

# The Stein Club

**IT'S FRIDAY** afternoon. Tomorrow, the Tigers play; this evening, Mizzou students crowd into their favorite watering hole to listen to tunes and celebrate survival of another week. Sounds like any Friday afternoon this fall, right? Well, check the price on that cold mug of beer. Twelve cents! And beer in a bottle? That'll be 27 cents, please.

This can't be 1983.

It isn't. It happens to be 30 years ago in the most popular student hangout of the day—the Stein Club.

"Faurot was football coach when I started tending bar at the Stein Club," 70-year-old A. B. Hatton recalls. "The bar was strictly a student hangout. You hardly could get in the place on football weekends."

The Stein Club opened in 1947. Harry Truman was president. Joe Louis was heavyweight champ. Alfred Hitchcock's latest release, *Notorious!*, with Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman, was playing at the Uptown Theater. Puckett's had Eisenhower shorty jackets on sale for \$3.95, and George's Market at Third and Broadway was selling bacon at 49 cents a pound.

consulting engineer for Chinn and Associates Inc., the firm that replaced the old Stein in 1967, was studying at Mizzou after he returned from World War II. He remembers the club's opening.

"There was great anticipation," Niewoehner says. "It was billed as a great nightclub. It was pretty doggone nice for students. The owner had it all fixed up." Students mingled at tables or at the long bar, which ran the length of the north wall, and crowded into five round booths along the opposite wall.

The club filled a void for students who found little else to do in Columbia but study. "There was nothing, I mean nothing, to do," Niewoehner says.

So on Friday afternoons, the students headed for the Stein Club. "I saw it so crowded you couldn't get in, even standing," recalls Niewoehner. "It was absolutely packed."

Despite the student hordes, Niewoehner says the Stein Club allowed no roughneck behavior in those days. Edward "Country" Atkins, the founder and 28-year owner of the Stein Club, "ran a good, quiet bar." Niewoehner

squeeze through the front door of the Stein Club. She says that Country was a lovable character who had great rapport with the customers.

Oldtimers remember Country, who is ill but still resides in Columbia, as a shrewd businessman. They smile as they describe his style of serving beer. Each was topped with an inch or two of foam—a Country head. Country saved a lot of money over the years by serving beer that way.

Country moved the Stein Club to its current location at 704 E. Broadway in 1967. Carolyn Hawks, who studied at Mizzou from 1964 to 1968, fondly remembers the Stein Club and its personable owner.

"The Stein Club was wonderful," Hawks says. "It was like a regular club. It had a great mixture of students and townspeople. It wasn't a commercial place at all.

"Country was the whole Stein Club—his personality was. He was so big, and he was just fun." She also remembers that Country "personally made sure that everyone had a good time."

When liquor-by-the-drink became legal, other bars opened around town in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The students switched allegiances and left the small bar.

Mike Atkinson, the current owner, bought the Stein Club from Atkins in 1975. The bar was an ailing business at the time, he says. To increase capacity, he remodeled and expanded the interior. He installed a small bar and pool tables in a back room that had been used for storage.

He also introduced 25-cent, 10-ounce beers on Tuesday nights. "The

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Columbia institutions come and go and so, too, did the Stein Club. It closed its doors for the last time in December.

Originally, the small bar was at 13 S. Eighth St., now the fountain lobby of Boone County Bank. Carl Niewoehner, a

says Country was a "dominating type of individual."

Sandy Humphrey, a Stein Club barmaid for the past 10 years, says Country was a large man—six feet and at least 300 pounds. Humphrey and others who know Country remember him having to

# The Welcome Sign Goes Dark

A great mixture of students and townspeople.

idea was to give it away one night and hope they would come back," Atkinson says.

According to Atkinson, business took off. He recalls having to lock the front door some Tuesdays because there was no room for more customers inside.

"There would be 100 people drinking on the sidewalk in front," Atkinson says. "It was fun. But the city told me I couldn't do that—the city council meets across the street."

Its days as the most popular student hangout over, the Stein Club began earning a new reputation as perhaps the roughest and wildest bar in Columbia. Some folks began referring to the bar's quarter-draw night as "Tuesday night at the fights." Atkinson is amused by the characterization. "If you're doing a great business, you're bound to have some trouble," he says.

Arthur "Jaybird" Jolly, 34, a gravelly voiced riverboat man who tended bar for Atkinson in 1975 and 1976, says that it was common to have three or four fights most Tuesday nights.

But most who frequented the club the past few years considered its reputation for roughness a thing of the past.

Jerry Pierce, who was a Stein Club regular the last seven years, says those who believed the Stein Club was a rough bar were those who never bothered to check it out for themselves.

"I went there because it didn't matter how you dressed," says Pierce, who

wears his dark-brown hair in a single braid down his back. Pierce, wearing faded blue jeans and an omnipresent black leather jacket, drank cold bottles of Busch.

John Moseley, the 1973 All-America Tiger football star, and his wife, Debbie Egerstrom Moseley, also a Mizzou graduate, operate a fitness center near the Stein Club. He says he visited the bar for the same reason.

"You didn't go in there to get face-time," Moseley says. "There were no pretensions. It had a homey atmos-

Columbia now lacks a neighborhood bar.

phere." Debbie Moseley feels the same way. "It was a place to talk and relax where you didn't have to worry about what people thought of you."

Many students adopted the Stein Club as their hangout again during its last two years. They say they enjoyed the variety of people it attracted.

Mary Jane Gore, a journalism graduate student at Mizzou, says she frequented the Stein because it reminded her of the small neighborhood bars back home in Washington, D. C.'s Latin Quarter.

"The Stein Club was crowded, dark and it served good, cheap, cold

beer," Gore says. "And you could always count on seeing a few characters." She also enjoyed the live music. "You could dance without caring what you looked like. I could come straight from the library and dance."

Judi Jacobs, a Missouri senior who had been going to the Stein Club for the last two years, liked the diverse crowd as well. "I'm with people my own age all the time," Jacobs says. "I liked talking to some 70-year-old man who has lived in Columbia all his life. It was cool. The Stein was small and it seemed more like a pub than a bar."

Atkinson explains that he closed the club partly because he wanted to try something new and partly because a new lease called for a sizable rent increase.

Atkinson plans to open a new nightspot with a new name and a "high-tech" look on Broadway, two doors east of the Stein Club. Instead of the small poolroom, the new club will feature a stage and a large dance floor.

"I think Columbia lacks a good small neighborhood bar now that the Stein Club has closed," Gore says.

Gone is the smoky, old bar with its woodgrain booths and red-brick walls. The red neon sign has been extinguished, and the luster of the shiny black exterior of the Stein Club will soon be a memory. A Columbia institution has ended. □