CHAPTER FIVE

Part IV: Student Life

Teacher Training and the Training School

In the normal school days students had all done their student teaching at the training school. As the students numbers increased this was no longer possible even with three or four student teachers in each classroom. During this period, students increasingly did their student teaching off-campus in Indiana schools, but also in schools in distant locations such as Johnstown or Altoona. While being off-campus provided some additional freedom to female students, they were still required to stay in college approved housing.

Many students still did at least some of their practice teaching at the training school and the training school continued to offer a superior education to the students that attended. Alumni recall that students benefited from instruction provided by college level faculty, and progressive teaching techniques that were “in line with children’s interests.”

In this school students received instruction in special topics from Music and Art, to Home Economics. There was a widespread belief that the educational experience offered there was better than in the local public schools.

Indiana on the Air

In the 1938-39 school year, in “keeping with current trends in progressive education,” the students and faculty of the ISTC took to the airways and began contributing programs to the WHIB radio station in Greensburg. Calling upon the talents of faculty and students in a number of departments, they offered programs in music, drama, psychology, and athletics among others.
Miss Orndorff, of the English Department oversaw the scripts and Van A. Christy, of the Music Department, led the music. Miss Sprowls who directed many on-campus productions directed a number of short plays.

**Student Finances**

Most ISTC students did not have to pay tuition. Students who signed a pledge to teach during this period had tuition waived unless they were out of state students, but there were still fees and living expenses to be paid.

ISTC increased student fees in 1931 when the state decreased its funding for the school. By 1935 students had to pay room and board fees (which were higher for more modern rooms) and a raft of other administrative fees. Though these fees were lower than those of other colleges, there were still students who had difficulty paying them.

All over the country students were dropping out of high school or unable to attend college because of a lack of funds. In June of 1935, Franklin Delano Roosevelt authorized the creation of the National Youth Administration, a program which provided funds for schools to pay students of both genders to do “socially desirable work.” To qualify, students had to be between the ages of 16 and 25, not already enrolled in college, and demonstrate economic need and the ability to do high level college work.

ISTC took advantage of this program which benefited students and the school. ISTC faculty and administrators participated by selecting students and finding work for students to do which was “educationally justifiable” as well as “socially desirable.” The *Penn* recorded that the participants were paid $.30 an hour and worked in a variety of locations on and off-campus, doing work that was clerical, custodial, and academic, from ironing in the laundry or cleaning tennis courts, to filing and typing, mending books in the library, or assisting in labs. (September 27, 1935). It also noted that by February of 1936, 14.8% of all the students’ on-campus were working in the program. (February 21, 1936) This suggests that that
percentage of students would not have been able to attend college without the program.

Student organizations also offered support for students. Alumni had begun a Jane Leonard Student Loan Fund to memorialize her after her death because she had expressed a desire to something for students who might not otherwise be able to attend school. The YWCA also raised money to assist “worthy students of the College” in their Junior and Senior years.

**Student Government**

Following national trends, in 1930 Dr. Foster suggested the campus might benefit from an elected group of students to assist in the administration of the school. The idea was put to a vote by the students. The results were overwhelmingly in support of the suggestion.

The organization that was formed was called the Student Council. According to the *Penn*, it was designed to be an intermediary between students and the administration and it was hoped it would “promote the best interests of the college,’ and “regulate matters of student conduct that do not fall under the jurisdiction of the faculty, and provide a mechanism to put needs of the students before the administration.”

(December 5, 1930)

Women were assured inclusion in the council as it drew from organizations such as the Resident Women’s League and also won many of the elected seats on the Council. In fact, in 1934-35, the *Penn* reported, “Girls get the lion’s share of offices.”

**Student Life**

Increasingly during this period, female students asked for more freedom on campus. The Student Council and Men’s and Women’s Resident Student Leagues requested change but it did not come quickly.
During the 1930s, on-campus students were still living under strict rules. Female students were not allowed to live off-campus, except with immediate family members, and their on-campus activities were closely monitored. Students were still expected to attend church on Sunday, sit at assigned tables at dinner and dress formally for the occasion. They still had study time between 7:15-9:45 and were closely monitored in the dormitory.

**Smoking at Dairy Dell**

Female students were not allowed to smoke in the dormitories, but an article that appeared in the *Penn* in 1939 suggests this rule was not extended to the Derry Dell. The article, “Hell to the Dell,” laments the fact that women had no place to smoke in the dormitories, so they rushed to the Dairy Dell (located at the present day Pizza House location) to smoke when they had a few free moments. (February 18, 1939).

**Student Co-Op Association**

During the 1930s, most students at ISTC had little money for necessities, not to mention entertainment. Without cars and money for transportation, their lives focused on free campus activities. The Student Co-Op Association was formed in the early years of this decade to run the book room and administer the student activity fees collected from students, and to use these funds for student activities. They supported a wide variety of activities from sponsoring speakers and musical performances, athletic events, and even the production and free distribution of the *Penn* newspaper and the *Oak* yearbook.

**Bicycles and a Bus**

Also in 1935, the Co-Op purchased a 35 passenger bus with surplus from book room funds. The bus, which was decked out in school colors, was used for a variety of purposes including trips to Pittsburgh to watch plays or day trips to historic sites in the vicinity. In 1938-39, the Co-Op also purchased bicycles which students could use, in support of the formation of a bicycle club.
Student Organizations

Students had many opportunities to participate in the student organizations which flourished during the period. There were religious clubs, including the YWCA, Newman Club for Catholic students, and the Lutheran Students Association. Department clubs included one for Art, Geography, Home Economics, and the Junior Chamber of Commerce for Commerce majors. Other clubs dealt with areas of interest not specifically related to majors such as the International Relations Club that explored topics of international interest or a female Rifle Club organized by the female students. There were also a wide variety of musical performance clubs, and a number of clubs drawn from the English department including the Leonard Literary Society.

The Leonard Literary Society, a descendent of the oldest student associations, the two literary societies, was still popular in the 30s. The two societies had merged in 1927 and taken the name of Jane Leonard who had provided leadership and inspiration in the work of these societies and encouraged literary and artistic performances of all kinds.

In keeping with the depressed economic times, they reduced their membership fees from $2.50 to $2.00, during the period. This money was used to bring in nationally known speakers from Hugh Walpole and Christopher Morley, to Harriet Beecher Stowe’s son, Lyman Beecher Stowe, Norman Thomas, Socialist Party Leader, and authors Hamlin Garlin and Carl Sandburg.

One of the speakers that Leonard would have particularly enjoyed was Ruth Bryan Owens, the daughter of daughter of William Jennings Bryan, and a congresswoman from Florida. During her lecture, she observed that “it is a far cry from the time when a woman would faint while reading a poem to women’s club to the time when every town has a woman speaker.”
The Coming of Homecoming

With rapid societal changes it is not surprising that old traditions are lost and new ones created. For many years October had been the month for first the senior hayride and the senior excursion day. In 1930, this tradition disappears and the new practice of Homecoming was born.

Athletics WAA

At the end of the 1920s national trends in women’s athletics had led to the abandonment of varsity competitive women’s athletics, particularly basketball which had been very popular among students. In its place was a philosophy that encouraged wide participation in a variety of sports, not just the best athletes in a few sports. According to the "Penn," they encouraged activities “mainly for the developing idea of cleaner, health giving sports and fair play among all of its members.” (May 17, 1929) Initially, the result was a lackluster program of intramurals with insufficient staff to run it effectively.

By the end of the 30s, a more elaborate program of intramurals had been developed. In addition to swimming and basketball in the new gymnasium, there was tennis, archery, mushball, and a number of different dancing groups. With improvements to the College Lodge a winter sports club was formed, which offered tobogganing, skiing, and skating.

But the occasional female star athlete could still steal the spotlight. In the spring of 1938, Helen Parros tried out for the first string tennis team that had been exclusively male. According to the "Penn," she left them shocked that a female could give even veteran male players a run for their money. She was not surprised though and told them, “I think that girls ought to go out for tennis more
than they do.” (April 9, 1938)

Summary

As the decade was drawing to a close, thanks to federal New Deal funding, the campus finally got the new buildings it needed to serve its expanding enrollments, including a building to house an auditorium large enough to seat most of its student population and a new training school. Still outnumbering men in the student body 3-1, ISTC female students during the Depression Era beat the odds and graduated from college in one of the most difficult financial periods of the century. A new generation of women faculty and administrators had come on board during the decade, and the female students were better able to participate in student government than ever before.