“If you ain’t got personality, you can just hang it up.”

But personality has never been a problem for Tommy Sorrell. Sitting outside the Poplar Corner Exxon off Hollywood Drive, he sips on a Dr. Thunder and waits for the next customer to pull up.

“When gas prices are high like this, I try to get outside and talk to people.”

And people around here like to talk to Tommy. He knows most of his customers by name, and is eager to start up a conversation with new faces.

“I want people to feel welcome; to feel like they get what they paid for,” he explains, as he finishes washing a windshield.

And on the rare occasion business is slow around the station, Tommy and his coworkers sit outside, finishing yesterday’s crossword puzzle and talking about days gone by.

“That’s how I learned to do what I do—from an old man. He told me ‘Son, you always remember one thing: treat people like you want to be treated. And they’ll remember you. And they’ll come back.’"

Tommy said back in those days, gas was only $.29 a gallon. “But that was back in 1974.”

A native of Forked Deer (“but down there, they call it Stoggem Bottom—cause its soggier there”), Tommy said what he likes most about Jackson is the people, and Casey Jones Restaurant.

For a few years, he worked on the grounds at Union.

“Those college kids were crazy,” he said, “but that’s just how college kids are.”

But when it comes down to it, Tommy is all about people.

“Like that woman that just came through in the little green car. When she got here, she had a long face. When she left, she had a smile. That right there’s what it’s all about.”

“If I can’t brighten someone’s day, I’ve defeated my purpose.”

**Say What?**

**How do you get outside the Union Bubble?**

“Every weekend I take my clothes home for my stepmom to wash.”  
Joshua Pettigrew  
sophomore, political science

“I try to stay connected with my friends outside Union from back home.”  
Kimberly Carkman  
sophomore, public relations

“I get outside with Young Life, visiting friends who live off campus, and with many long trips to Wal-mart.”  
Ronald Long  
sophomore, youth ministry

“A sinking tradition?”

**BY KRISTEN NICOLE SAYRES**

Some traditions are not made to last.

For many students, the fountains outside the PAC and Jennings Hall provide a ritual initiation to Union life. Students continue to swim and play in the fountains despite rebukes by administration and the office of safety and security.

“It has become somewhat of an underground tradition here at Union,” said senior Brad Spencer, biology major. Director of Safety and Security Larry Ross says playing in the fountain is prohibited for two reasons: it will cause damage to the fountains and students risk hurting themselves.

“The bowl of the Jennings fountain is not stationary and not safe,” said Gary Carter, senior vice president of business and financial services.

“We would prefer they not do it,” said Ross. “I can’t say it’s a part of my legacy when I attended school.”

“The fountain is there for the aesthetic enhancement of the campus,” Carter said. “To use it for something not honoring to the intent is disrespectful to the university.”

“Will students go on to lead productive lives if they do not play in the fountain? Most likely, but you never know for sure,” Spencer said.

One freshman recently took a dip in the Jennings fountain with her Life group.

“It was unique bonding time,” she said. “Most certainly a part of the Union experience.”

“I got a small scrape on my knee, but that is a part of growing up. It was definitely worth the fun.”

**FOCUS | OUT**

"A PHOTO COLUMN BY BRAD MOORE AND KRISTEN NICOLE SAYRES"