



Ashley Christiansen, 7, left, and Adrian Matthews, 8, play near the snack bar Monday night and enjoy their last day of summer before school starts up again on Wednesday.

Still 'In' to drive



Children sit atop their parents van to get a clearer view of Deep Blue Sea's giant killer shark exploding off the big screen during Monday night's showing.

"I love it here. I wouldn't trade this job in for the world."

— Ozzie Bates, manager, 28th Street Drive-In



Candice Hartman of St. Petersburg (above) relaxes with a cigarette while waiting for more cars during a very slow Tuesday night at the 28th Street Drive-In. Only 20 cars showed up with 39 people over 10-years-old. Seventy-three-year-old Elwood Brunt (right), known by everyone as Woody, checks the film to make sure the sound track is on the correct side and that there are no loops in it. Brunt has been with the 28th Street Drive-In since 1965, except for a short stint at another theatre during the 80's.



Ozzie Bates plays a little tune at the beginning of Sunday night's showing of Deep Blue Sea at the 28th Street Drive-In. Bates, the drive-in's manager, recently started playing guitar and has become very passionate about his music.



Story and Photographs by
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The 28th Street Drive-In, located at 4990 28th Street North in St. Petersburg, is a slice of life right out of the 50's and 60's. A time when life in America was simpler and families would pack up the kids and teen-agers would stuff their cars and head to the big screen. A place which made hero's and villains larger than life.

The theatre is a lone survivor. Others have given in to newer, air-conditioned theatres with surround-sound audio and high backed seats. Located in a quiet neighborhood with a mix of mobile home parks and industrial businesses, the outdoor theatre is enclosed by trees that naturally filter out the city's lights for optimal viewing.

The drive-in is run by a young musician named Ozzie Bates who really enjoys what he does. He says, "I love it here. I wouldn't trade this

job in for the world."

His staff is a mix of age and gender including 73 year-old Elwood Brunt, affectionately known to patrons as "Woody." Brunt has been working at the drive-in since 1965 except for a short time in the 80's when he worked at another theatre for a few years.

Brunt refers to himself as a jack of all trades. He says, "I can do anything."

When he was younger he used to bring his wife to the theatre with him while he worked. They made a date out of it.

About a year-and-a-half ago, Brunt had to slow down because he said the job was killing him. At one point he would be out cleaning the lot at 3 a.m., after the crowds and cars had gone home, to prepare the grounds for a flea market that started at 6 a.m.

The theatre is truly outdated compared to the quality of digital video disk, but offers something that modern technology cannot, a genuine piece of Americana.

