

Tuck shop

Its traditions and hamburgers may soon make way for progress

By BERNIE GOEDHART

Victor Eryl of Vancouver would certainly mourn its death.

Edgar Gerhart, MLA, might also feel somewhat bereaved.

About 52 people would leave their jobs.

And dozens of alumni would have an added cause to reminisce.

Tuck Shop, 8821-112 St., faces a possible death in the name of university expansion—with it will die tradition and an integral part of the U of A.

Many phases of university life have passed through the Tuck Shop, making for an interesting past.

Its birth is shrouded in a certain amount of mystery.

The first account, related by James Burke and Eugene Schneider, present owners of Tuck restaurant, is centred around Victor Eryl.

RETURNED TO TUCK

Mr. Eryl, now in his mid-80s, visited Edmonton with his wife two years ago and returned to the Tuck Shop where he spoke to Mr. Burke and Mr. Schneider.

"He won this property (the shop) for \$25 in a poker game (before 1917)," said Mr. Burke.

"He named it Tuck. It means 'snack' in England.

"It was a little, wee shack," he said. "There was a winding old trail around here and the rest was bush.

"He told us that even before he won it he thought he could serve

food out of that building," said Mr. Burke.

"There was no place to sit; he served the food out of the back door."

Mr. Gerhart, owner of the Tuck building, had a different account of the shop's birth.

Quoting a 1963 article by Tony Cashman, he said Tuck originated with a Bill Smith of London, Eng.

Mr. Smith, "a decent sort, but a bit of a schemer," was a stonemason and helped build Assiniboia Hall in 1912.

In 1917, he hatched the Tuck Shop scheme. St. Stephen's College used to be an old armory and the shop was geared towards convalescing soldiers.

Consequently, Mr. Smith did not restrict himself to providing food. He also stocked liquor and had the facilities to take bets.

Two of the wounded soldiers, Vic Eryl and Charlie Warren, must've been favorably impressed. By 1919, they bought the shop.

In 1927, Tuck Shop was sold to Sam McCoppen, an Edmonton businessman known as "the jolly undertaker."

Mr. McCoppen was responsible for the sharp pitched roof, the basement and the concrete foundations of Tuck. And concrete wasn't the only thing used for support.

BEAM TRACKS

"There are tracks for beams," said Mr. Gerhart. "They run lengthwise (across the floor).

"I think it's either light railway track or heavy streetcar track," he said.

In 1932, Tuck Shop was traded for an apartment block and by 1944 it reached the hands of Cliff Roy.

About four years later, Tuck found its way to Mr. Gerhart. Mr. Roy, a former alderman, is presently associated with the Chapel of Chimes, Roy and Owen Ltd.

Understandably, the Tuck Shop has undergone some changes.

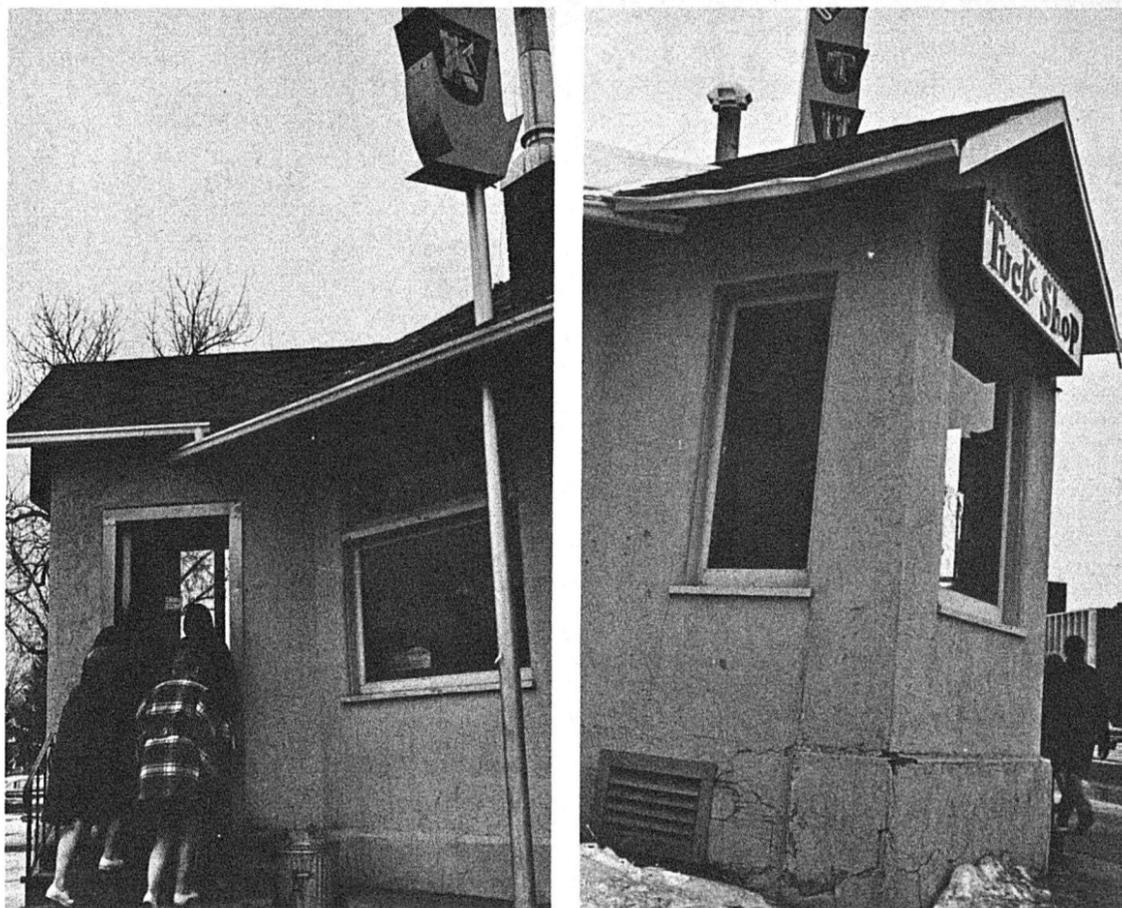
"It used to be THE dance hall," said Mr. Burke.

"People from all over Edmonton used to stream over here in their horse and buggies or Model-T's."

The hardwood floor can still be seen where the barbershop's linoleum doesn't quite meet the wall. And it's not difficult to imagine the wallflowers waiting patiently under the arches in the wall.

"There used to be Spanish pillars out front," said Mr. Gerhart. "They were taken down about 1950."

If Tuck is torn down, the cam-



—George Barr photos

A FAMILIAR SCENE AT U OF A ... this crumbling building is the last student "meeting place" left

pus will lose a very effective cupid.

"About ten years ago, a fellow who looked old enough to be my father came in," said Mr. Gerhart.

"He was all the way from California and said he had met his wife in the Tuck Shop."

Mr. Schneider and Mr. Burke agreed that many of the alumni who return as married couples, met each other while in Tuck.

And there has been excitement in the shop.

Mr. Gerhart told the tale of a would-be robber who, about 12 years ago, marched into the kitchen pointing a gun.

"He started waving the gun around and the women started screaming," said Mr. Gerhart.

"Then he shot a bullet into the ceiling and they started to scream all the more.

"He couldn't control these women, so he gave up.

"My association with the Tuck

Shop has been very enjoyable," said Mr. Gerhart. "I have not regretted it."

He said the possible demolishing of Tuck has prevented him from upgrading the building and making as many improvements as he would like.

Mr. Burke and Mr. Schneider took a less business-like outlook.

There is a definite need for Tuck, said Mr. Burke. It provides students with an off-campus atmosphere.



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- The Secretary of The Students' Union
- The Treasurer of The Students' Union
- The Co-ordinator of Student Activities
- The President of Men's Athletics
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- The President of Women's Athletics

Nomination blanks are available from the receptionist, 2nd floor, Students' Union Building, and must be returned to the Returning Officer at room 272 SUB between the hours of 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. Wednesday, February 21, 1968.

Stewart MacAllister
Returning Officer