

# Carefree Corner

## Woody's Bar retains its relaxed aura, customers

By Jason Hardy

Staff writer

With a name like Woody's, it's not surprising that there is a decidedly masculine feel to the L-shaped bar at the corner of 14th and O streets.

Woody's has the atmosphere of a remodeled basement rec-room, complete with tall chairs, pool tables, beer signs, TVs in a range of sizes and a carpeted floor.

The bar even caters to women in a masculine way, offering Jell-O shots and other fruity drinks that don't taste like beer.

Nevertheless, since its beginning on April 18, 1995, Woody's has used this atmosphere to carve out an L-shaped niche that sets it apart from other O street bars. It's definitely different from most of the bars, and that's something people have come to appreciate.

From a corner table in Woody's south wing, one can take in about half of the bar's scenery. There are scattered couples along the east wall, a couple of larger groups in the center, some guys playing pool and a small crowd around the Golden Tee video game. The male to female ratio is about even, and the trousers of choice for both sexes seem to be blue jeans, with a few mesh and khaki short exceptions.

The crowd reflects the face of UNL at a glance: mostly white, young adults ranging from 21 to about 35. Look closer, however, and some diversity seems to appear among what is still a pretty homogenous crowd.

Still, one thing strongly connects almost everyone in the bar — each person looks like they could be friends with everyone else. Be it the older guy singing along with the Commodores' hit, "Brick House," the

twenty-something girls playing darts or the guys in the corner who came "to shoot pool and look for tail."

Arron Diskin, co-owner and co-manager of Woody's, along with Brian Linderman and Ben Moran, said this implied camaraderie was one of Woody's biggest assets.

"I think the people who come in here generally get to know each other," he said. "When we're not working, we come out and drink here. Seeing the same faces all the time makes them feel comfortable."

Ally Hofts, a member of one of the groups sitting in the center of Woody's south wing Wednesday night, makes a strong case for Diskin's point.

"It's laid-back," she says. "It's not so much about going out and meeting lots of new people, like thinking you have to go to a certain place to meet people. It's not so much greek-oriented compared to the (Brass) Rail and Iguanas."

"It's just something different," interjects her friend Nikki Moeller. The two then comment positively on the music selection as a Creed song comes on. Someone in the background says, "This is an awesome song."

Because Woody's is fairly large, it seems spacious despite being pretty busy.

Husker paraphernalia covers the walls, and pictures of people and

things such as Woody Harrelson, Woodrow Wilson, woody cars, wood chucks and people playing woodwind instruments are everywhere.

Generally, the place feels like a college keg party in its earlier moments, before things get out of hand, and it's about the closest thing

to a sports bar O street has, but this statement seems relative to who is talking.

"Every bar down here that's opened calling itself a sports bar was out of business in six months," said Reg McMeen, former Woody's owner. "So we didn't want to limit ourselves to that."

McMeen and his former partner John Mahoney said when they opened Woody's in '95 they wanted it to look like a pretty traditional pool hall and be a place everyone could enjoy. Even in the bar's opening

The Bars of  
O Street



Scott Eastman/DN

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Arron Diskin

co-manager and co-owner, Woody's Pub

stages, they said, it was apparent that their laid-back approach for a bar was something Lincoln residents would appreciate.

"The afternoon we opened, we were scheduled to open at six, and I was still running around looking for stuff to put on the walls," McMeen said. "I came back at 4:45, and we were packed because my partners decided to open the bar early."

For Mahoney, this set the precedent for how the bar should be run from that day forth.

"People like to come into a joint and know the workers. If there's a problem, it can get handled here," Mahoney said. "If someone comes in and asks for something, we'll get it, as long as it's not ridiculous."

One such example is the foosball table near the jukebox. Mahoney said people told him they wanted to play foosball, so he got a table.

After five years, Woody's is starting to become a fixture in the downtown neighborhood. Considering the success of some of the businesses that previously occupied the corner of 14th and O streets, it is not surprising that Woody's would follow suit.

Before the building that currently houses Woody's was built in 1987, the block hosted the original O'Rourke's, Sandy's and the Mill, all of which have become very successful Lincoln establishments in new locations.

Still, the thing that sets Woody's apart from those and other downtown bars, and what makes it such a success, is that people feel comfortable there. It doesn't feel like a bar, and that's what a lot of people are looking for.

"I've been coming here for a long time," said Shawn Ayotte, a 30-year-old UNL senior who just finished winning a Woody's pool tournament. He mentions his wife, child and full-time job and then explains why he finds Woody's so inviting. "Basically, the atmosphere is awesome, and pints are a buck — there you go, man."

Along with the aforementioned implied camaraderie comes an implied loyalty among the Woody's crowd. It's an obvious source of pride for McMeen.

"Oh yeah," he said. "You look at all the new places that have opened and haven't taken our crowd away. It's great."

ΣX

### Sigma Chi Fight Night

**April 15, 2000**

**\$5.00 at the door**

OR

**purchase tickets in the Union**

ΣX

**And on the eighth day,  
God said let there be ...**  
***dailynneb.com***

WEEKEND PREVIEW

The following is a brief list of events this weekend. For more information, call the venue.

#### CONCERTS:

Duffy's Tavern, 1412 O St.  
(402) 474-3543  
Sunday: The Mezcal Brothers

Duggan's Pub, 440 S. 11th St.  
(402) 477-3513  
Friday: Shuffle Cats  
Saturday: The Right Mix

Kimball Hall, 11th and R streets  
(402) 472-4747  
Friday: Jay Hershberger, piano  
Saturday: Scarlet and Cream Singers  
Sunday: Peggy Holloway, soprano; Michael Cotton, piano

Knickerbocker's, 901 O St.  
(402) 476-6865  
Friday: Chezicks, Meelee  
Saturday: Black Light Sunshine, Clever

Newman Methodist, 2242 R St.  
(402) 477-7899  
Saturday: "A Brass Managerie"

Royal Grove, 340 W. Cornhusker Highway  
(402) 474-2332  
Friday and Saturday: Bosch

The Zoo Bar, 136 N. 14th St.  
(402) 435-8754  
Friday: E.C. Scott  
Saturday: Debbie Davies

#### THEATER:

Lincoln Community Playhouse, 2500 S. 56th St.  
(402) 489-7529  
All weekend: "Children of Eden"

Mary Riepma Ross Film Theater, 12th and R streets  
(402) 472-2461  
All weekend: "42 UP"

O'Donnell Auditorium, 50th and Huntington streets  
(402) 465-2319  
Friday and Sunday: Opera

Theatre Production: "The Consul"

#### GALLERIES:

Burkholder Project, 719 P St.  
(402) 477-3305  
All weekend: Laron McGinn, Harry Dingman, Fine Crafts Group Show

Doc's Place, 140 N. 8th St. Suite 150  
(402) 476-3232  
All weekend: Liz Dodds

Noyes Gallery, 119 S. 9th St.  
(402) 475-1061  
All weekend: Western Nebraska Artists: Carol Sexton, Maxine Yost, Alis Rodgers, Richard Tucker, Jo Brown, Sheila Downey

The Sheldon Memorial Art Gallery, 12th and R streets  
(402) 472-2461  
All weekend: "Visions of the Prairie," "Parallel Perspectives: Early 20th Century American Art," Josef Albers: "Elements of Art"