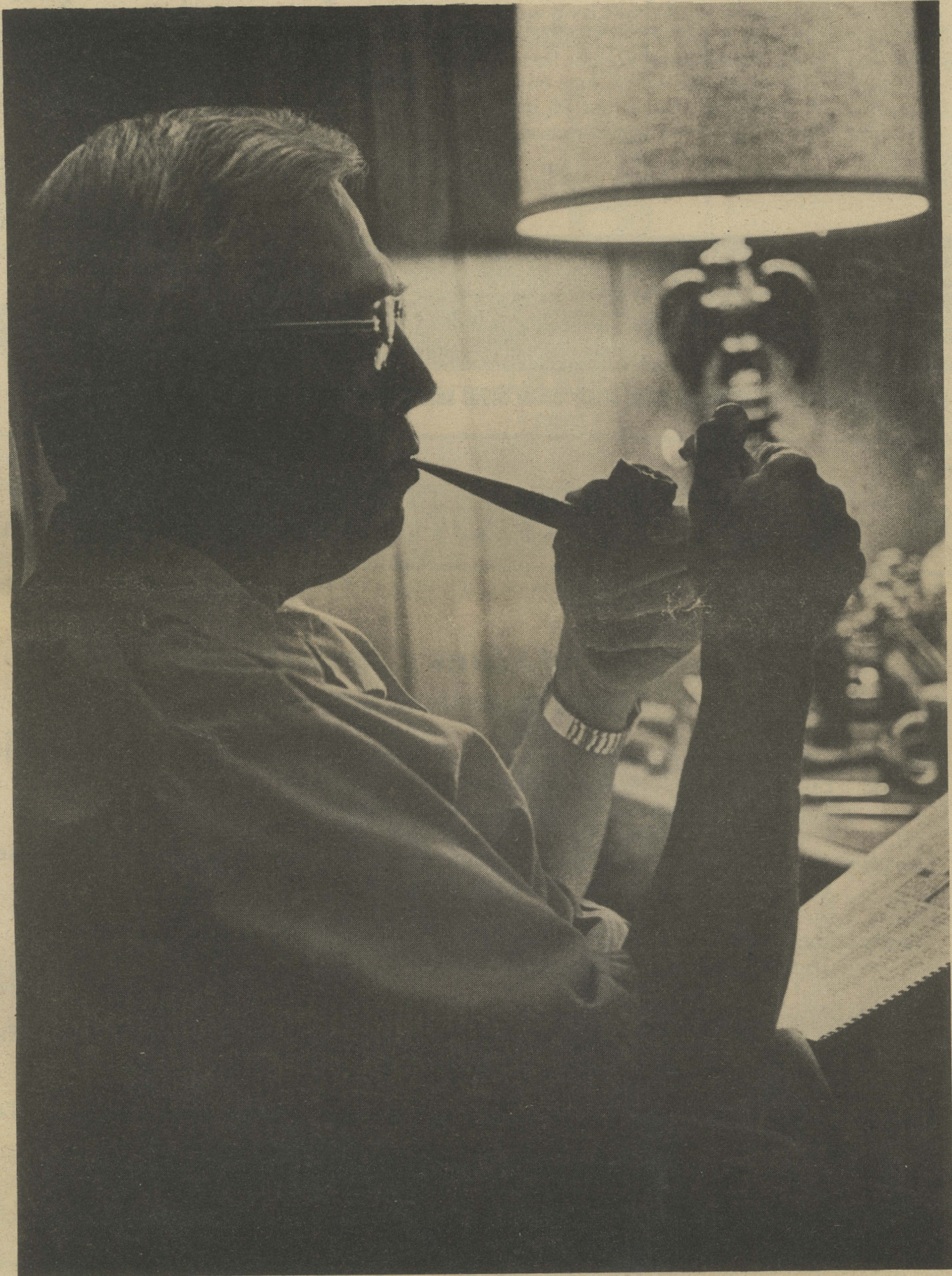


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Arts and Entertainment

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Pipe smoking--it takes skill,

By Rebecca Cox
Features Editor

According to Edsel James, owner of the Three Ten Pipe and Tobacco shop on East Main Street, smoking a pipe is something of an art form.

Pipes "are a different ballgame altogether," he said, from smoking cigarettes. In fact, he will go even farther. "Pipes are much more

enjoyable and just as satisfying as a cigarette."

James estimates he has "switched" between 150 to 200 individuals from cigarettes to pipes. And, he said, many continue to come to his shop for advice.

There's more to smoking a pipe than buying some tobacco, a pipe to stick it in and a lighter. "Some skill is required," James said. And practice is necessary. "You don't just buy a

pipe and tobacco and call yourself a pipe smoker."

James himself has been smoking a pipe since "Oh, 1936 or '37. I still have the pipe, too," he added, pulling it from a rack to show it off. The bowl, he explained, was too tall for him at that age. So he sawed it down.

Although his career has been wide-ranging, James has maintained his interest in pipes and tobaccos. He has worked in business relations for a bank, brought a car dealership to Murfreesboro, and opened his own insurance agency. During all this time, however, he continued to repair pipes, blend tobaccos and to buy and sell pipes.

"I always wanted my own pipe shop," he said. And he is proud of his six-year-old business. There he mixes 10 of his own blends to ship to other stores throughout the country. And he does his own repairs. "I don't know of another shop that does," he said.

James is willing to impart "any knowledge I have," he said, to those who wish to learn. And the person who is seriously interested in trying a pipe will not be given just any pipe.

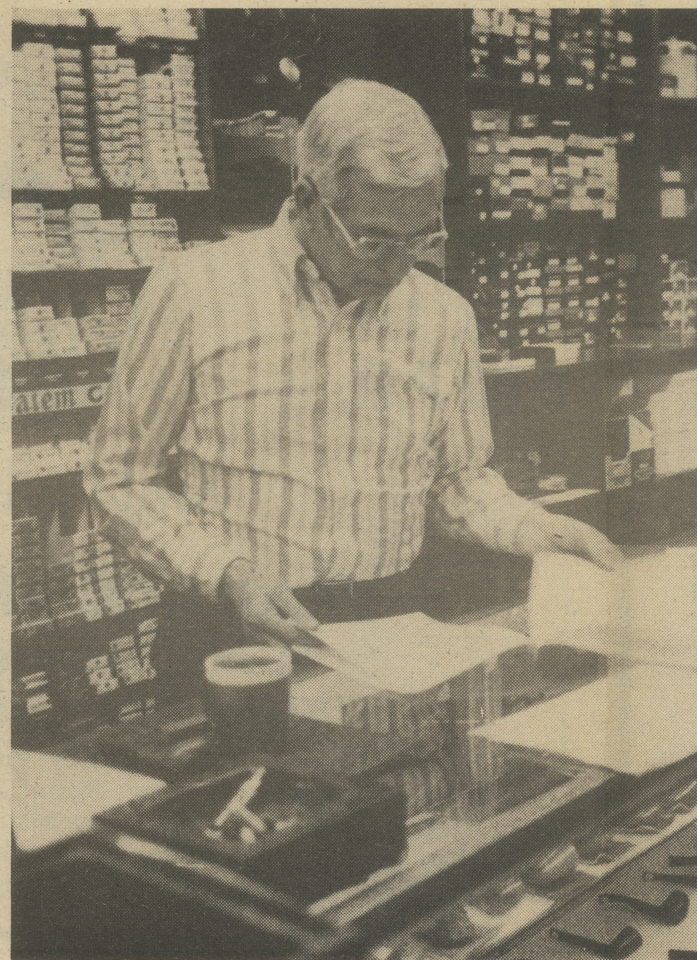
"I like to find out what type of work he does," James said, "whether he's sitting at a desk or driving a truck." From that, he can determine the weight the pipe should be and whether the person will have his hands free to manipulate the pipe.

Next he tries to determine a price range. "I have to know how much he wants to spend and how serious he will be about it," James said. A good-quality pipe, he added, will cost \$30 to \$50.

"The beauty of buying an expensive pipe," he commented, "is that if it is properly cared for and not abused, it will usually bring the



Edsel James enjoys an evening at home with one of his favorite activities--a good crossword puzzle, while his son, Craig, plays guitar. At his shop, (right) he discusses the merits of various pipes with a salesman and mixes one of the 10 special blends that are his own specialty.



practice

purchase price or more. But a poor-quality pipe seldom has any resale value."

And he prefers to start a novice pipe smoker on a mild tobacco with some aromatic tobacco added. "As he progresses in his smoking world," James said, the smoker "eventually will leave all artificially-seasoned tobaccos out of his blends."

James also encourages his customers to return, so he can see how they are progressing with their pipes. He likes to watch them fill, tamp, light and smoke the pipe. "I can see if the speed is right, if the pipe is drawing correctly," he said. He also checks the pipes to see if they are kept clean and offers advice.

"It takes a sincere desire to smoke a pipe," he said. The person must be willing to devote some time and effort to the process. "Most people enjoy smoking pipes, if they start with a good-quality pipe and good-quality tobacco."

And once a person enters that special smoking world, they may develop an interest in special pipes. Many become collectors--in earnest. "Some want a dozen Dunhills, some will collect Savinellis," James said. Many have commemorative pipes. James pointed to a collection hanging on the wall in his shop, "I've been teaching a Bible study class at St. Mark's for 23 years. The class has given me a pipe each year," he said.

But the earnest collector, in his opinion, collects pipes to smoke them.

"With a good pipe, good tobacco and a good crossword puzzle," James said, "life is really worthwhile."

Photographs by Dave Findley

