

MONTEVALLO Main Street Memories

The Plaza Grill Part 2

by Clay Nordan
Montevallo Historical Society

When Billy Rotenberry purchased the ownership and management of the Plaza Grill, he transformed what had been a basic eatery into a dining spot suitable for a college town and its more sophisticated students, residents, and visitors. The restaurant was a popular place for Alabama College co-eds to stop by for a hamburger and a coke following a motion picture at the Strand Theatre, just a few footsteps back up Main Street.

The Plaza Grill became famous with its young customers for the Juke Box that Billy kept stocked with the latest hits of the day. Music selections could be perused and purchased through a remote console, called a "Wall-O-Matic," stationed in every booth in the cafe.

Early every morning before Billy's wife Julia left home for her full-time job at the Alabama College Library, she would prepare and bake the day's regular assortment of 6 to 12 Coconut, Chocolate, Lemon Icebox, Butterscotch, and Egg Custard pies in her home kitchen. Billy's father stopped by the house after Julia went to work to pick up the pies and deliver them to the restaurant in time to be on the menu at lunch.

You Lucky Girls with Dates ...
Come to the Plaza Grill for Steaks

THE PLAZA GRILL



Date night for Alabama College Co-eds at the Plaza Grill, 1950. (Standing at right) owner Billy Rotenberry.

For variety, Julia would often include Apple, Cherry, Peach, Lemon Meringue, Pecan, Double Crust Lemon, Raisin, Mincemeat, Pumpkin, or Vanilla Custard to her line-up. The cafe leased the bottom floor of the two story building owned by its neighbor, F. P. Givhan. The upper floor housed a few offices that were occupied at one time or another by lawyers, insurance agents, and "businessmen."

A short-lived barbershop tried to make a go of it in one of these offices, but never caught on. Billy got out of the restaurant business in 1964 and went to work for the Post Office, ending 26 years that his family served meals and a warm welcome to the town of Montevallo. Later occupants of the space have also been restaurants of one sort or another. Following the Plaza Grill came the "Sizzler" as well as Pratcher's Cafeteria, among others. Today, El Agave Bar & Grill maintains the culinary heritage of this particular storefront

but never caught on. Billy got out of the restaurant business in 1964 and went to work for the Post Office, ending 26 years that his family served meals and a warm welcome to the town of Montevallo. Later occupants of the space have also been restaurants of one sort or another. Following the Plaza Grill came the "Sizzler" as well as Pratcher's Cafeteria, among others. Today, El Agave Bar & Grill maintains the culinary heritage of this particular storefront



The parade float transporting Montevallo High School's 1960 Homecoming queen, Lola Daviston (back), and her court pauses briefly in front of the Plaza Grill. (L-R) Phyllis Kyser, Marilyn Kyser, Janice Waters, Sandra Scott.



THE PLAZA GRILL

BILL ROTENBERRY

MONTEVALLO,

ALABAMA

Montevallo
Historical Society

Opening the Portals of Our Heritage

JOIN TODAY!

Download Application at
www.historicmontevallo.org

P.O. Box 411 • Montevallo, AL 35115

montevallo1817@gmail.com

MONTEVALLO MAIN STREET MEMORIES is adapted from the series, THROWBACK THURSDAY, a Montevallo Historical Society and Montevallo Main Street partnership started in 2018. Each installment revisits commercial and residential life on Main Street and in the downtown area in the early to mid-twentieth century. The series remains available online and may be viewed at www.historicmontevallo.org under "Local History".