvia Briscoe, the business's financial adviser.

good I'd done and to ask more questions," she said. "The second time, I felt better, reassured that I could do

anything."

Monahan has been with the Small Business Development Center since January. That's when he joined longtime Extension educator Bill Wilkinson in staffing the Champaign office, inside the Champaign County Alliance suite at 1817 S. Neil St., C.

Wilkinson has been director of the center for about nine years, dividing his time between the Decatur and Champaign-Urbana offices. It wasn't until this year that the Champaign office was staffed full time, with the

Germ of an idea: 'Mom was always cleaning'

SAVOY — Lots of moms get credit for clean living. But LaDonna Drake's mom gets credit for teaching her daughters a clean way to make a living.

"My mom was always cleaning. She embedded it in our heads," said Drake, who recently started Jones Cleaning Service. "So that helped us a little bit in knowing how to clean."

Drake, 44, of Savoy has managed to make her enterprise — cleaning apartments and offices — a business that involves the whole family.

Her sisters — Idell Dollison, Pamela Peoples and Sylvia Briscoe — are all involved to some extent, as is their mother, Inez Jones.

"We're a close-knit family, and all of us wanted to do a business venture," Drake said. "But no one had taken the initiative to do that."

Everyone brings her own skills to the business.

"Idell has a master's in communications and training. Pam has a degree in criminal law and is good about talking to people and (preparing) publications. Sylvia (who lives in Florida) has a financial degree and is acting as a financial adviser," Drake said. "My mom's just Mom. She's a cleaning expert."

"Mom" also brings management



Please see **SMALL BUSINESS, C-2**

Please see **CLEANING, C-2**

Cleaning

Continued from C-1

skills to the business, having managed dining hall facilities at the former Chanute Air Force Base.

Drake contacted apartment managers and arranged to clean apartments before new tenants moved in.

"We also clean businesses as well as medical and clinical facilities," she said. "And we do construction cleanup. After a builder has finished building a new house, we make it present-

able for the buyer."

Drake assesses each situation before negotiating a price.

"We charge pretty much not by the hour, but by the job and what needs to be done," she said. "Most apartment managers have a detailed list (of tasks), and we charge by detail."

Drake works as an administrative assistant at Kelley Vault Co. in Urbana. She said the company's owner, Bonnie Kelley, has been an inspiration for her.

"She encouraged me to better myself and not to be afraid of

taking that step of going back to school," Drake said.

Drake is the only one of the four sisters without a college degree, but that may change soon. She has enrolled at Parkland College, with hopes of getting a degree in computer science or computer design.

But she plans to continue her work at Kelley Vault, where she assists with cremations along with other tasks.

"I'm not ready to give up my day job," she said.

— DON DODSON

Chili harvest looking grim for New Mexico farmers

ALBUQUERQUE, N.M. (AP) — New Mexico chili farmer Joe Lujan works the soil his family has tilled for more than half a century, keeping a watchful eye on the plants whose delicate leaves conceal shiny, spicy green pods.

Lujan can predict yields with an accuracy born of experience. And with harvest season under way, this year's crop, battered by disease and persistent Southwestern drought, looks grim.

"I can tell it's not going to be a productive year," said Lujan of Las Cruces, N.M. "We've farmed through the droughts of the 1950s and '70s, but this is

the worst."

Farmers throughout southern New Mexico's Hatch and Mesilla valleys are facing a lack of water from Elephant Butte and Caballo reservoirs, a problem that has led to fewer acres for planting. They've also had to combat plant-attacking bugs and disease.

The result is that the 2003 chili season may prove to be among the toughest for farmers in the nation's leading chili-producing state, which last year yielded 96,400 tons of peppers.

Lujan now relies on water pumped from wells to keep his 35 acres alive, running him an

extra \$2,000 a month in electric bills. Lujan said he would be surprised if he met his annual yield average of 12 tons per acre.

Although chili yields might not be as abundant, the quality of chili this season won't be affected, said Paul Bosland, director of New Mexico State University's Chile Pepper Institute.

Chili season in New Mexico runs from early July to mid-October, with roughly 80 percent of the state's crop contracted for processed products. Green chilies are either frozen or canned, and red chilies are dried or pickled.

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The News-Gazette

www.news-gazette.com

Vol. 148, No. 331

SATURDAY MORNING, June 24, 2000

“The building itself doesn’t hold a lot of memories, but the atmosphere does.”

– Phillip Edwards, a customer at Rose & Taylor Barber Shop, which opens at a new location today



News-Gazette photo by Robin Scholz

Joe Taylor, left, shaves Simon Hill's head at the Rose and Taylor Barber Shop at 204 N. First St., C, on Friday. At the next

chair is co-owner Lum Rose. The two barbers are having a grand opening today for a new shop at 124 N. First St.

Rose and Taylor barbers making move

By TOKUMBO BODUNDE
News-Gazette Staff Writer

CHAMPAIGN — There's no place like Rose and Taylor Barber Shop, which has been like home to many of its customers for decades.

So even though it's moving, there aren't many long faces among waiting customers. They know that the shop won't really change — just its location.

Barbershop co-owners Lum Rose and Joe Taylor head the 40-year-old business at 204 N. First St., C. The two, who have been cutting hair together for 23 years, will celebrate the grand opening of their new shop at 124 N. First St., C, from 10

Fellow barbers, local leaders, city planners, and faithful customers plan on attending.

The new shop is part of Champaign's North First Street Redevelopment Plan, adopted in 1996 to revive an area that historically has been home to several black-owned businesses. Construction also began recently on the Lone Star Masonic Lodge 18 to be located at 208 N. First St.

“You don't see too many black businesses in Champaign,” Taylor said. “This is an opportunity to have a nice, updated business.”

“I kinda have mixed emotions,” Rose

good. (But) the new place will have more room.” The shop will also have a snack bar and a beauty salon.

“You can see where everyone's doing this,” said Rochelle McFarland, putting her hands to her eyes to illustrate people peering in the window.

McFarland, who is with the Professional Cleaning Service, and a few others spent Friday adding finishing touches to the new shop.

Marble-colored floors, shiny red swivel seats and gleaming mirrors await customers who will get their hair cut on Tuesday when the new shop opens for

It's carryout only, but Seaboat is a winner

By **LYNDA ZIMMER**
NEWS-GAZETTE STAFF WRITER

CHAMPAIGN — Landlocked Champaign has a "sea" full of fish and a "boat" full of chicken on the north side.

The Seaboat carryout restaurant — which specializes in "Tasty Fish & Chicken Delight," according to one of its signs — brings a lot of hungry traffic to the southeast corner of Market Street and Bradley Avenue.

One busy weekday afternoon, customers — including a University of Illinois professor, UI students, a mail carrier, teen-agers, walk-up residents from nearby neighborhoods and drive-up residents from Champaign and Urbana — kept the owners busy cooking and packaging food orders.

Owner Baseemah Abdullah and her husband, Qaiyim Abdullah, cheerfully greeted everyone who came in. He said he was helping out by cooking just until 4 p.m., when another cook was expected.

The Abdullahs turned the former service station and building that first housed Herriott's rentals into a carryout restaurant eight years ago.

There is a large parking lot with its entrance and exit off Bradley. The building is bright and clean, decorated with lots of plants, outside and inside.

Three framed copies of Muslim prayers and greetings on the walls reveal the owners' religion. "It's a blessing from God," Qaiyim Abdullah said. "We have felt no prejudice from teens or other customers. I was worried after 9/11 — that was so terrible, what happened — but our business has been the same."

Five wicker and iron chairs, plus a rack full of magazines, are provided for customers waiting for food. Many call ahead to avoid waiting.

We waited about 20 minutes for our order. A sign warns, "All meals cooked to order but the wait is well worth it."

Indeed, everything is freshly cooked and tastes like it. You can watch most of the preparations in the stainless-steel kitchen.

We ordered six chicken wings for \$3.29 as an appetizer, but they were large ones. We ended up saving half of them for later. Because we could not decide on hot or regular style, Baseemah Abdullah split the order. The wings are nothing like wings drenched in red hot sauce served as appetizers at other restaurants. They are dry, and our hot version was barely discernible from the regular.

On the recommendation of a regular customer, I tried the Delicious Seaboat, a sandwich of whiting fish on a long, large, soft bun garnished with tartar sauce, lettuce and tomato slices for \$4.59. It looked like two whole, lightly breaded fish in the sandwich, but probably was two halves. Despite being fried, it was not greasy and was a meal by itself.

Since this was our first visit, my lunch companion and I wanted to try other things.

She ordered a \$7.49 shrimp dinner that came with seven good-sized fried shrimp, a hot roll and

FAST FACTS

Restaurant: The Seaboat; carry-out and delivery only.

Address: 1114 N. Market St., C.

Phone: 351-6209.

Hours: 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Tuesday through Thursday, 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. Friday, noon to 9:30 p.m. Saturday; closed Sunday and Monday.

Specifics: Cash only. No smoking in waiting area.



two sides. Here's another category where the Seaboat surpasses most fish and chicken places. Side choices include: spaghetti with ground beef, which could be another meal in itself; coleslaw; french fries; potato salad; fried okra; and green beans.

The coleslaw was a colorful combination of cabbages and shreds of carrots, but it was fairly bland in a mayonnaise dressing. The fried okra was breaded and cooked enough to remove all sliminess, yet obviously fresh. I could tell by scraping off the breading and seeing its bright green color.

The only thing I did not like was the commercial packaged shrimp sauce that was dark and bitter.

I asked about the bean pie, and Baseemah Abdullah quickly brought me a good-sized sample. She said it was made with white Navy beans. It had the texture of pumpkin pie and the subtle taste of pumpkin pie spices, but we decided to split a piece of the sweet-potato pie for \$1.25 a slice. The piece looked small and the crust a bit too thick and browned, but the sweet-potato filling was out of this world. I wanted seconds — and thirds! Next time, I'll buy the whole pie for \$6.99.

Qaiyim Abdullah said a friend makes the pies for the restaurant. Cookies also are available on weekends.

Our total feast — which was enough to feed four — cost \$19.99, without beverages.

Soda pop is sold in three sizes for \$1.09 to \$1.29.

Salads come in fried chicken and seafood and crab flavors for \$5.59 each. A garden salad sells for \$1.69.

Besides the whiting, other fish sold are catfish and cod. Most of the fish and chicken are sold as boneless nuggets or tenders, sandwiches, dinners and in buckets. A bucket of 18 shrimp sells for \$13.79 and a bucket of 14 pieces of chicken sells for \$15.10. But be sure to bring cash. No checks or credit cards are accepted.

The day I was at the Seaboat, three wings, fries and a beverage were on special for \$4.29. The combo usually costs \$4.89.

Seaboat also delivers — in an area bounded by Vine Street/Cunningham Avenue in Urbana, Mattis and Kirby avenues in Champaign and Interstate 74. There is an \$8 food minimum for delivery, but no delivery charge.

Tips are accepted by deliverers and in a jar on the counter. ■

SECTION

C

Sunday
November 19, 1995

The New

BUSINESS & A

'Afrocentric' artwork

■ Champaign's Soulful Treasures aims to be unique

By ANNE COOK
News-Gazette Staff Writer

CHAMPAIGN — Lillie Guillory learned to sew at her mother's knee. She didn't realize, until much later, that she has a special talent.

"My mother sewed a lot, she never used patterns, and she used to just hand me a piece of material too," said Guillory, a featured artist at Champaign's Soulful Treasures gift shop and art gallery, where local and imported "Afrocentric" art takes center stage.

"Now I make pretty much anything," she said. "I just have a talent like that. I look at magazines and books and go to the library for inspiration, and sometimes I just see little kids,

their eyes. I love eyes."

Soulful Treasures owner Charla Henry and her partners say abilities of artists like Guillory, who's best known for her hand-made dolls, and Joe McVay of Champaign, who can make just about anything from wood, are what make their Champaign gift shop unique.

"Woodworking is something that just came up in my spirit about 10 years ago," said McVay, who works full-time as a shop foreman at The Pella Window Store.

"I set out to do it, I started reading about it, and I made furniture for my house," he said. "I picked it up, and it stuck. It's relaxing for me to be creative."

Henry stocks McVay's custom-made spice racks, shelves, frames and other items as well as locally made ceramics, cards and crafts acquired from a group of artisans supervised by

her mother and partner, Katie Henry.

Other partners in Soulful Treasures at 408 E. Tremont St. include sister Alicia Henry and family friend Esmus Kinard. Alicia Henry, who's a professional artist on the East Coast, spends part of her year helping her sister run the business.

"There's an interest here, and a need, for a shop like this," she said. "I'm glad to be involved here, and the shop is a good thing anyway."

The partners knew from the start that they wanted to stock local crafts and also unusual African, African-American and Caribbean items. But Charla Henry said it took a few months to define exactly what interested local shoppers.

"We initially had clothing and a lot more jewelry, but they weren't very popular," she said. "Now we sell only unique items."

The sisters buy their merchandise from traveling acquaintances who shop abroad with the shop in mind. They attend trade shows looking for appropriate gifts. And they're always looking for area artists who produce the quality they require.

"High-quality craftsmanship and creativity are our major concerns," Alicia Henry said. "There are a lot of things out there, but that's what we're looking for."

The partners put their own

See CRAFTS, C-3

marily sells the software to companies, such as Lotus Inc., that want to train employees. Apte's most famous customer is the White House. About 3,000 of President Bill Clinton's administrative staff members learned how to surf the Internet using a version of Internet Coach. Internet Coach costs \$49.95.

It takes about 10 minutes to install the software on a computer. The tutorial doesn't link you to the Internet. It is just a mock-up of what can be found on the Internet and how to go about looking for information.

The first screen that pops contains a menu of the four

a daily basis.

Development of Mathematica

Wolfram, a former physicist at California Institute of Technology in Pasadena, Calif., is the principal inventor of Mathematica.

Doing his own research, he realized all scientists are bogged down by complex, time-consuming computations and could benefit from such a product, said company spokeswoman Jar Rich.

He came to the University of Illinois as an adjunct faculty

for us to see how

AGRICULTURE

Business & Agriculture C-1-8
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...takes center stage



News-Gazette photo by Robin Scholz

Sisters Charla, left, and Alicia Henry pose in the window of their shop, Soulful Treasures, at 408 E.

Tremont St. in Champaign. They were there last week. Family friend Esmus Kinard is also a partner.

BUSINESS & AGRICULTURE



News-Gazette photo by John Dixon

Lillie Guillory shows some dolls she made. She displayed the items last week. She is a featured

artist at Champaign's Soulful Treasures. 'I make things up as I go along,' she says of her artwork.

Crafts

Continued from C-1

money into the shop project.

"We talked to the city about funding, but that moved too slowly," Charla Henry said. "We talked to banks about low-interest loans, but we wanted to retain control, so in the end we used our own funds."

The Henrys sell Afrocentric greeting cards, and they're looking for more local suppliers. Imported items range from a Senegalese xylophone to a South African beaded choker to vintage handbags painted by an artist whose work was recently featured in the Italian version of Elle magazine.

They don't sell on consignment. They purchase all items outright.

Guillory's dolls line a rack along one wall. Some are large, some are small, some are wooden and some are rag. Each face is different, and all wear handmade clothes.

Guillory, who retired five years ago after working for Colwell Systems for 20 years, also paints wooden paper bag holders

and other items.

"My favorite thing?" she said. "That depends on my mood. I can be sewing and get tired so I paint. I just finished a painting I really like, a girl in corn rows. I've been doing a lot of African-American lately to keep up with Charla and her shop, but I do white, Oriental, I do it all."

Guillory takes her art and crafts to shows and sells everything she makes.

"The money comes in handy, but I'm not going to make a killing," she said. "I do it because I enjoy it. I'm just one person working, and there's not enough time in the day to make a living off it."

McVay's woodworking is strictly a hobby. His favorite projects: end tables he made for his wife, Ruby, and china cabinets he made for his wife and mother.

But he also enjoys making the smaller polished oak pieces for the shop. "She inspires me to do satisfactory work," he said of Henry's influence.

Colorful frames made by McVay hang on the shop wall

around poems Henry wrote and illustrated, poems with titles like "Fat Plaits" and "Toad and Me."

She said she left her job as a University of Illinois computer programmer to open the shop.

"I needed a creative outlet," Henry said.

This week Soulful Treasures will send out a catalog so regular customers can order gifts by mail. Henry plans to expand that business, and she's looking for new ways to spread the word about her artists' talents.

"We'd like to work with companies and retail stores to get our artists work out into other outlets," Henry said. "We want to be a showcase for African-American crafts. A lot of people don't know about the incredible talent out there."

"When I'm working, I don't think about anything else," said Guillory, who gives her husband, Chester, credit for helping with carpentry projects.

"I think about color and what texture I'm going to use," she said. "I make things up as I go along. I never get lonesome. It takes me far, far away."

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*By famous African-American designers and actual African
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Perfect for you or ones you love...

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