

Area Experienced Life-Threatening Events

Over the past 20 years this area has been the victim of three major incidences--two natural and one technological. Both had great but opposite impact on the campus. The natural disasters brought people to us while the human mistake drove them away.

Hurricane Agnes struck the Harrisburg area with all its fury in June 1972. After 48 hours of continual torrential downpour, people willingly left their home for higher ground.

On June 22, Penn State at Harrisburg was contacted by Middletown Civil Defense and Lower Swatara Township Commissioners asking for space for an evacuation center.

With only a limited staff and handful of students on campus awaiting graduation on June 24, Norman Gantreau, manager of food and housing, set up the center. Serving over 1,000 of the displaced people, the school turned to the community for help. Businesses, including Pantry Pride (food store), Twin Kiss, McDonald's and the Big M (discount store), donated everything from food to diapers.

Fruehauf loaned three large trailers, one refrigerator, one freezer and one dry food storage.

The campus was designated an authorized flood relief center for people to receive free food, clothing and emergency expense money.

As the flood subsided many people were able to return to their homes. However, about 100 families had lost everything. To accommodate this group trailers, dubbed Flood Village, were set up as temporary homes on the grass in front of the main building. They remained there for two years.

Then, just three years later, on September, 1975, the "once in a lifetime" was back. This one, precipitated by a storm named Eloise, was not as extensive as the previous one, therefore not too many people had to be evacuated.

However, once again the campus community pitched in to respond in a spirit of cooperation. Many students living on campus stayed to ready the area, XGI's helped evacuate families from Village of Pineford and low lying parts of Middletown, members of the campus student security force fielded inquiries from the outside. Countless other students, staff, and faculty lent a helping hand, many of whom had homes also in jeopardy. Within days, flood waters subsided and people were able to return to their homes.

The technological mistake, which could have been much worse than it was, sent people scurrying to safety. On March 28, 1979, the emergency at Three Mile Island nuclear power station caused the campus to close for ten days.

Thousands of people evacuated

the area and Penn State students were no different. However, upon their return, the students demanded a refund for services unavailable to them during the emergency. A study of the situation was made by the powers at University Park and a suitable refund was made for unused housing and food services. In addition, a revised class schedule had classes being held on Memorial Day that year.

As a result of the accident, Provost Theodore Gross issued a statement informing the public that a Research Information Clearinghouse would be established on campus. The aim of this project was to "collate all date pertinent to the impact of this nuclear event." All concerned scholar and citizens were invited to make use of this facility. The abundance of data collected, and proximity to TMI

brought the Keminey Commission to Penn State at Harrisburg to hold its week long hearings on the cause of the accident.

In an effort to ease students concerns of another TMI accident in the future catching them offguard, Gross issued a memo laying out guidelines. "Should a situation develop where radioactive materials are released into the atmosphere and individual students feel endangered instructors should provide the opportunity to make up work which is missed," said Gross. There is no evidence that the guidelines were ever used.

As a result of the accident, evacuation plans were formulated for students in leaving the campus. The plan complements local evacuation plans by getting students off campus and into the designated traffic flow to Interstate 83.



The students who stayed on campus during the June 1972 flood weren't going to be cheated out of a graduation. The impromptu ceremony became known as the "rump graduation."

Rock Festivals Drew Thousands

Woodstock is a legend. Even if some of us don't remember when it actually happened, we've heard enough about it in succeeding years to be able to conjure up a vision.

In May, 1971, two years after the historic gathering, a group of campus students formed a social organization called "Good-People Productions". Through their tireless efforts, along with the support of Jerry South, dean of student services, 12 hours of music was provided to an impressive audience of 15,000

people. With the stage located in front of the Olmsted building, people were sprawled all over the lawn listening to the 12 bands who donated their time.

By 1972, the festival grew to around 25,000 people. Again the free festival offered 12 hours of entertainment from groups from Philadelphia and Washington as well as Central Pennsylvania.

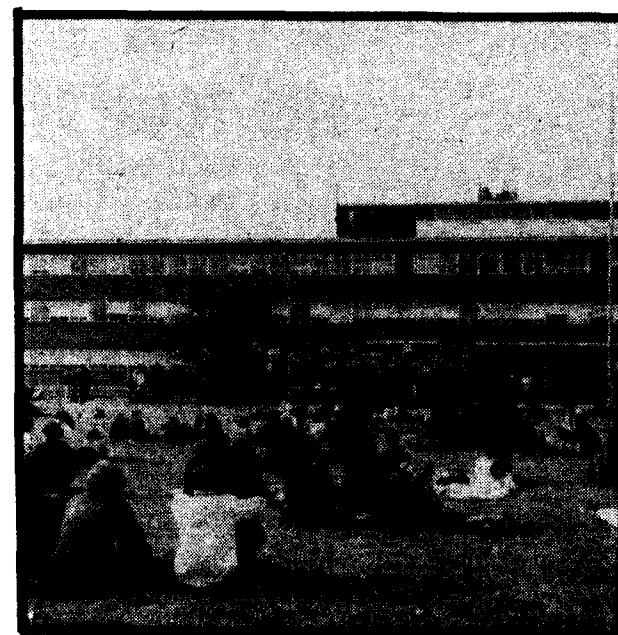
For several years the concerts flourished, gaining momentum as word of mouth spread. But by 1976, the rock festival fever began to fade, and so did the

crowd, which was estimated at 10,000.

In an attempt to keep the increasingly unruly crowd away from the classroom building, the concert was moved to the hill behind the Engineering Lab, at the natural amphitheater. However, because of lack of electricity, the concert was forced to end at dusk.

As early as September, 1978, student leaders were informed that there would be no more concerts. Problems cited in making this decision included drug and alcohol abuse incidences, complaints received from surrounding community of the crowds and noise, and the small percentage of the crowd being university student (10 percent attending were under 18 years old).

The rock festivals, no matter the size, took countless hours of planning and coordination. These events probably mark an all-time high of cooperation among students, faculty, administration and staff at PSU at Harrisburg.



Early arrivals claim their territories for the free spring concert in 1973.

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