

Former WF 'Deacon' Will Open Nightclub

By **MERRILL BROWN**
Sentinel Staff Reporter

A Winston-Salem native, who at one time was the "Deacon" at Wake Forest athletic events and subsequently became the clown at Winston-Salem Red Sox baseball games, is about to open a nightclub at Thruway Shopping Center.

Bill Shepherd, the former Wake Forest mascot, is the president and director of operations and memberships of the Hub Pub Club Inc., a firm which owns the Hub Pub Club near Banner Elk.

The firm, owned by Charles Babcock Jr., is sinking between \$65,000 and \$70,000 into another Hub Pub Club in what had been the location of Art Gallery Originals at Thruway Shopping Center.

Shepherd has high hopes and expects to present nationally known popular musicians, songwriters, comedians and variety acts when the club opens in May.

"This area is barren for consistently good entertainment," Shepherd said. "Our club is going to be for the person deprived of live entertainment with a good atmosphere in a room that is well equipped."

The club, which will be private, allowing the

serving of alcoholic beverages, will have \$35 a year dues, with a \$4 to \$6 cover charge for most of the entertainment. Members will be allowed to bring guests — spouses, for example.

The club will have two rooms, one a lounge seating about 80 people and what Shepherd calls a "listening room" with a sound system costing more than \$13,000 that Shepherd says "will be second to none."

"You ought to be able to see an artist like Doc Watson, hear him breathe and see him finger-pick his guitar with the right lighting and sound," he said. "The concept is that of a listening room with sophistication and class."

"Most people only know supper clubs where a guy has to perform over 'pass the steak sauce.' I don't know why we subject our artists to that treatment."

The club's first booked act will be the rejuvenated Kingston Trio, scheduled for May 20-24. The club may open around May 15 "if we can iron out some construction problems," Shepherd said.

The variety of acts he hopes to bring to what may become the only club of its kind in the Triad is somewhat startling. It ranges from Teresa

Brewer, who he hopes to have in the first week of operations, to comedian Pat Paulsen, who he expects to have after the Kingston Trio engagement.

Shepherd hopes to bring anybody to the Hub Pub Club "except something that will hurt your ears."

The list includes pop singers like Peggy Lee and Robert Goulet, country-folk artists like Jonathen Edwards, Tracy Nelson, Melissa Manchester, Jerry Jeff Walker and John Hartford, groups like the Dillards and comedians like Jimmy Walker (J. J. of TV's "Good Times") and George Gobel.

And Shepherd hopes that despite the minimum membership age of 21, younger people will also get to see artists, at certain times, in his club. "It would be a crime to have Cat Stevens in here and not let young people in to see him," he said.

Shepherd's ambitious plans have worked in the mountains, and he likes the challenge of bringing the "listening room concept" to Winston-Salem. "I've never been happier in my life than I am trying to get something done than I am trying to bring this concept to a metropolitan area like this," he said.

Shepherd, 39, attended Reynolds High School, and

graduated from Wake Forest after being the "Demon Deacon" for three years and being named one of the school's 10 outstanding seniors. He has served as executive director of the Deacon Club Foundation and was general manager of the Seven Devils resort before becoming involved in the Hub Pub Club.

"The name of the club was intended to point an accusing finger at these ridiculous liquor laws in North Carolina," he said.

But if the local liquor laws bother Shepherd, local talent doesn't. "I'm all ears 24 hours a day," he said. "I'm delighted too that the School of the Arts is here. If someone has ability and performing talents, I'd drive five hours to hear them."

"We want not only good musicians, but people who have the ability to entertain," he said, explaining that he feels entertainment is just what local residents need during economic hard times.

"People look for happiness, an escape in music and other things," he said. "We want this . . . to be a place that artists love coming to and the kind of place where people who are just sitting around know they can come and consistently catch good entertainment."



BILL SHEPHERD

... "people look for happiness ..."

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Club Operator Found Dead

By GENE WHITMAN

Sentinel Staff Reporter

William G. (Bill) Shepherd, operator of the Hub Pub Club which closed last month, was found dead this morning at the club in Thruway Shopping Center.

Dr. David S. Nelson, Forsyth County medical examiner, said the death was a "clear case of suicide."

Nelson said Shepherd, 40, evidently planned his act well in advance. He said the body was discovered by Shepherd's attorney, Richard Sapp, who had received a letter from him this morning indicating his intention.

Sapp went to the club and, when he was unable to get in, called police.

Nelson said officers found Shepherd lying on his face in a small room used for storage. He said a plastic bag of the type used as a garbage bag had been placed over his head and secured with tape.

Shepherd had taken a large amount of tranquilizers, Nelson said, which probably left him in a lethargic state so that he "could not have taken the bag loose then if he had wanted to."

Nelson said that in his opinion, Shepherd had been dead for 36 to 48 hours. He said an autopsy would be performed and the results would be available late today but that in his opinion, death was due to asphyxiation.

Nelson said letters and other belongings were found beside the body.

"He evidently contemplated this long in advance. He recorded his thoughts extensively and wrote several letters."

Police made extensive tests and checks inside the club and played recordings — apparently made by Shepherd — for his parents. The body was taken to Forsyth Memorial Hospital a little after noon.

Shepherd was the son of L. F. Shepherd Sr. and Vivian Glenn Shepherd.

The club has had financial difficulties for some time.



BILL SHEPHERD
... former "Deacon" ...

When it opened in the shopping center's lower mall in May, members were charged \$35 for annual memberships, which entitled them to keep liquor at the club and get reduced prices for admission to the live entertainment offered.

Shepherd told a reporter three weeks ago that by the time the club closed in mid-December, only about 1,400 people had become members. He said successful operation required at least 5,000 members.

The Winston-Salem club was the second Hub Pub Club to be opened by Shepherd, Sapp and Charles Babcock Jr., whose funds covered the local club's deficit. The first club was in Banner Elk.

When Shepherd announced plans to open the club here, he said, "This area is barren for consistently good entertainment. Our club is going to be for the person deprived of live entertainment with a good atmosphere in a room that is well equipped."

In its nine months of operation, the club presented such performers as Frank Sinatra Jr., Peter Nero, the New Kingston Trio and John Hartford.

When the club closed in December, Shepherd said he would try to find a way to reopen it. Club members met last week and tentatively decided to mount a telephone campaign to get members to pledge another \$35 for a year's membership. Shepherd also said he would look for someone to buy Babcock's interest in the club.

Last month Shepherd told a reporter that he "still has the enthusiasm" but that he had "taken one hell of a psychological beating."

Shepherd, a native of Hamlet, graduated from Wake Forest University in 1960. For three years he had been the "Demon Deacon," the comic "mascot" who performed at Wake Forest sports events. Bones McKinney, head basketball coach at the time, said Shepherd may have been the best Deacon the school ever had.

In his student days, Shepherd also performed as a clown at the Winston-Salem Red Birds' professional baseball games and with circuses that appeared at the coliseum. Later he served as executive director of the Deacon Club Foundation, and he was general manager of Watauga County's Seven Devils resort in the mid-1960s.