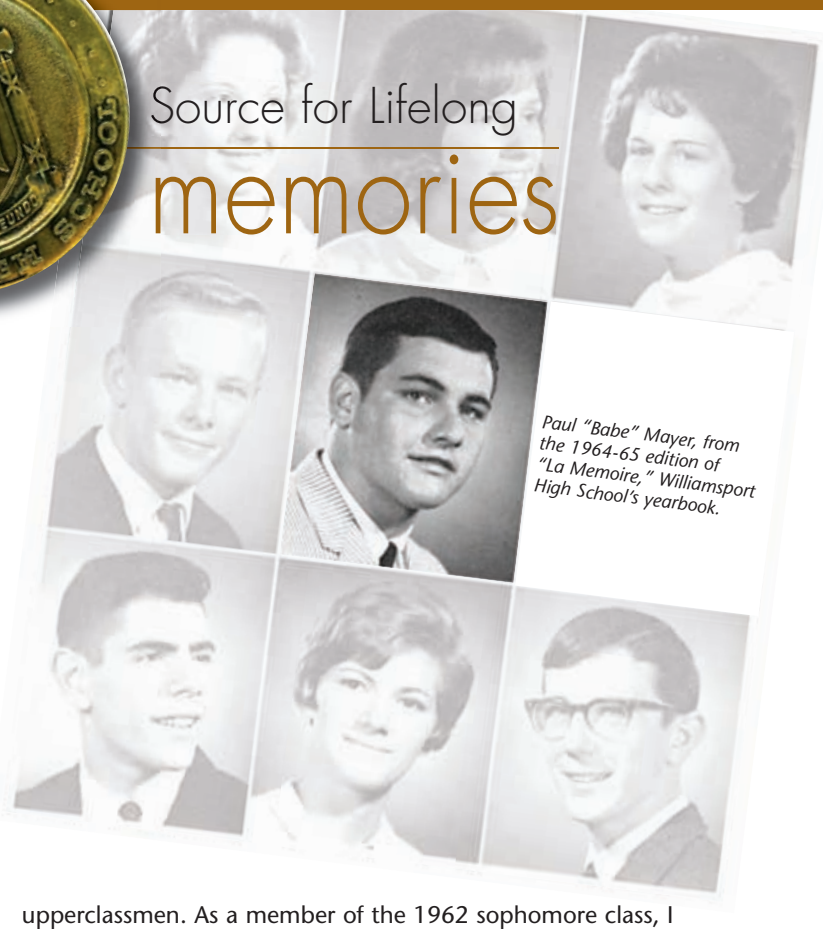
HISTORIC BUILDING



Source for Lifelong memories

by Paul A. "Babe" Mayer Jr., associate professor, fitness and lifetime sports, WHS Class of 1965



Paul "Babe" Mayer, from the 1964-65 edition of "La Memoire," Williamsport High School's yearbook.

I don't know who George S. Klump was … or what he did … or why his name is associated with the George S. Klump Academic Center on the campus of Pennsylvania College of Technology. To those of us who occupied the structure between 1914 and 1972, it was simply known as "the high school." Since the winter of 1972, the occupants have known it as "the ACC."

I do know, however, its history goes far beyond a name. The building has survived two world wars and the Great Depression, numerous renovations, and a baby-boomer population that pushed its capacity to the limits. Yet, it still stands as a symbol of a proud community and flourishing campus. Over the past 90 years, it has played a key role in the development of CEOs and politicians, doctors and lawyers, artists and educators. In its classrooms sat leaders of industry and technology, laborers and soldiers, parents and mentors, and even a college-football Heisman Trophy Award winner.

The building has undergone six major renovations since its opening in 1914. This past year, the building underwent its most recent renovation. A Williamsport High School alumnus and current Penn College senior vice president, Dr. William J. Martin, directed the project.

In an era that is defined by disposable products, the building once again dodged the wrecking ball. Razing the structure and rebuilding gave way to a renovation project that preserved a part of history. The external structure, aside from a few alterations, stands as it has for nearly a century. The internal structure the same, its character maintained.

The decision of the college to renovate, and not rebuild, is a gift to all those who occupied the building over the past 90 years. Both the city of Williamsport and Penn College continue to have a monumental building that reflects the past and forges into the future.

The following are three short stories I hold of my years as a student at the Williamsport High School and a professor at Penn College.

A Tunnel to the Gym

In 1939, the high-school gymnasium was moved from its original location in the basement of the building to its present location across Third Street. I presume the prank began around this time. The upperclassmen at the high school would start a rumor that a tunnel was built from the main high-school building, under Third Street, into the (*new*) gymnasium. Sophomores, entering the high school for the first time, would be told that, in order to use the tunnel, they would have to purchase a pass from the upperclassmen. As a member of the 1962 sophomore class, I was approached by upperclassmen to purchase such a pass. Fortunately, I knew of the prank and avoided becoming a victim. But a tunnel was such a good idea, that it was tempting. Today, as I watch Penn College students, tired of waiting in inclement weather for the Third Street traffic light to change, I believe they, like me, would still think a tunnel is a good idea.



The Auditorium

The American Indians built a large council house in the center of their villages. It was where the villagers could meet and address significant matters and make vital decisions. It was located in the center of the village to signify unity among the members of the tribe. I don't understand



From 1964-65 "La Memoire" yearbook.

Students attending Williamsport High School in the mid-1960s cram the auditorium.

architectural design, or why the builders of the Williamsport High School chose to place their auditorium in the center of the building, but I can see a connection between the "council house" and the auditorium.

The faculty and student body of the Williamsport High School attended regular assemblies in the auditorium. Williamsport, throughout most of the 20th century, was a secular community: The German neighborhood was located in the eastern part of the city and the Polish in the western sector. The Irish neighborhood was in the northcentral and the Italians in the southcentral. The African-American neighborhood was in the central and pockets of other ethnic groups scattered throughout the city. But in the high-school auditorium, they all sat as one unified group. It was the school's "council house." Today, at the beginning and end of each semester, the faculty and staff of Penn College gather in the same auditorium – diverse disciplines of education, together as one unified group. It is still the "council house."

The President Is Dead

I attended the former Williamsport High School from 1962-65. We were the baby-boomer generation. My class graduated 750 students; the school enrollment was more than 2,000 students. The building was bursting at the seams. Its days as the Williamsport area's high school were numbered. The old building was showing its age.

On Nov. 22, 1963, I was seated in my junior English class, on the second floor, southwest corner of the now-ACC building. A knock at the door disrupted class. Our teacher was called out of the room. My classmates and I sensed something was wrong, but didn't foresee the dramatic event about to unfold. A distressed teacher returned, gathered her composure and announced to us, "The president is dead!" John F. Kennedy, the 35th president of the United States, had been assassinated. We sat in silence, then burst into an assortment of emotion.

Forty years later, I can still remember that day. On Sept. 11, 2001, I had a similar experience. While instructing class, I was called out of the room and told of a strange event happening in New York City. My students and I began watching the news coverage. We watched as a second airplane crashed into the World Trade Center. America was under attack! We sat in silence, then burst into an assortment of emotion. It will be remembered by all for a long time.

A Significant Preservation

Thousands of students, faculty and staff have occupied the Williamsport High School/ACC building over the past 90 years. There are millions of similar stories. I wish I could hear them all. It's one good reason why preserving this building is so significant.

I don't know who George S. Klump was … or what he did to have his name associated with such a magnificent building as the George S. Klump Academic Center. I do consider him to be a fortunate man to have his name immortalized in such a way. ■

Editor's Note: Dr. Klump was a local physician and member of the Williamsport Area Community College Board of Trustees.

From 1964-65 "La Memoire" yearbook.



High-school students cross Third Street to get to gym class during the 1964-65 school year.