

# Campus personalities give perspectives on life at

Special campus feature by Jerry Trently

This article looks at the history of the Hazleton Campus from a perspective that does not concentrate on dates, but on the way of life and attitude of former affiliates of this campus.

It was during the depression that the Hazleton Campus was born, 1934 to narrow it down, and it, along with the Schuylkill Campus, was the first campus in the Commonwealth Campus system. It was not called the Penn State Hazleton Campus initially, but the H.U.C. or the Hazleton Undergraduate Center. As an interesting sidelight, the campus basketball team was called the Hucsters, using the letters HUC.

Highacres was not always the home for the campus. Originally, the campus was spread about buildings in downtown Hazleton, and it was a few years until the campus was moved to its present spot. The move to Highacres, formerly the

estate of Eckley Markle, was a marked improvement for the school since it centralized the whole campus at one location.

Aside from the centralization, the homey atmosphere at Highacres seems to have rubbed off on the faculty and

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Francis Pierucci

alumni that have come in contact with it. "It has a homey atmosphere," tells Leonard Shaevel. "When I first came here, it was only supposed to be for three years and then move on, and I'm still here." Shaevel first came here in 1966 and teaches physics.

Expansion has been a trademark of the campus. The Library, Classroom Building, and Physical Education Building are all

fairly new additions to the Hazleton Campus, especially when compared with buildings like the Administration Building, which was built during the 1920. Unlike the new buildings that are built with conventional materials, the Administration Building is built with rocks handpicked from the mountain on which it is built.

Changes in the construction of buildings on campus were not the only noticeable changes. Over the years, faculty has noticed a change in the quality of the student. "Students of today don't have the background students had years ago. The precollege educational system is deteriorating, I mean from the grade school levels right on up," says Shaevel. "But that is not to say that the students themselves are not better than students in the past. Students today are much more open than they were when I first came." Francis Pierucci, a language instructor, tends to agree with Shaevel. "Students of today are much more self-

conscious than students were in past years," explains Pierucci. "However," he continues, "students used to try harder. Today's students seem to expect the easy grade, but I think part of this had to do with the war (Vietnam). Then it was a choice of keeping your grades up or being drafted."

Both Pierucci and Shaevel agree that students are groomed better than they were in the 1960s and early 70s. "They dress better now and are more aware of their appearance," tells Pierucci. Shaevel adds, "Oh sure, I once had a kid that looked like a grub. It was a two term course, and I told him not to come back into my class unless he got a haircut. He objected, but his mother called and thanked me."

Stories of this nature are common all throughout this special feature. In an effort to avoid repetition, many of them can be found in the other articles concerning other members, both past and present, of the Hazleton Campus.

## Former director reminisces



Frank Kostos

Frank Kostos sits back in his chair, relaxing while he lights a cigar and tells the story of the Hazleton Campus from a former administrator's point of view. It was his job to work closely with not only the students, but the faculty as well.

He said that many faculty members are former students of the Hazleton Campus. "You must remember," he says, "that we've been going since 1934... People don't realize that a number of alumni are around the area. I

mean the doctors, tists, and the lawyer in town. At one ti was a study of it a rather surprising h professional peop back and stayed in t

As he talks of forni, he expresses th he feels when l newspaper clipp former Highacres who have become s yet who have neg mention their atten the Hazleton Camp all," he says, "it isr of the institution ters. There are a lo sometimes that perhaps an exposu one or two factors, turn a person's l down. And the next know, there it is." of a person becom cessful, it appears content with his with Penn State. sketch of the Adm Building hangs in room.

Like others who

## Student turned teacher discusses campus change

Tom Caccese has shared the rare experience of being a member of both the student body and the faculty here at Highacres.

As a faculty member, he reflects back on student life as it was just one decade ago. "There was a fantastic student-teacher relationship then," tells Caccese. "Almost every teacher went to the SUB during the lunch period and we talked on virtually any subject the whole period with them." He goes on to explain that the SUB was the Student Union Building now known as the Commons. Then, comparing the times he comments, "I think that that kind of student-teacher relationship has vanished from the campus. Teachers now have more demands, like their requirements for tenure, to go to the Commons and share a lunch period with the students. Besides," he chuckles, "the Commons is much too crowded for that kind of thing anymore."

"The Commons was built in 1958 with money donated through the years by students," he explains. "Just think what it would be like to ask students today to donate, oh say, ten dollars towards a student building to be built in the 1990s."

Another difference is the increase of students coming

from all across the state, and even nation, as opposed to a student body comprised almost all of Hazleton-area residents. "That was a time when your professor was your next-door neighbor, or someone you knew or heard of because of his local origin," says Caccese.

During his affiliation with the Hazleton Campus, he has seen the destruction and construction of several buildings here. "When I was very young," he reflects, "and my friends and I would walk by the entrance to the campus, we would never venture in.

We thought we'd be arrested or something. It had that aura of a prison, yet we respected the ivy-covered, strict image it represented." Then, when he was attending the campus, his boundary was the Administration Building. "Security sort of frowned upon us for venturing past the Administration Building area because the university did not own past that point at that time."

Eventually, after the university purchased the rest of the land it now owns, he would make the walk up to the second mansion that has

since been dismantled. "It was really a marvelous building," recalls Caccese. "I remember there were several buildings around it. A garage and a greenhouse I believe. They used to grow their own vegetables in the winter-time."

He worked for the campus one summer. "I remember painting the fire escape on the Administration Building. Of course, from that high up, the view was breathtaking and you could see up the valley for miles." He also tells how things on campus shut down at night. "This place virtually shut down at 5:00 when I was a student. Of course, everyone went home right away because there really wasn't much to do on campus, since the gym and library were not constructed and we didn't have dorm students. Sometimes, after everyone would leave, I would go up to the scenic overlook and study or just relax for awhile. It was really quite peaceful. I guess some of the tranquility came from the fact that we didn't have all the large, newer buildings we have on campus today, and there was a great deal more woods around. It made you feel isolated."

The parking situation was really something at that time also. According to Caccese,

"We used to park our cars on a dirt lot near the area where the dorm lot is now. The trouble was getting down the hill to the lot in the winter. We had a hell of a time since there were no lights or anything, in fact, there was only a dirt path leading down there. All we could do was make our way through the darkness, and it was pitch

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dark sometimes too. He continued on the parking situation, "I remember when they built the big three level parking lot at the bottom of the hill. People laughed and said they wouldn't fill it, and look at the crowded parking conditions we have on campus today."

Without the Classroom Building, classes had to be conducted in other buildings on campus, including the Administration Building. "I had a Biology class on the third floor of the Administration

Building. It was cramped, but much more than the classroom today. Since it was on the third floor, the ceiling was slanted on the side. Caccese. He also classes were some ducted outside. "Very warm outside, we wait to have classes because it got hot small classroom."

The sports program on campus was restricted when it was here, due largely to a lack of facilities. "We had an athletic field down where the tennis court is now," he explains. "I played some tennis and a little softball. Softball was too easy to lose then. It was hit back in the days of the college v ball, since that was the only sport we had at the Hazleton Campus."

Both sports are now a part of Caccese's life. He is a basketball coach and a physical education teacher. He operated times at Highacres was a student body and being coach present students State's Hazleton C



Tom Caccese

Photos by Jerry Trently