

A look at the past

The Hazleton and Wilkes-Barre Railroad

By Jerry Trently

As explained in the first installment of this column, this series will continue to cover the topics outlined at that time. This issue, "A look at the past" takes a look at the Wilkes-Barre and Hazleton Railroad.

Not many students at Highacres know that a railroad ran just below the campus beneath the area designated as the Scenic Overlook. One can still see the remains of this railway's right-of-way just below the overlook.

The W-B. & H. RR. was a pioneer in the development of the protected third rail design. This means that this railroad ran on electricity with the electric charge running through a protected third rail. Other railways ran on electricity before this, but none of them protected their third rail, the rail carrying the charge. As a result, these railways were dangerous because any person or animal that came in contact with this rail could be electrocuted.

In 1899, the railway was incorporated, a right-of-way purchased, and a lease granted for 999 years of operation. Other railroads soon followed the W-B & H. R.R.'s pioneer protected third rail design.

The cars that ran over the route were called Interurbans, and looked something like trolley cars. Interurbans provided perhaps the most comfortable and efficient method of transportation between Hazleton and Wilkes-Barre. Hazle Park, formerly an amusement park in West Hazleton, was the sight of the Hazleton car barn, a large

storage building for the interurbans.

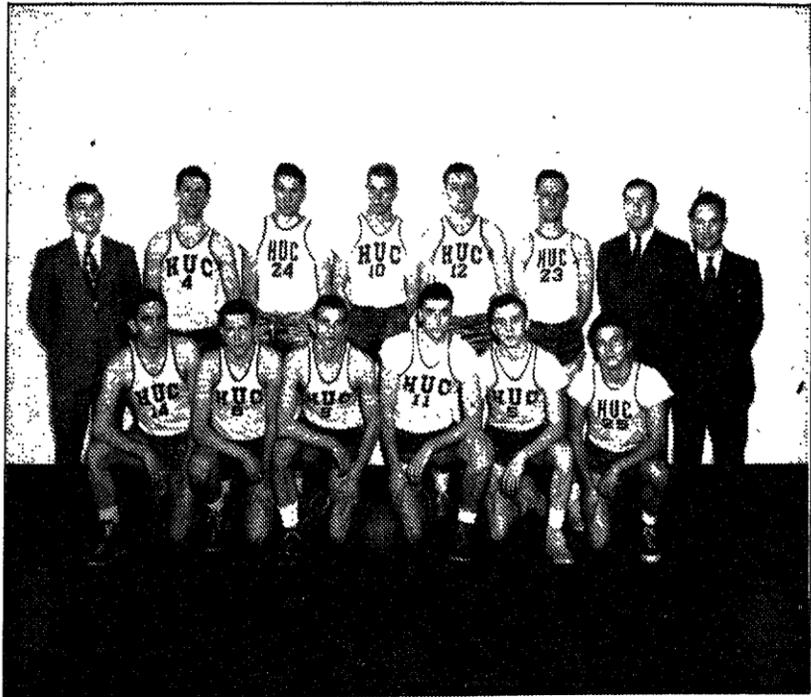
Despite its protected third rail, there were accidents on the line. One of the most gruesome occurred when two of the cars collided head-on and locked together. In one of the cars, the conductor, Harry Cunius, was trapped, unable to free himself from the wreckage. As he struggled to escape, the electricity from the third rail began to start a fire. Everyone else

from the two cars had gotten off safely by now, although with several injuries, and the fire continued to spread as the trapped motorman tried in desperation to free himself. As the heat from the flames grew more intense, he pleaded for someone to shoot him to end his agony. A priest was aboard one of the cars and anointed Cunius before he died.

The accident just described was a freak one. In general, the railroad had a fine safety record, yet its existence was short lived and the railroad stopped operation in 1933. Incidentally, Highacres' Alvan Markle was one of the prime investors in the project, but died before the railroad shut down.

Gone forever are the times when interurbans used to pull into the Hazleton station at 22 Wyoming Street and take passengers to Wilkes-Barre.

Teams from "then" and "now" compared



Comparison photos show pictures of two Hazleton Campus basketball teams. Notice that one of the pictures shows team members wearing the letters HUC. This team was known as the "Hucsters," the letters HUC standing for Hazleton Undergraduate Center.

As opposed to modern teams at Highacres, almost all the team members from that time came exclusively from the Hazleton area. The Hucsters pictured are the team from the 1948-49 season. It was indeed a good year for the Hucsters, as they went into the season as defending champions of the State Junior College Conference, ran up a season record of 16-5, and finished as runner-up to the State Junior College Conference title.

Also during that season, the Hucsters competed in the traditional "Dream Game" against the freshman team from Temple University. The Hucsters defeated Temple in that game, handing the Owls their only loss of that season. Up to the time they played Hazleton, the Temple Owls were undefeated. So popular was that game that it set what was then an attendance record for the Hazleton gym, in which it was played.

The other picture shows this season's Condor basketball team. Last issue we printed a season summary of the Condors' season, but briefly, the Condors enjoyed one of their finest seasons in several years as they made their own bid for the conference title.



Flick Picks

By Tim Swarr

SHOOT THE MOON

Alan Parker as a director has shown flash and action in his films whether it has been the humor of "Bugsy Malone," the drama of "Midnight Express" or the introspection of "Fame."

Alan Parker's latest film

"Shoot the Moon" may not have the flash of his earlier works, but is still his strongest film so far in maintaining energy from beginning to end.

"Shoot the Moon" is the story of George and Faith Dunlop and the collapse of their marriage. The viewer witnesses in moving detail the aftermath of divorce in contemporary America. George and Faith are unable

to keep their near-fairytale life in order. They live in a restored Victorian house in the lustrous, northern California countryside. George is a successful author and Faith is the loving mother of four children. Their lives crumble after Faith and their eldest daughter discover George is having an affair.

Alan Parker's casual yet revealing direction is helped by a virtually seamless screenplay by Bo Goldman, who also scripted "One Flew Over the Cuckoo Nest" and

"Melvin and Howard."

Both Albert Finney and Diane Keaton give one of the strongest performances of their respective careers in the leading roles. The support cast is also in top form. Dana Hill's performance as the oldest daughter is equal to both Finney and Keaton with excellent support from Venesa Davis, Tracy Gold and Tina Yothers as the younger daughters. Few films have given the depth and dimension to the roles of children as found in "Shoot

the Moon." Peter Weller brings a fitting disgusting presence as the stud Faith becomes involved with.

With "Shoot the Moon," Alan Parker gives us a powerful film without the normal self-conscious exhibitionism found in the action of his earlier films. What he gives us is a quiet, sensitive portrait of an American family suffering throughout the changes of a divorce. "Shoot the Moon" may prove to be one of the best films of 1982.