

Life at the Hazleton Campus

Former student reminisces Highacres life

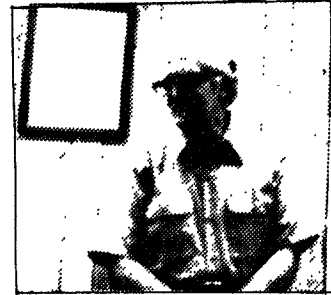
mean the doctors, the dentists, and the lawyers that are in town. At one time there was a study of it and it was rather surprising how many professional people came back and stayed in town." As he talks of former alumni, he expresses the sadness he feels when he reads newspaper clippings of former Highacres students who have become successful, yet who have neglected to mention their attendance at the Hazleton Campus. "After all," he says, "it isn't the size of the institution that matters. There are a lot of things sometimes that develop, perhaps an exposure, maybe one or two factors, that might turn a person's life upside down. And the next thing you know, there it is." As he talks of a person becoming successful, it appears that he is content with his affiliation with Penn State. In fact, a sketch of the Administration Building hangs in his living room. Like others who have been

with the Hazleton Campus over the years, he has seen the many changes on campus, and has actually played an active role in these changes. When the upper mansion was torn down, he did his best to make sure that at least some of the area would be left to future generations. He talks of University Park's plans for the demolition. "They were going to just bulldoze the whole thing over the bank. 'Oh no,' I said, 'You do that and I'll have a photographer up there the next day and raise hell.' I personally told the contractor to preserve the level area and the stonework. You can't find stonework like that anymore." When he first came in 1946, many World War II veterans were coming to the Hazleton Campus. As Kostos explains, "We were giving the veterans a chance to prove themselves. And really, it was the most tremendous thing that ever happened, because these were people

who were mature. They knew what they wanted, and they weren't fresh out of high school. These were decisions that they made themselves. They knew they had to work hard and they were beautiful to work with. You didn't have to stir them up to do a little bit of work. That's what they came for." In 1946, Penn State had not yet moved its Hazleton Campus to Highacres. It was spread around downtown Hazleton and classes were actually held in an abandoned and condemned building. "It was the abandoned, condemned Hazle Township School Building ... I'll never forget. I brought my wife up to see it, and as I showed her the place, she started to cry. I asked her what was wrong and she told me, 'You don't mean to say that this is where you're going to work.' I said yes, and that was it. That was the beginning."

John Coyne tells of raising a family at Highacres

For many of the students and faculty, the campus is like a second home, since they do spend several hours each day on campus. For John Coyne, the campus was a full-time home, as he not only lived here, but raised a family here as well. What makes Coyne's story unique is the experience of raising a family on a college campus while students attend there daily. The Coynes lived in a cottage that stood where the library is now. When that was torn down, they moved, but even before the cottage, the Coynes lived in an apartment in the Memorial Building, along with students that lived in dorms there. "I never had any problems with the students," tells Coyne. "We always got along." His children too, got to know the students on campus and as he says, "The girls enjoyed living here although only one of them wound up going to Penn State for an



John Coyne education."

"It was a little noisy when we lived in the apartment next to the dorms, but we didn't mind. Their dorm arrangement was something like an army barracks. I used to take them into town sometimes for something to eat, we developed a good rapport," explains Coyne. He has three girls and has no regrets about bringing them up on a college campus, except that when they were very young they really had no one to play with. Coyne worked as a custodian on campus until his retirement about seven years ago.

Changing from the Markles to Penn State

Building. It was kind of cramped, but much different than the classrooms we have today. Since it was on the third floor, the ceiling was slanted on the sides," tells Caccese. He also tells how classes were sometimes conducted outside. "When it got warm outside, we couldn't wait to have class outdoors because it got hot up in that small classroom." The sports program on campus was severely restricted when he attended here, due largely to the lack of facilities. "We had a small athletic field down by the spot where the tennis courts are now," he explains. "We played some touch football and a little softball. But not much softball because it was too easy to loose the ball when it was hit back in the woods. The only sport we could play for the college was basketball, since that was the only sports team we had at the Hazleton Campus." Both sports and teaching are now a part of Tom Caccese's life. He is presently a basketball coach for the Condors and a physical education teacher. He openly talks of times at Highacres, when he was a student being taught and being coached, as the present students of Penn State's Hazleton Campus.

When the Hazleton Campus moved to Highacres, many of its personnel came along from the original location. Harry Michaels is an exception to this procedure. He has been here since the time before the campus moved to Highacres. Michaels was a chauffeur and handyman for Donald Markle, the man who lived in a mansion that existed on the area near the water tower. Markle made his fortune from the Jeddo-Highland Coal Company, and lived in his mansion even during the time that Penn State University was occupying the mansion now known as the Administration Building. "They were very good to me," tells Michaels, "I considered them as family." He lived on the estate until he built the home he lives in now. "Even when I worked for the University, I used to help Mr. Markle out doing a little handy work. But, I really did enjoy working for the University." Even though he was on the campus a great deal of time, he could not get really close to the students. "I got to know some of them in passing," he says, "But because of my job, I really didn't get to know too many of them very well. They had their classes during the day, and I had my job and I



Harold Michaels

never worked the night shift." Michaels got to know the whole Markle family during the time he worked for them. "Donald Markle had seven children," he explains, "Four girls and three boys. His brother Eckley Markle lived in what we now call the Administration Building. Eckley never married and left Highacres about a year after his mother died. It was impractical for him to continue living in that mansion and pay all the help by himself. A third brother, Alvin moved away from Highacres when he got older." The name "Highacres" is actually the name of the estate that the three Markle

brothers' father built. Their uncle built the upper estate, which was located near the area where the water tower is now. Many considered the mansion that stood on this estate to be even more beautiful and elaborate than the Administration Building. In fact, Michaels talks of the "Ship Room." "It was a magnificent room," he says. "There was a chandelier made out of a ship's wheel in that room. Whatever became of it I don't know." The upper estate was known as Norwinds, short for Northwinds, in comparison to the name Highacres, the namesake of the lower estate and the current Hazleton Campus. Norwinds was leveled by the University after it determined that it would be too expensive to maintain the building. "It had been standing vacant for a couple of years," recalls Michaels, "and vandals began to take their toll on the building so the University tore it down." What is left of Norwinds can still be seen up by the water tower. The floor of the ship room is still intact, dominated by the "direction stone," which reportedly points to magnetic north. As Michaels talks of his affiliation with the Donald Markle Sr. family, he talks of the Markle children. "They

were raised on Norwinds," he tells. "Mrs. Markle was from down South, and when she came up to Hazleton, she brought her personal maid along with her. The children were quite attached to this maid, as she was now the cook at Norwinds. Harriet was her name, and since the children traveled a lot, they could never wait to get home and see Harriet. I remember when she took ill and had to go to the hospital. She had been in there, so Mr. Markle asked me to take her check up to her at the hospital. Well, when I got there, Harriet was dead. I returned to Norwinds and gave Mr. Markle the check and told him that Harriet had died. He was really quite broken up about it, but then again we all were. We all loved Harriet." Harold Michaels finished out his years at Highacres after becoming head of the maintenance department. He retired about three years ago. He was always proud of Penn State and proclaims, "I was their greatest salesman." That means that he talks good of the Hazleton Campus wherever he goes. And why not? He spent years of his life watching the estates of Highacres and Norwinds change hands from the hands of the Markles to the hands of Penn State University.