

Season of new beginnings

Students shed red and white

By KATHY BLOMSTROM
TIMES Staff Writer

DENTON — Winds of spring are whistling a new tune for students and staff at Denton Junior/Senior High School.

By Friday, the 700 middle and high school students will have shed their red and white Red Raider mascot for the royal blue and grey of the South Davidson Wildcats.

Teachers and administrators will also have made a trade — flaking chalkboards, warped floorboards and cramped quarters for atriums, teacher workrooms and a "cafelobitorium."

"We're looking forward to the move with great anticipation," said Principal Jim Carpenter. "There's a measure of nostalgia about the old building and deservedly so, but we're ready to go."

The South Davidson transition begins Thursday, with middle school students loading up and moving to the new school two miles north on Highway 109. High schoolers will join them Friday.

To many, the closing of Denton High marks the end of an era.

A Denton high school has existed for over a century, with generations of residents graduating from the present 60-year-old red brick school.

"I've attended this school for 12 years," said senior Chad Gallimore. "My grandma, daddy and sister graduated from here and I thought I would too."

Instead, he will spend his last two months of school at South Davidson, leaving the large elegantly arching windows of Denton High to graduate a Wildcat.

But just as some see doors closing on the past, others are looking to the future, viewing the new building and name change as symbols of a new beginning.

"I'm excited about the move," said junior Stephanie Fine. "It's a new start, a chance to set our own traditions."

Miss Fine and her cousin Julianna, a sophomore, admitted they will miss the sound of shoe soles tapping down the narrow hardwood hallways and walking outside to classes scattered in the school's seven buildings.

"Denton High has the best memories," said Julianna. "You can't replace that."

However, the allure of South Davidson includes air conditioning and reliable heat, new equipment and furniture and spacious classrooms, all under one roof.

"I'm going to be the first in my family to graduate from the new school," added Stephanie, "and that's exciting."

The new building, which was completed under budget, features a combination cafeteria, lobby and auditorium area that Mr. Carpenter likes to call the "cafelobitorium."

The auditorium, which is cost-prohibitive in schools now, is created by removing the music room walls and using the cafeteria/lobby area to seat 450 people.

"We wouldn't have had that if our staff hadn't thought of it and asked for it," said Mr. Carpenter.

Staff input is also reflected in two atriums or indoor courts, which were designed to flood the school with natural light.

Mr. Carpenter noted the specific teacher areas, such as the work room and lounge, should help boost staff morale.

The new building also offers a guidance area, specific rooms for computer and satellite instruction and two gyms — one for middle school students and one for high schoolers.

Denton High may be showing its age with cob webs slung from its arched windows and plaster peeling from classroom walls, but the love affair between students and faculty and the school and community are as fresh as ever.

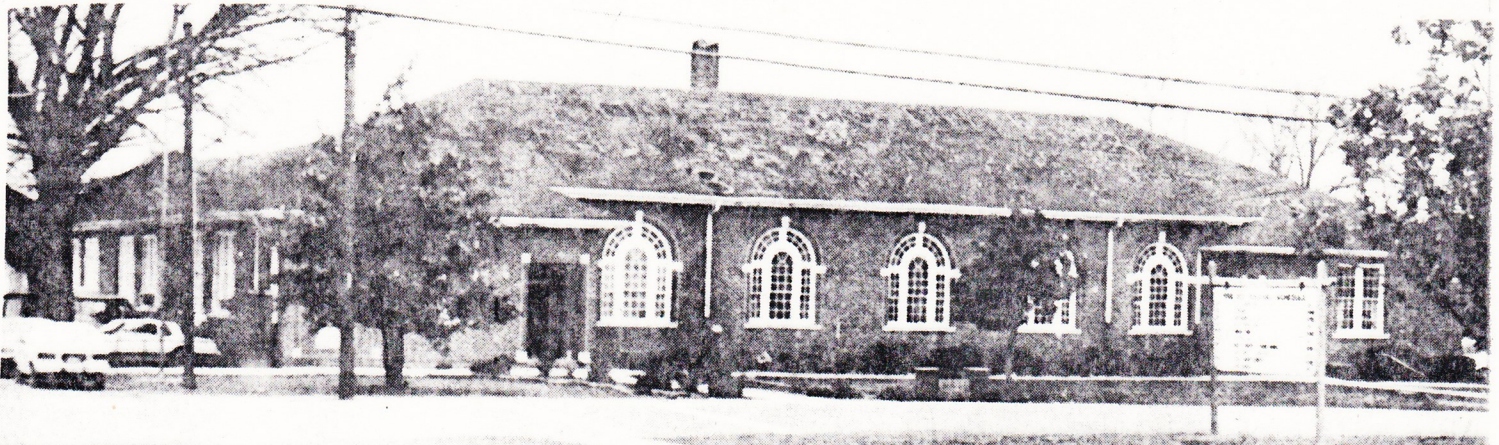
"The school's always been the focus and center of community life," said Pearl Miller, school secretary and 1956 graduate, "and the townspeople have supported the school in everything."

And despite inconveniences of the aging structure, she has many good memories of the school.

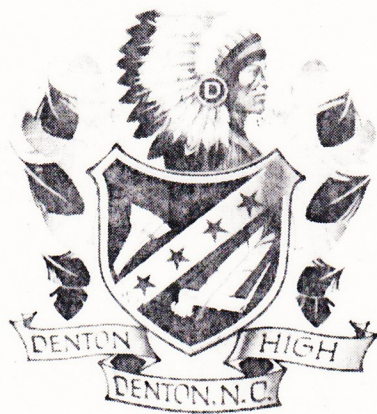
"I cherished the closeness of students and faculty when I was in school, and that closeness has carried over through the years," noted Mrs. Miller.

With a 9-12 enrollment of under 400, students don't get lost in the cracks, said Mr. Carpenter. Everyone has the opportunity to participate in sports and other programs.

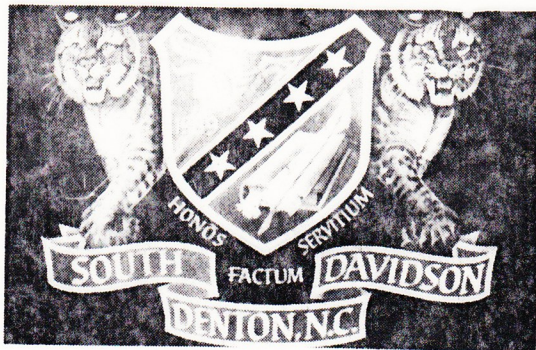
"The self-image of students here is enhanced by the attention they get from their peers and staff," he said. "And moving to a new building isn't going to change that."



DENTON High looks out over the city's Main Street, which students cross daily to attend classes in the home economics building. The main building, constructed in 1929, is one of seven structures that make up the school.



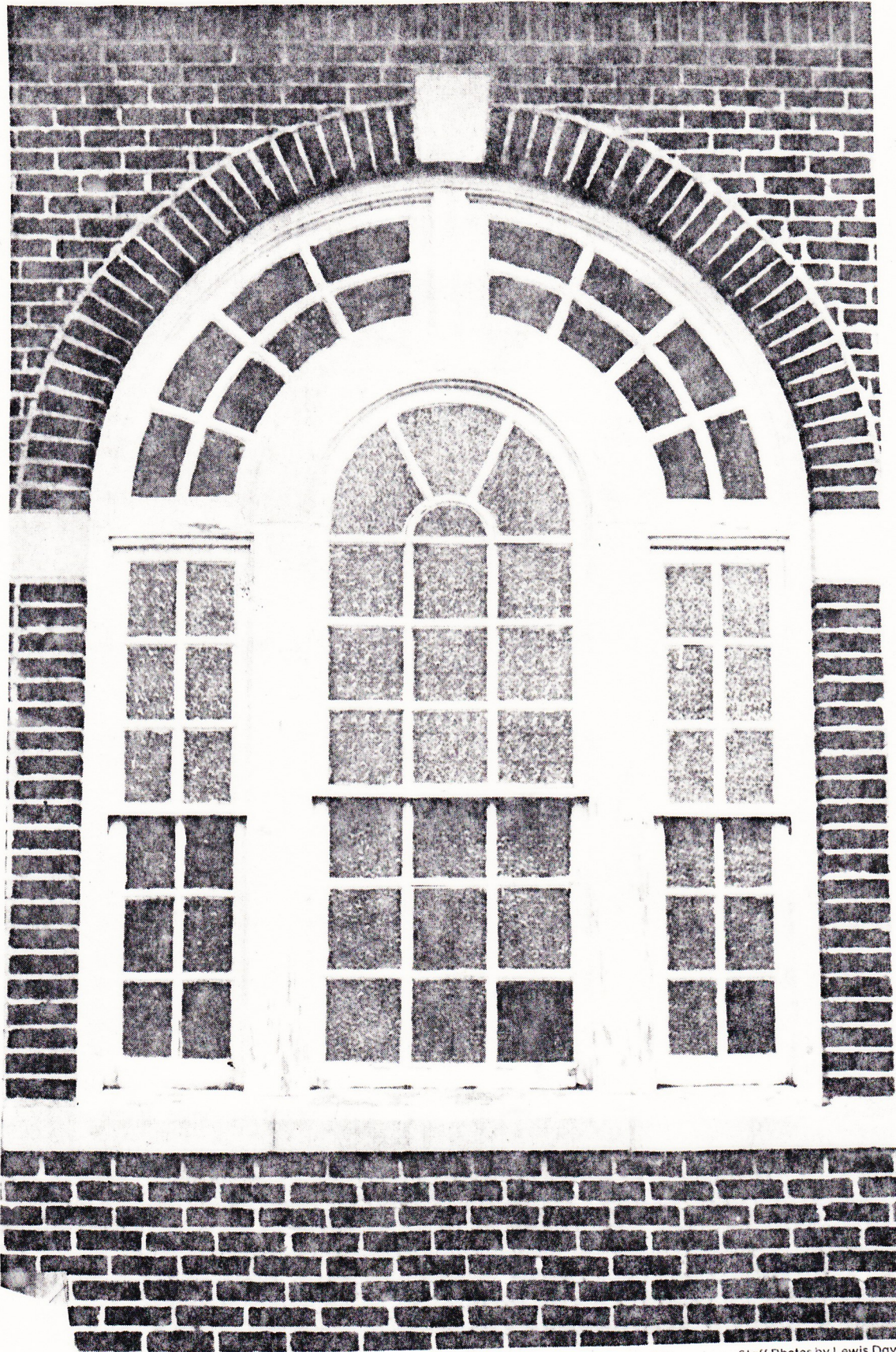
STUDENTS are bidding a fond farewell to the red and white of Denton's Red Raiders.



SOUTH Davidson's coat of arms showcases the school's mascot, the wildcat, the school's colors, royal blue and silver grey, and symbols for strength and protection.

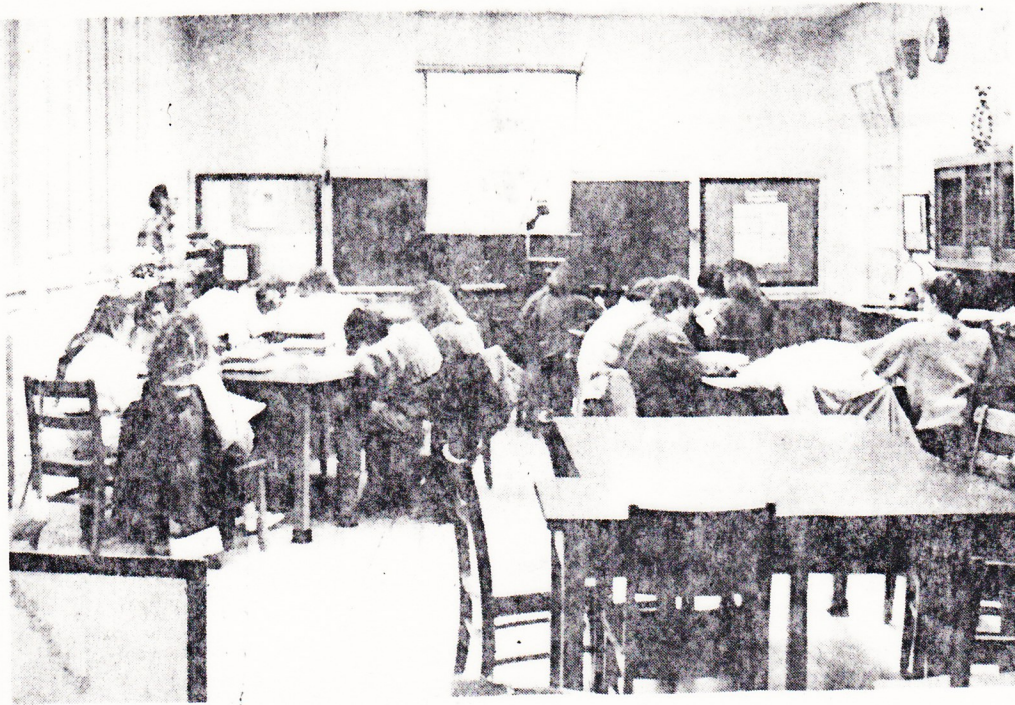


LOCKERS line the long, narrow hallways of Denton High School, built in a U around a central courtyard.

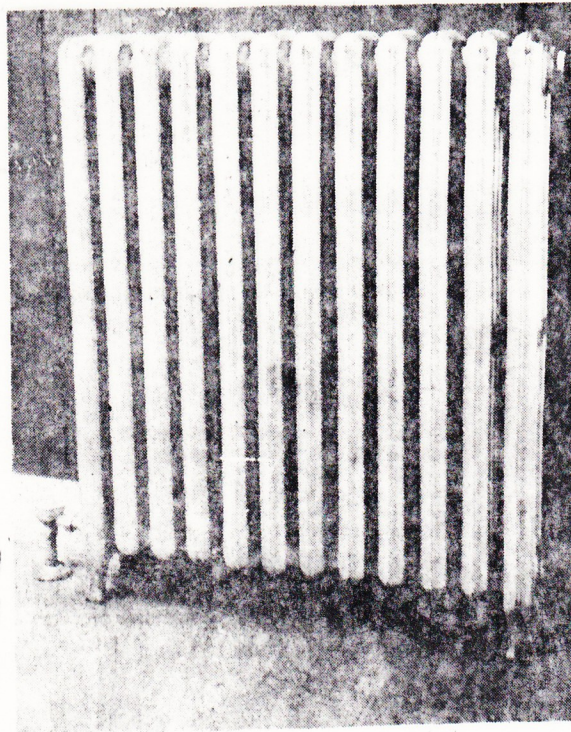


Staff Photos by Lewis Day

ALTHOUGH paint flakes from the large front windows, and several panes of glass are missing, the structures add character and elegance to the 60-year-old school with their gentle arches.



A typical Denton classroom features such amenities as flaking blackboards, peeling paint and warped floorboards.



OLD-FASHIONED radiators erratically supply heat to Denton High School.