

## Teen Dance Halls

By Barbara Glakas

Those who grew up in the town of Herndon during the 1960s and 1970s will likely remember the Starlight Dance Club and Burger Hall, two dance clubs that catered to teenagers.

Burger Hall was located in the building that is now Herndon's Moose Lodge building, at 779 Center Street, formerly known as Willow Street. Doug and Mary Burger had the building built in 1963 for their business, Burger's Cabinet Shop, staying there until 1972.

Gary Haines, a Herndon resident who had been conducting teen dances in the old Herndon Theatre (which is now The Upholstery Shop at 757 Elden Street) asked Mary Burger if she would be willing to hold dances in the upstairs of her new building. The theatre building was being sold. Burger agreed and by April of 1964 the Burgers finished off the upstairs which became known as Burger Hall.

The second story of Burger Hall consisted of tile floors and wood paneling. They also added a small kitchen. That was the beginning of teen dances on Friday nights that high school students would attend after the athletic games were over at school. In addition, adult organizations had parties at Burger Hall on Saturday nights. During the week, Burger Hall served Wednesday night dinners to the Herndon Rotary Club; every other Tuesday night they had dinners for the Herndon Jaycees; and every other Thursday night they had dinners for the Herndon Lions Club. Four teenagers helped serve the food and clean up after these dinners. On Monday nights, the hall was rented out to the Herndon Weight Watchers.

The dances were conducted on Friday nights from 9:00 PM to 12:00 midnight. The teens could enter for the admission of \$1. No advertising was needed as word would get around about the dances. Dances sometimes had anywhere from 100 to 200 teens in attendance. Burger hired a Herndon police officer for \$15 to monitor the outside area, walking Willow Street. Otherwise, Burger was the only supervisor inside, and she held down very strict rules – no fights, no alcohol, and no smoking. At that time – in the mid-1960s to early 1970s – Burger herself was pretty young, in her late 20s, when the dances were going on at Burger Hall. Burger said, "I was not young enough to be one of them, but I was not old enough to be their mother. I was like a big sister. Some of the teens would often sit next to me on a stool and pour their hearts out to me." Students recall, "She ran a tight ship."

The music at the dances was played by teen bands from the local high schools. Burger remembers bands coming from Herndon High School, Loudoun High School, Fairfax High School, and areas around Vienna. Burger would conduct auditions of the bands and they would play typical 1960s and 70s music of that time. Some bands that played there included The Shadows, The Village Squires, and The Cavemen.

By circa 1968 another dance hall opened in Herndon. A man named Charlie Guilford owned the Larro Mill and opened the Starlight Dance Room. This was part of the vacant General Mills Granary building that had stopped operations in the early 1960s. The granary was located near Herndon's current town green, along the former Washington & Old Dominion Railroad tracks, in the area behind the Maude Salon at 775 Station Street. The Starlight Dance Room was housed

on the south end of the granary building. Like Burger Hall the Starlight Dance Room was relievedly plain with paneled walls, wood floors, a small stage, and few adornments. Although Guilford owned the building, the dance hall was run by Eddie Putnam and his wife, Rita King.

Putnum and King scheduled bands through Bud Decker at Domestic Sound Productions, located in Falls Church. According to a 1969 *Northern Virginia Sun* newspaper ad, this company provided “musical groups for all occasions.” In addition to Friday night teen dances, the Starlight Club also hosted country dances for the general public on Saturday nights.

There as well a variety of teen bands played at this new hall. Some bands – like the Village Squires made up of teenager from Herndon and Loudoun High Schools – played at both Burger Hall and the Starlight Room. The Friday night admission at the Starlight Room was \$1.50 and they were also open from 9:00 PM to 12:00 midnight. The dances were known to be crowded. Putnam and King surprised the dance and has a police officer outside as well. As some of the former teenagers recalled, this new dance hall posed a little bit of competition for Burger Hall. However, Burger remembered that attendance at Burger Hall only dropped from about a month. They had a kitchen and she thought the teens preferred the rules that were established at Burger Hall to keep it running smoothly.

A member of the Village Squires does not remember playing at the Starlight Club for too long, for only about six or seven months. The Starlight dance room did not last as long as Burger Hall. Unfortunately, the Starlight Room came to an untimely end when it burned down in 1971. According to the *Herndon Tribune*, the fire resulted from Mr. Guilford leaving his food cooking on an old wood stove while he went out for a visit. Guilford – who some townspeople described as being a little eccentric - was not only the former owner of the General Mills store, he also resided in part of the building. One long-time Town resident remembered that Guilford:

“...ran his form of a ‘car rental agency’ out of the building, along with raising chickens and ducks in the building while he also lived there. [His] chickens and ducks were often seen wondering on Station and Pine Streets and the junk cars he collected/rented, about 100+, were strung along the creek bed from the General Mills building down to Willow Street.”

The building had no electricity and the stove had been the cause of three or four earlier fires. Two years prior to the 1971 fire, Herndon’s Fire Chief had demanded that Mr. Guilford get an estimate to bring the building up to code. A county inspector had attempted to inspect the building several months prior to the fire, but he was met with locked doors.

The fire resulted in a total loss of the building and the end of the teen dances that were held there.

The dances at Burger Hall continued until December of 1972. The Burger’s Cabinet shop needed more room. The Burgers sold their building in January of 1973 and moved their business to Sterling.

The demise of these two venues marked the end of a teen dance era in Herndon. Mary Burger, who is still a town resident today, recalled that these years of the dances at Burger Hall was a very special time in her life.

-----

*About this column: "Remembering Herndon's History" is a regular Herndon Patch feature offering stories and anecdotes about Herndon's past. The articles are written by members of the Herndon Historical Society. Barbara Glakas is a member. A complete list of "Remembering Herndon's History" columns is available on the Historical Society website at [www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org).*

*The Herndon Historical Society operates a small museum that focuses on local history. It is housed in the Herndon Depot in downtown Herndon on Lynn Street and is open every Sunday from noon until 3:00. Visit the Society's website at [www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org](http://www.herndonhistoricalsociety.org), and the Historical Society's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/HerndonHistory> for more information.*

*Note: The Historical Society is seeking volunteers to help keep the museum open each Sunday. If you have an interest in local history and would like to help, contact [HerndonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com](mailto:HerndonHistoricalSociety@gmail.com).*