



prologue.

Campus hangouts linger in alumni memories.

If, as a student, you missed the crack o' dawn St. Patrick's Day experience of standing in line for green beer in the crowded confines of O'Connell's Irish Pub & Grille—the original O'Connell's at Lindsey and Jenkins—and if you always intended to come back someday for that dubious delight—sorry, you're too late. The classic campus hangout closed its doors in mid-January after a week of nostalgia-laden news stories, special events and finally the auctioning of the fixtures, furniture and memorabilia right down to the bricks.

O'Connell's had a good run, 30-years-plus, in the end falling victim to progress, its location across from the stadium making it ripe for University expansion. Proximity also had made it ideal for what may have been the origin of Sooner tailgating—pre-game and post, and even during half time, until security concerns ended reentry to the games.

The owner of O'Connell's had the foresight a couple of years ago to open a second location on Campus Corner, where his hope is to develop new traditions for future generations of Sooners who never knew the old. Traditions are essential to a true hangout; good food is almost a secondary consideration. The important element to the student clientele is to be where your friends are, to order a minimum of food and drink over a period of time for the privilege of just, well, hanging out.

When OU reps go on the road to visit alumni in far-flung places, reminiscing ensues—first up, favorite profs, maybe the frat house, but almost always they ask: Is my old hangout still there? Most of the time the answer is no, be-

cause hangouts like college days are not forever, and sometimes they are a moving target.

The Copper Kettle on Buchanan, there in the '30s and still there in the '50s, was more special date place than hangout, but a successor in the location, the Lovelight, did fill the bill, a venue where the hippies of the mid-'70s and '80s flocked for music and vegetarian fare. Rickner's on University Boulevard, known as a bookstore but also a restaurant, was the site of '50s rush week serenades, guys on the ground floor singing to girls on the balcony. Mom's, first on White, then Boyd, served the best cheeseburgers on the planet, and the line on Sunday night looked like a mob scene.

All long gone—as are Campus Corner's Liberty D's, Sooner Drug, Jockey Strap Saloon, Dee's, Across the Street, Hoops, Orin's Pizza, La Baguette and the fabled Town Tavern.

The Tavern was one of the few places sorority girls were forbidden to go—or at least not while wearing “the pin.” Most of the hangouts served beer, so it's not clear what made the Tavern different, perhaps its prominent location on the corner of Boyd and Asp. Of course the prohibition only made it that much more attractive. Today Louie's is thriving in the same spot.

There are a number of promising new restaurants on the Corner, but in the hangout category, list the venerable ToTo's and The Deli on White, and the nearby Joe's Taverna—and, of course, Othello's, made famous as Barry Switzer's favorite. A different type of student haunt often mentioned is the quirky little Cookies 'n' Cards and the now-departed Shadowplay Records.

One source in our unscientific poll insisted on inclusion of the strip club Walter Mitty's, now Sugar's—but that's a whole other story.

A location on the Corner isn't mandatory for hangout status. Mr. Bill's in Stubbeman Place across from the dorms has had a long run, though neighboring Pinocchio's and Village Inn disappeared. Even the Union had a hangout, the old Crossroads, with nearby pool tables; the tables are gone, but there's a newer Crossroads with better food. Denco's, now a thing of legend, drew to downtown generations of late-night partiers with cast-iron stomachs who ordered a “Denco Darlin' ” to finish off the evening.

The Mont, east of the campus on Classen qualifies, having been there in one form or another for at least 50 years and today with a choice of experiences, the dim and well worn inside or the even more popular patio where conversation battles the traffic noise. Patios have become great places to hang out, one of the best at Pink's, a couple of blocks west on Boyd. Pink's has a wonderful history. In the '50s it was The Brown Owl, or in student parlance, The Dirty Bird. Then it became The Library for a time, the name providing the perfect cover story for a wasted evening.

Any litany of campus hangouts is destined to be incomplete. No one remains to testify to the favored gathering places of the earliest Sooners—history refers to the downtown saloons, the dance hall and later the more typical Varsity Shop. Each generation has had its own, and merely closing the doors, or even razing the site to the ground, fails to erase the memories.

—CJB