



Photo by Phillip Mosier

Coin-op laundries An industry with a history

By Kerry Bouchard

It was just another Blue Monday for Hannah Montague, and she didn't like it. Particularly, she resented washing her husband Orlando's shirts over again when only the collars, and perhaps the cuffs, were dirty.

Meditating on such inefficiency, she had an idea. She took her scissors, neatly snipped off a collar and sat down to hem it into a garment by itself.

Thus it was that an industry came into being—two of them, actually—because the detached collar industry that started in Troy, N.Y., in 1829, two years after Mrs. Montague's invention, gave rise to the laundry industry as we know it today.

I quote from "The Laundry Industry," by Fred DeArmond, published by Harper & Brothers in 1950. DeArmond's book is dedicated to "those pioneer laundrymen whose achievement helped to emancipate the modern homemaker."

Of course, dirty laundry antedates the Montagues by several thousand years.

According to the Encyclopedia Americana, archaeologists have found clay tablets from Mycenaean civilization that list dry-cleaning as being one of more than 100 occupations practiced between 1600 and 1100 B.C. (Grease-absorbing earths may have been the cleaning agent for these "pioneer" dry-cleaning establishments.)

Before the National Institute of Dryers and Cleaners developed Stoddard solvent in the mid-1920s, gasoline was the chemical used in American dry-cleaning shops. But it had an unfortunate tendency to catch fire and explode, making dry-cleaning a rather high-risk occupation.

Whatever its roots, one thing is clear: laundry has come of age.

Today, laundry for many Americans is a private phenomenon. In most middle-class homes, closeted away in dank utility rooms, where paint

peels off the walls from excess humidity, are kept families' washers and dryers, testimonial to the American dream that—if we just build enough machines—no people need air their dirty linen in public.

That is a shame, because it isolates so many people from that great melting pot and forum of public opinion, the coin-op laundry.

The common denominator of most coin-ops—besides the machines and humidity—is the style of seating. Aqua-colored Fiberglas speaks a poetry like nothing else on earth. It is utterly artificial, utterly omnipresent. Fiberglas bucket seats are the leisure suits of furniture design, the essence of coin-op ambiance.

Both the coin-ops in the TCU area feature that type of chair; Wash-O-Matic on Berry Street has eight of them, and Sharma's Coin-O-Matic on Bluebonnet Circle has 12.

The Wash-O-Matic at 2909 W. Berry St. is open 24 hours a day,

seven days a week. It is situated in one of the cultural oases of the TCU area, with Evergreen's Books and Fantasy Imports on one side and The Hop on the other. The wall separating the washing machines from The Hop is thin enough to give nocturnal launderers a fairly good seat for the live bands next door.

Wash-O-Matic also offers more space to dance than The Hop.

Sue Struve, who has owned the Berry Street Wash-O-Matic since 1969, said she enjoys working there because she meets people from all walks of life. She says that TCU students make up a lot of her business, even during the summer.

At present, washing machines at most coin-ops cost 50 cents per load, and the dryers cost 25 cents. (In TCU dormitories, dryers cost 50 cents a load, but the machines run longer.) Struve said that the washing machines may have to start charging 75 cents per load if utilities keep going up.

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Lawyer offers free advice

By E.K. Kaufmann

His practice is not unlike that of an old family doctor.

He grew up in Mansfield and considers himself a country boy. He is known to make house calls.

But he isn't a doctor. Tom Lowe is a lawyer and former TCU student who offers free legal advice to students.

The university pays him \$150 a month for the consultation service, and the Student House of Representatives pays him to hold office hours on campus two Saturdays a month from 9 a.m. to noon.

Lowe's interest in law came at a time when the Perry Mason television series was a big hit, Lowe said. As a kid, most of his heroes, like Thomas Jefferson and Abraham Lincoln, were lawyers.

"I was talking from the moment I was born," Lowe said. A neighbor who heard him talking in a local store was reputed to have said, "Isn't he smart! Is he going to be a lawyer?"

Lowe graduated from TCU in 1973 and then attended the law school at the University of Texas.

While at TCU, Lowe served as student body president. He was a strong advocate for change and worked to obtain adequate health facilities for the campus. Even then, he said, he felt that students needed access to a lawyer.

A university is no longer an authority figure for students in the absence of their parents, Lowe said. Students are seen as independent adults and as such need help with legal affairs, he said.

"I'm a natural for the job," Lowe said, adding that he is familiar with the faculty, administration and the university system. "TCU is a part of me."

House Treasurer Jill Robertson said Lowe is "willing to help the students—even just to listen."

Lowe isn't an easy person to catch in the office, so he encourages students to call his home if they cannot reach him at work. He recently moved his office from West Seventh Street to the River Plaza office building on South University Drive so he would be more accessible to students.

Lowe has been actively involved with the university for the last 15 years. He said he considers the school "family" and will stay at TCU as long as he can. If he ever left, he said, he would help the university find someone to replace him.

"It hurts me financially to serve TCU," Lowe said, but he added that he hopes his compensation will increase as he continues to work more for the university.

Success for Lowe depends on "being able to do the best job considering the circumstances. I've always considered myself a

Tom Lowe was a TCU advocate when he was here, serving as student body president and working for better student services. Now, he is using his law practice to help TCU students. The university pays him for consultations with students, but it still costs him. Some students fail to even pay the minimal fees he charges for representation.

knight on a white horse; I like fighting causes," he said. "I want to do the most for the most people."

His greatest satisfaction comes from being able to help people, especially people who are unable to help themselves, he said.

In one such case, he received a phone call late one Friday night from a man who had attempted to commit suicide because his marriage was deteriorating. Having been divorced himself, Lowe said, he was "well-suited" to handle the case. He talked with the man until 3 a.m. and later handled the divorce.

Although he is a general practitioner, Lowe said, he considers family law—including divorce, parent/child relationships and juvenile cases—his speciality. He said he is especially competent at handling child custody cases. Such cases are extremely difficult, he said, because of their emotional nature.

Lowe said he went into law with the intention of being a trial lawyer. "I love litigation." He is a solo practitioner—a firm in himself. Lowe said he likes the arrangement because it lets him decide which cases and clients he will represent.

Such a practice limits his income, but he is not in the profession to make money, he said.

In his business with TCU, Lowe said, he does "a little of everything." Although the cases he deals with vary from semester to semester, he cited vehicle problems, driving while intoxicated, shoplifting and theft as some of the more common areas in which he deals with students. Settling landlord/tenant disputes, especially concerning apartment deposits, is another typical problem brought to him, he said.

Lowe has also helped students with credit problems. He told of one woman who continued to write hot checks to the point that a warrant was issued for her arrest. Most students don't realize that writing bad checks is a criminal offense, he said.

Lowe represented the woman and charged her \$197. Usually he would charge a client approximately \$800 for a similar case, he said. Lowe never received payment.

He said he should have sued the woman but was too busy at the time to do so. Lowe said he has never sued a TCU student.

Such abuse is irritating, Lowe said. He cited another incident in which an international student visiting San Antonio became involved with a prostitute. The student was arrested, and his \$9,000 Rolex watch was taken by



Tom Lowe

police. Through a number of costly long distance calls, Lowe said, he managed to secure the watch for the student. For representing the student, Lowe charged \$200, which he never received.

Lowe said that most students need someone to help advise them with their first contracts, like those made with an apartment house or health spa. He encourages self-help, because students learn more that way, he said. Often, Lowe will refer a student to a government agency or another person for assistance.

He will not represent or advise any student who could cause a potential "conflict of interest." If,

for example, another student were involved, Lowe would not be able to accept the student as a client. He said he will mediate if both parties agree.

Students often do not realize the seriousness of their crime, Lowe said. He told of an instance in which a student was charged with a third-degree felony. At that time, the student was not aware of the lifelong implications that could result from a conviction.

Lowe was able to get the man a deferred adjudication, meaning that the sentence would be held based on the student's behavior over the next four years. If his behavior was satisfactory at the end of that time, the charge would be dropped.

Lowe said he spends an average of 20 minutes talking with each TCU student who calls him. He said he will take a call from a student to set up an appointment while he is in conference with a paying client. Lowe estimated that he spends approximately 10 times the amount of time of the conversation on research and follow-up work.

Getting students to provide follow-up information is one of his biggest problems, he said.

"Some people would say that it takes a long time for me to get back to them," he said. "Of course, I have the same problem with students." Lowe said that he is often more easy to track down than college students, because of their fluctuating schedules.

Lowe said he thinks students are satisfied with his service, but he added that it will probably take a couple of semesters for students to realize that he is available on certain Saturdays for consultation.

Both Dottie Phillips, director of the student center, and House treasurer Robertson said an effective means of evaluating the success of Lowe's service is needed. The Saturday office hours, for example, are a new aspect of the legal service. "Not a whole lot of people know about him," Robertson said.

Robertson said she thinks Lowe is sincere. She said he respects confidentiality and will not talk to students' parents if they do not want him to. She added that he encourages students to come to him with problems before they get out of hand.

Another way Lowe is involved with TCU is his sponsorship of the Student Government Service Award, an annual award of \$100 given to the student who has served the student body most through student government.

"I know of no greater honor nor greater responsibility in our society than to be chosen to speak and act on behalf of others," he said.

Laundry industry comes of age

Continued from page 1

From 7:45 to 11 a.m., Struve offers a service of washing customers' clothes and having them ready to be picked up in the afternoon.

"Some of those TCU kids call us their mom," she said.

Struve estimated that each of her 20 washing machines does about 300 loads a month.

Sharma's Coin-O-Matic on Bluebonnet Circle has 28 washers and is generally less crowded than the coin-op next to The Hop. It is open from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m., and because no one is on duty, it is not a good idea to leave clothes there unattended.

Sharma's features a jukebox and Space Mission pinball and is next door to a video arcade—for those adventurous souls willing to leave their clothes unwatched while they go massacre blips.

The Fort Worth Police Department has no statistics on how many people are mugged or have their clothes stolen from laundries.

Because of a rent hike, however, Sharma's will close down next month, its manager tells patrons on a hand-lettered sign in the window.

In addition to Sharma's Coin-O-Matic, Bluebonnet Circle has three dry-cleaning establishments. Brothers II offers one-hour service and charges \$3.75 to dry-clean a two-piece suit. TCU students receive a 20 percent discount if they present a student ID.

Manager Gail Horton said she estimates as much as 60 percent of her business is from TCU students.

Circle Cleaners charges \$4.25

for a two-piece suit and offers a 10 percent discount to TCU students. It specializes in one-day service.

Martinez Custom Tailors and Cleaners specializes in alterations and tailoring. Roland Martinez said that to have a pair of pants altered and pressed costs \$5, and to have a two-piece suit dry-cleaned costs \$4.

"I think that one of the reasons a lot of businesses have survived around here is because of money generated from TCU," Martinez said.

University Cleaners on Berry Street also offers alterations and charges \$4.20 to dry-clean a two-piece suit. It estimates that 20 percent of its business comes from TCU students.

The purple facade of Frog Cleaners is nestled between bars and restaurants on University Drive across from TCU's education building. Donald Sampley said he's owned the place since 1949.

About half of his business consists of TCU students, he said. He charges \$1.75 to clean a pair of pants and \$3.75 to clean a two-piece suit.

Yes, dirty laundry is a business.

In the preface to his monumental treatise on the laundry industry, DeArmond wrote:

"Not all history is made by parliaments and presidents, congresses and kings, generals and G-men. A part of the drama of mankind is performed by the people who do the prosy everyday work of feeding, clothing, housing and cleansing the world. That this latter record is incomplete is the only excuse for this book."



LOST SOCKS — TCU student Bob Kreutz checks a dryer at the Wash-O-Matic to make sure he got all his clothes. On the cover, student David Kiene leaves his laundry washing, perhaps to wait next door at The Hop.

Photo by Phillip Mosier



A MELTING POT — Coin-op laundries, while they aren't the most exciting places to be, are a melting pot and forum of public opinion. TCU students seem

to prefer the Washo-O-Matic on Berry and Sharma's, on Bluebonnet Circle.

Photo by Phillip Mosier

For student, 69, graduation is realized dream

By Quantalane Henry

Dreams still come true for 69-year-old Deborah Cox — her dream to finish college is becoming a reality.

Cox has been pursuing an undergraduate degree at TCU since August 1978. She's not preparing for a career. She decided to spend the rest of her life learning in an academic environment and is working toward a degree in general studies with an emphasis in art history.

"My friends have been dropping like flies, and I may just drop off at any time, I don't know," Cox said. "I'll probably be taking classes for the rest of my life."

Cox said that she now realizes how little she knew before she came back to college and that she finds it stimulating and exciting to be able to assimilate information and put it back down on paper. It gives her a sense of fulfillment and satisfaction, she said.

Thirsting for knowledge is not new for Cox. She remembers her mother riding the bus to TCU in the 1960s to take biology courses.

"It was a fun thing for my mother — she valued education and had a sincere interest in it before she died in 1981 at the age of 95," Cox said.

Because she had been "away from the books" for some time, Cox said, she believed she would probably make a C on her college work or a B if she was lucky. At present, Cox has a 4.0 GPA.

"Since I have it, it's a challenge to try to maintain it," Cox said. "If I didn't have it, I would feel more relaxed, but I don't think it is something great."

Classes are a challenge because of the discipline and studying involved and the time it takes to write research papers, she said.

Luncheons and bridge are only two sacrifices Cox has made since she returned to school, but attending college keeps her "out of her children's hair," she said.

Although she anticipates graduation in December 1984, Cox said, she is taking one day at a time.

"My friends have been dropping like flies, and I may just drop off at any time, I don't know. I'll probably be taking classes for the rest of my life."

— Deborah Cox

In her classes, Cox eagerly participates in discussions and has never sensed uncomfortable feelings toward her because she is older than her classmates. Having many nephews, nieces and other relatives around her at home, Cox said, she has never felt isolated around the younger generation. Some of her best friends are young people, she said.

"I feel I have been accepted among the students here at TCU," Cox said. "I am real pleased when students from 'old' classes come up to me and chat with me."

Cox accumulated 63 hours of credit in the 1930s at the University of Texas at Arlington (formerly Arlington Community College) and at Texas Woman's University. TCU applied all the hours toward her general studies degree. Cox attended some classes at TCU before dropping out because of the Depression.

Working in the Mary Coats Burnett Library in 1960 led Cox to employment at the Kimbell Art Museum Library with her friend, the late Ilse Rothrock. Mrs. Rothrock was librarian of the museum and wife of Walton Rothrock, a TCU professor of French and director of general studies.

Upon retiring in August 1978, Cox enrolled in art studio classes. She thought she would probably major in art history.

She said she didn't just want "to take some courses or audit classes," Cox said she wanted a plan, a direction to aim in.

"After getting advisement," she said, "I realized that if I got a degree in art history, I would need extra science and math, so I got into general studies, which is much more flexible."

"I was able to substitute psychology courses for math and science courses, and I've had nine hours of psychology classes."

Although she is taking six hours this semester, she originally was advised to take three hours just to get her feet wet, she said.

Emphasizing that she is not a lonely widow taking classes just to

fill her time, Cox said she wouldn't trade anything for her supportive husband, Jackson, and her two married daughters, Julia and Deborah, and their families. She said she is happy with her family life and is living a balanced life to the fullest.

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Cox's husband, who graduated from college, is a retired public relations director and advertising manager for a utility company. He still writes a column about retirees for the monthly company paper. Both of her daughters graduated from TCU.

Rothrock said Cox is not only an enthusiastic and conscientious student, but she has also been a close and dear friend with his family.

Even with her household responsibilities and family, Rothrock said, Cox has come into his office for advisement and has left his office and entered the intellectual world — one she has conquered academically.

"She's the kind of person who is excited over learning anything new, and she's well accepted by other students on campus at TCU," Rothrock said. "I have the greatest admiration for her."

events etc.

Monday 25

Housing Staff 8 a.m., Student Center Room 222
Residence Hall Staff 9 a.m., Student Center Room 214
Panhellenic 3:30 p.m., Student Center Room 218
IFC 3:30 p.m., Student Center Room 222
Performing Arts 4 p.m., Student Center Room 203
Films committee 5:30 p.m., Student Center Room 202
Mary Kay meeting 6 p.m., Student Center Room 204
Film 8 p.m., Student Center Ballroom
Campus Crusade 8:30 p.m., Student Center Room 205&6

Tuesday 26

ICHTHUS 7 a.m., Student Center Room 202
Housing Staff 9 a.m., Student Center Room 222
Area Ministers noon, Student Center Room 214
Student Conduct Committee 3 p.m., Student Center Room 205&6
Traffic Appeals 3:30 p.m., Student Center Room 202
Parents' Weekend Committee 3:30 p.m., Student Center Room 204

Public Relations 4 p.m., Student Center Room 203
Creative Programming 4:30 p.m., Student Center Room 215
House 5 p.m., Student Center Room 222
Rec and Travel Committee 5 p.m., Student Center Room 214
Angel Flight 5:30 p.m., Student Center Room 204
Academic Affairs 5:30 p.m., Student Center Room 218
University Relations 5:30 p.m., Student Center Room 211
Spirit Wranglers 6 p.m., Student Center Room 207&9
Permanent Improvements 6 p.m., Student Center Room 203
Campus Chest 6:30 p.m., Student Center Room 202
Phi Alpha Theta 7 p.m., Student Center Room 205&6
Sophomore Class 7 p.m., Student Center Ballroom
Amway 7:30 p.m., Student Center Room 203

Wednesday 27

History of Fort Worth 10 a.m., Student Center Room 205&6
Book Discussion 1 p.m., Student Center Room 222
SOC 3 p.m., Student Center Room 203

SOC Subcommittee 3 p.m., Student Center Room 204
Job Search 3 p.m., Student Center Room 218
Forums 4 p.m., Student Center Room 202
Hunger Week Committee 4 p.m., Student Center Room 204
Homecoming 4 p.m., Student Center Room 205&6
RHA 4:15 p.m., Student Center Room 222
Programming Council 5 p.m., Student Center Room 211
Circle K 6 p.m., Student Center Room 205&6
Reading Program 7 p.m., Student Center Ballroom
ICHTHUS 7 p.m., Student Center Room 207&9
UCAM 7 p.m., Student Center Room 218

Thursday 28

Purchasing Policies 8 a.m., Student Center Room 218
ACT Workshop 8 a.m., Student Center Room 205&6
Purchasing Policies noon, Student Center Ballroom
ACT Workshop noon, Student Center Room 207&9
Advisers Workshop noon, Student Center Room 211
Counseling Center noon, Student Center Room 203
Homecoming Reps 4 p.m., Student Center Room 203
Job Search 4 p.m., Student Center Room 215
Arnold Air Society 4:30 p.m., Student Center Room 205&6
Student Leaders 5 p.m., Student Center Room 211

Concerts 5 p.m., Student Center Room 214
Campus Crusade 5 p.m., Student Center Room 202
Prelaw Assoc. 5:30 p.m., Student Center Room 204
Tau Beta Sigma 6:45 p.m., Student Center Room 203
Churches of Christ 7:30 p.m., Student Center Room 202
Lutheran Ministries 8 p.m., Student Center Room 204
Kappa Alpha Psi 8 p.m., Student Center Room 216
Catholic Music Ministries 8 p.m., Student Center Room 218

Friday 29

Student Life Staff 8 a.m., Student Center Room 207&9
Purchasing Policies 8 a.m., Student Center Room 218
CPPC 9 a.m., Student Center Room 215
Purchasing Policies noon, Student Center Ballroom
Advisers Workshop noon, Student Center Room 211
Wright School 3 p.m., Student Center Room 205&6

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