A new concern about drinking among teenagers has led to major crackdowns by law enforcement agencies.

By Mike Stagg

There's been a change of chapter in the continuing saga of this area's love affair with alcohol and efforts by policing agents to keep that affair within bounds. One chapter (dealing with a noted nightclub operator) has closed, while another (dealing with the continuing efforts to halt the sale of alcohol to minors) has opened. The two are related, but not directly.

The subject of one of the more controversial chapters in the history of Lafayette's bar and night club business has faded from the picture. Bobby Silor is no longer in the club business in Lafayette.

The departure of Silor from Lafayette's club scene is the denouement of a series of actions taken by local and state officials against two Silor corporations that ran two of the three clubs in the city in which he was involved.

Mike Russel, the chief of the state's Alcoholic Beverage Control Agency (ABC), told The Times that fines and penalties were levied against Silor's Big Times Inc., and the Sting of Lafayette as a result of a hearing held on Sept. 25 in Baton Rouge.

"Big Times Inc., which operated Sugars and later Boogies, had its license suspended for 30 days and was fined $1,500," Russel said.

"The Sting of Lafayette, which operated Espree, had its license suspended for one week and was fined $1,000. Both the fines and penalties came because the clubs sold alcoholic beverages to minors.

Silor was also ordered to inform ABC of any other business involvement he had in clubs holding beer and liquor licenses, according to Fay Thiel, ABC's chief of intelligence. Thiel says Silor has since advised ABC that he has "voluntarily removed himself" from the nightclub business in Lafayette.

Silor, along with Mike Hanisic was part owner of the Jefferson Street Music Hall which closed its doors after the Oct. 9 Steel Pulse concert.

Silor started in the night club business in Hammond where he opened The Sting in the late 1970s. The club's name was taken from the Paul Newman-Robert Redford movie of the same name. He later opened a similarly named club in Lafayette on Johnston Street near the USL campus in a former supermarket. The Sting later became JR's, after the villainous star of TV's "Duck's," JR's later became Espree.

Silor was also in the restaurant business in Lafayette, owning and operating a Mexican Restaurant named Mi Anita's. The restaurant burned in 1980 in a mysterious fire. Silor was involved in a nasty court fight with his insurers over liability for the blaze. Silor lost and the insurance company did not have to pay a settlement for the blaze.

Silor later expanded his operations to "The Strip," a cluster of clubs catering to the 18-21 crowd. Big Times of Lafayette opened Sugar's on the corner of McKinley and Cleveland. Originally a night club, Sugar's was turned into a teen club in late 1984. Earlier this year, Sugar's became Boogie's.

According to Russell, a number of complaints were made to ABC about minors being served alcoholic beverages at Silor's clubs. Such practices were common place in South Louisiana in years past, but the moral climate is changing. That perhaps contributed to the ABC's decision to take action against Silor, particularly after a 1984 incident at Sugar's.

On Oct. 6, 1984, a private party was held at Sugars, reportedly for a birthday party for a girl reaching her 17th birthday. Sugar's had a liquor license at that time, and Russell says that "juveniles are not allowed in places that hold liquor licenses, period."

While the party was a private function, Russell says kegs of beer were present and alcohol was served to minors. Thiel, his assistant, is more specific.

"We know of eight juvies who were served alcohol at that party," Thiel says. There was an incident in the same location (now operating as Boogie's) this year. The Lafayette City Police were involved in this investigation.

On Aug. 23, Lafayette Police found five juveniles in Boogie's and subsequently charged Silor with a violation on the night clubs. This came on the heels of an attempt by the department to close Sugar's earlier this year.

While Sugar's operated as a teen club, the city charged the club with violating a city ordinance which prohibits the operation of a teen club within 100 feet of a bar. Nitecaps is located on property adjacent to Sugar's. By the time the case was reaching a resolution, Silor obtained a liquor license for Sugar's and renewed operation as a nightclub—the question, in effect, became moot.

The ABC action against Silor's Sting of Lafayette (operating as Espree) resulted from another investigation involving the Lafayette Police Department.

BOBBY SILOR may be a casualty of the changing view in this area regarding alcohol and minors.