

Midnight fire destroys Gazebo at Dobbins

ALLY ORLANDO
news editor

For Penn State Behrend students, the events of Monday night's fire at Dobbins Hall will stay in their mind forever.

In a scant four hours, between 11:30 p.m. and 3:30 p.m., the Gazebo at Dobbins erupted in flames and was completely destroyed.

No injuries or fatalities occurred, as the building was uninhabited when the fire began.

The "Gazebo" section of the building was completely engulfed in flames as early as 11:45 p.m.

The east side of the building, which includes the kitchen and main dining area, suffered some significant damage, but was not entirely lost.

Ken Miller, Director of Student Affairs, said that the dynamics of how the fire was focused became one of the most helpful factors.

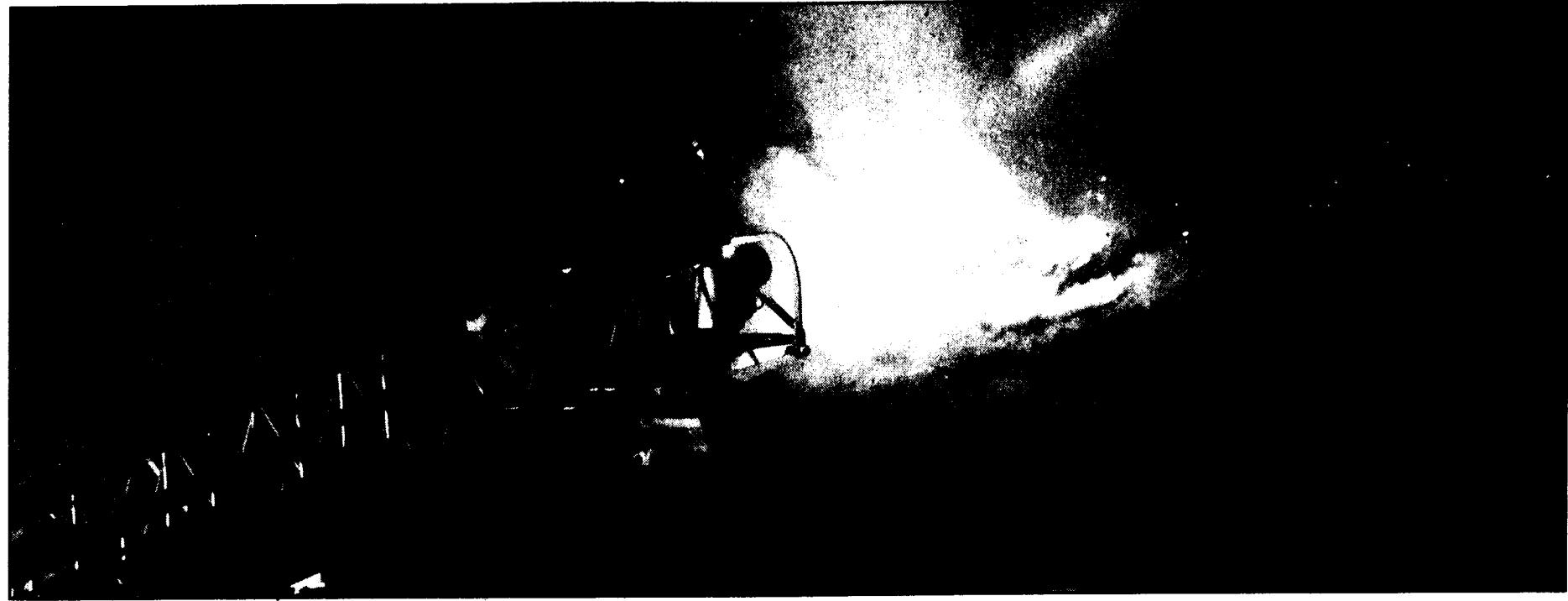
"When the windows blew out in the Gazebo, it acted as a sort of chimney," he said. "All of the heat funneled up the central part of the Gazebo, and prevented a lot of heat damage in the rest of the building."

It was enough damage, though, to force officials to close Dobbins Dining Hall indefinitely. [See **Dobbins Food services relocated to McGarvey Commons, below**]

For many students, the fire came as a complete shock, and made for an interesting night.

"I was working on my homework in the lobby of Lawrence and my friend came in and told us Dobbins was on fire," said Lindsey Masterson, a freshman resident of Lawrence Hall.

"We all ran out and saw smoke. They told us to move out of the way, so we went to-



Photos by Daniel Smith / The Behrend Beacon

Hundreds of students gathered to watch emergency crews fight the fire on the top of the Gazebo at Dobbins Dining Hall. The fire took around an hour and 20 minutes to be under control.

wards the apartments and saw the flames and heard the glass cracking."

Some student bystanders, who stood in large crowds watching the flames, even helped emergency crews that were on the scene.

"One fireman was trying to drag a hose up a hill," said Lindsay Wagner, a junior majoring in communications. "So some students came and helped him; we were all cheering."

The fire dissipated around 12:45 a.m. and was officially extinguished at around 1:30 a.m.

"The fire was put under control at approximately 1:20 a.m. after fighting it for over an hour and 20 minutes," said Assistant Fire Chief of Brookside Fire

Department Mike Carpin. The Brookside Fire Department arrived on the scene first.

At the time of the fire, students in Lawrence and Porcupine Halls were evacuated and moved to different locations.

Associate Director of Student Affairs, Kelly Shrout, said that 275 students were evacuated from the buildings primarily because of smoke.

At the time of the evacuation students in Lawrence Hall were instructed to go to Niagara Hall. [See **Smoke forces Lawrence and Porcupine Hall evacuations, below**]

Dobbins was undergoing renovations before the fire and is going to need more extensive renovations after the fire.

"The west end of the building

[the Gazebo area] is a total loss," Carpin said. "The interior kitchen area is a total loss due to smoke from the fire and water from extinguishing the fire."

Further information on the conditions of Dobbins will not be known until later this week.

"The building has been determined to be too unstable to

enter," Carpin said. "Further investigation of the building will be held when the fire marshall is here [Tuesday]."

"It is unusable, and it remains to be seen if the building can be accessed by the students that work in our dining hall," Gonda said. "That will be up to the fire inspectors."

"Our first priority right now is

that students need to be fed. There is no doubt that our Housing and Food Services team will accommodate them."

According to Ken Miller, the Director of Student Affairs, the Dobbins food service will be run out of McGarvey Commons until further notice, and classes will run as scheduled all week until Spring Break.

Smoke forces Lawrence and Porcupine Hall evacuations

SHAWN ANNARELLI
managing editor

"I was upset that they were having a fire drill so late," said freshman Courtney Bassani, a biology major. "We were pretty mad that we had to go outside."

These thoughts echoed throughout Penn State Behrend's Lawrence and Niagara Halls as, many students were unaware of the fire at the Gazebo at Dobbins.

"I was a little bit shocked, because I didn't think a real fire would ever happen," Bassani said.

Approximately 275 students evacuated the two buildings around 11:40 p.m. when the buildings' smoke detectors sounded.

"When the smoke detectors went off in the two nearest buildings to Dobbins, the stu-

dents in those buildings responded appropriately and exited them immediately," said Kelly Shrout, Associate Director of Student Affairs.

"That's why we do monthly fire drills," said Ken Miller, Director of Student Affairs. "When we do fire drills we want people out. Sometimes people get lackadaisical about it, but last night it was real."

Evacuated students were directed to other residence halls on campus to keep students warm and protected.

Residence Life coordinators and Resident Assistants directed students from Lawrence and from Porcupine to Tiffany and Tigress," Shrout said.

"Part of the RA training is what to do in emergencies," said Bill Gonda, Director of Marketing Communications.

"When the alarms sounded, the RAs knew exactly what to do."

A portion of students did not heed the instructions and opted to remain outside at safe distances from the blaze.

"Students that stayed outside

were probably caught up in the moment," Shrout said. "There were some crowd issues that impaired some administration and fire trucks from being where they needed to be."

Despite minor difficulties in

handling student crowds, there are no plans to alter the current evacuation process.

"The evacuation went very well and I don't think that anything would change," Shrout said. "We treat the students like adults. It was their decision to go to where we direct them or to stand at a safe distance from the fire."

The first priority of Penn State administration was to get students to protection and comfort.

"The staff led students to safe areas on campus," Shrout said. "Some students may find it to be a nuisance to have to practice fire drills, but last night is proof that practice works. We knew what was supposed to happen and it worked."

Lawrence Hall residents were allowed back into their building at 1:30 a.m., while Por-

cine Hall residents went back to their building at 1:45 a.m.

"After the smoke died down and the alarms stopped sounding, we knew it was safe to let students into their halls," Shrout said.

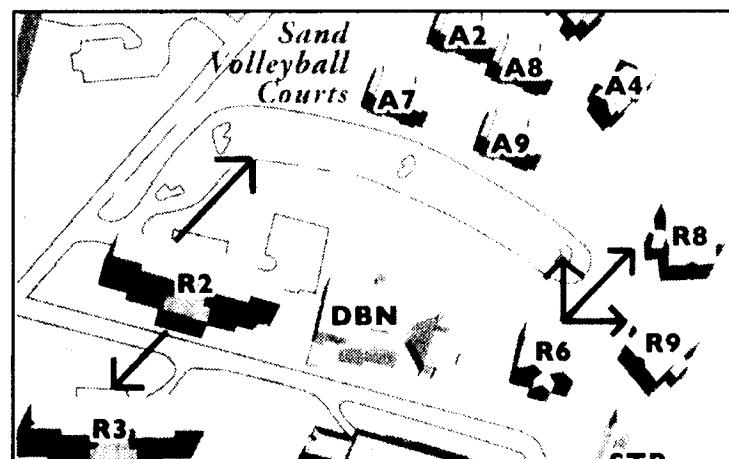
Students are concerned with meal arrangements now that Dobbins is inaccessible.

"Dobbins was so close, and now we have to walk further for meals. It's a real inconvenience," Bassani said.

Shrout spoke about how students should respond to the incident and the changes resulting from it.

"I ask that students be patient in this time of change," Shrout said. "Let's show Penn State resilience and plug through this."

"They deserve a big thank you for acting like Penn Staters and supporting the school."



Arrows show where students went after evacuation Monday.

Dobbins food services relocated to McGarvey Commons

SHAWN ANNARELLI
managing editor

Housing and Food Service's management and Dobbins student employees now occupy McGarvey Commons in the Reed Union Building.

The Gazebo at Dobbins was deemed inaccessible for students after the west end of Dobbins got burnt to a crisp exterior.

"We are able to continue to provide food service to students for the next few days out of the McGarvey Commons," said Ken Miller, Director of Student Affairs.

"We made the decision to relocate Dobbins staff to McGarvey Commons to accommodate large groups of people easily," said Bill Gonda, Director of Marketing Communications. "It was the natural choice."

Early Tuesday morning Behrend students were provided with a free Continental breakfast. Students will have to pay for their meals beginning Wednesday morning.

There is hope that the kitchen at Dobbins can still be used to prepare meals for students.

"If we can use the kitchen, food can be prepared and then served in a different lo-

cation," Miller said.

"If not, we have to both prepare and serve food from a different location, creating different sets of logistical problems," Miller said.

Plans to remain at McGarvey Commons to serve food are fluid at best.

"This week, Housing and Food Services will evaluate what it takes to serve food in that location, then will decide whether to move it," Gonda said.

"That decision to move or remain at McGarvey will be made as we see how well food service out of that space does," Gonda said. "One possibility for moving to a new area could include Erie Hall, he said."

No changes to the current makeshift dining hall in McGarvey Commons will be made this week.

"For this week, meal services are in McGarvey," Gonda said. "We are playing this by ear, day by day."

It is expected that the Reed Union Building will be much busier, particularly in Bruno's, due to the incident.

"There could be an increased level of activity in Bruno's," Gonda said. "We are working to prepare for that."

Housing and Food Services have placed students at the top of their priority list.

"The food service needs of students will be taken care of first," Gonda said.



Mike Fultz / The Behrend Beacon

Students ate a free Continental Breakfast in McGarvey Commons early Tuesday morning. Meals will be temporarily served in McGarvey Commons this week.



Daniel Smith / The Behrend Beacon