



October 2008

## *A Moment for Grove City College*

This “Moment” piece will be a change of pace as I share with you two interesting projects – one near the College that has been completed, and one right in the heart of campus that is being contemplated.

The completed project is the Revitalization/Olde Town project in the downtown area of Grove City. What exactly is this project? Specifically, it was a concentrated and planned effort to greatly “spruce up” what had become a rather worn-out and worn-down downtown area. What things were like, what happened over time and what this project addressed is the initial story I want to share.

First, a bit of history (and those alumni from the 1930s through about the '70s will need to put our memory caps on). The downtown area of Grove City was, like many small towns in America, a vibrant location. It was a place to be and to shop. During much of the period referred to above, the town had three department stores: G.C. Murphy, J.C. Penney and Meyers. I can recall going into Murphy's 5 & 10 as a freshman – it looked (and smelled) just like the one back home. The wooden floor even made the same creaking sound when you walked on it and the fish and other pets were in the same location. Even more important was the lunch counter with the same tasty cheeseburgers. It sure reminded me of home. For the ladies, there were at least five small dress shops. And there were two hardware stores (Sloan's and Flowers). The owners of these stores were amazingly helpful and customer-friendly. One reminded me of my uncle Ken, who was a second-generation hardware store proprietor in a small New England town. If you were having trouble with a plumbing fitting at your house, Uncle Ken might get in your car and ride home to help you put the “clamp” on correctly. A number of the local stores extended credit to customers who might have been having some short-term hard times. There was, of course, DeFrance Drug Store. As students, we didn't often need prescription drugs, but that soda fountain (sitting on stools that swiveled 360 degrees) was the best. And then there was Dad's Restaurant right next to Tower Church. A number of the bachelor professors would eat there for supper. So, if you were downtown, you could stop in and join them. I did often and always had a great time. Finally, there was King's Shoe Store; it was big to start with, and then expanded. They had hundreds and hundreds of shoes. Some of our students will also remember the Pool Hall where a few would play late into the night before a final!

So, all in all, the downtown had the variety of even a big city. Friday night was *the* night to be in town and Saturday also was an important day to shop. There was even a horse trough, as I recall, for our Amish friends who came into town from the New Wilmington area.

But times changed, and our little downtown became passé. McDonalds arrived in the late '70s, Wal-Mart plunked down just north of town in the early '90s and Grove City Prime Outlets, one of the largest discount malls in the country, set up shop at the Interstate 79 exit to the town. Folks also began to shop more extensively through catalogs, and in the last 10 years, the Internet with its numerous online checkouts, has become a well-used shopping vehicle. The College also tore down the original Colonial Hall on lower campus in the early 1980s, so there were no longer 200 or so students right in the heart of downtown. Another big project was the construction, in the 1970s, of the College View Towers apartment complex. This is a large high-rise built primarily for senior citizens. It is located across the street from the College's Carnegie Alumni Center, currently under renovations. When College View Towers was built, we said goodbye to Shaffer Paint Store, a shoe store, newsstand, grocery store and Forker's bookstore, where, until the College opened its own bookstore in 1959, we all went to buy our textbooks.

The effect on the downtown (other demographic changes were also ongoing) was the same in Grove City as in other small towns – catastrophic decline. In Grove City, storefronts became empty and the town began to look quite tired and downtrodden. When I came back as President in 2003, there were numerous empty structures and only one theater left (the venerable and refurbished Guthrie Theater). The Lee Theater was long gone, as was the bowling alley, shoe repair shop and dry cleaner.

It was time to do something, and the citizens of Grove City stepped up beginning in 2001. They organized a Revitalization Committee headed by President Harker's son-in-law, Dr. Dave Dayton '60. Dave had lots of good folks working with him. The Grove City revitalization project was proposed to address deteriorating physical conditions of the downtown area of Grove City, specifically Main Street, Broad Street and Blair Street, in order to promote economic development and an increased quality of life. After years of planning and working on



**President  
Richard G. Jewell '67**

securing funding from both public and private sources, the project was officially underway in September 2006 and finished this past spring. What a positive difference! The cost was \$3.2 million and the College contributed \$250,000, making us the largest private-sector contributor. It was an easy decision for us to participate because, without the citizens of Grove City who helped Dr. Isaac Ketler found the College, we would not be here today. In fact, an important part of the College's personality is what has come from our town/gown relations. The town of Grove City and the College have made the College's 133-year journey together. It is important to us, and always will be, and that is a promise.

The result of the project is a greatly enhanced and attractive downtown and surrounding area with new lights, buried utility lines, new and decorative sidewalks and streets, new landscaping plus many redone and updated store facades – all in all a great and positive change.

Along those same lines, and in conjunction with the great work taking place downtown, the College has once again turned its attention to lower campus. It's what I call "back to the future," for we are returning to redeveloping the property on which we first began. We constructed Colonial Hall Apartments in 2005. Today, 208 students once again live near the heart of downtown, and we are finishing the Carnegie Alumni Center project at the corner of Main and Broad Streets (to be completed by the spring of 2009). We have also redone the field surface of Thorn Field and provided lights, allowing hundreds of students use the field in the evening until 10 p.m.

So lower campus is alive and vibrant again and the downtown is also coming alive. As I write, there is just one unoccupied storefront, where many existed four years ago. The College has continued its downtown support by opening Crimson Connection, a downtown store for College brand logo items and memorabilia located right across from the Guthrie Theater. The next time you visit campus for Homecoming or any other time, be sure to see the changes downtown and visit the new Crimson Connection store. The citizens of the town have stepped up (and we helped a bit). The difference is apparent and welcome.

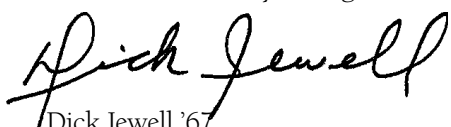
The other project I want to share with you is one that is being contemplated called the Wolf Creek project. Wolf Creek, as all alumni will recall, runs through our campus. In effect, it divides lower from upper campus. More than 90 years ago, the town put up two dams, one just above and one just below our property, for the purpose of producing electricity for local use. The production of electricity ceased 30-plus years ago; four years ago the dams were taken down. When the dams were in place, alumni will recall a lake or pooling effect on our property. In fact, from the time of the dams' erection until the mid 1960s, Wolf Creek was really a little lake on our campus. The historical society in town has postcard pictures of many a couple on the lake in row boats. It was a very romantic way to entertain your sweetheart. In the late '50s and early '60s, a lot of fill from construction projects on upper campus was deposited in the lake and a large field area just behind the football field was built up to be used as a practice field. There was still a smaller lake effect remaining. However, with the dams being taken down, over the past three years Wolf Creek has returned to a fast-running stream and a lot of land previously under water is now dry and capable of planned reclamation. There is also a positive environmental matter to note. Much of the upstream industrial waste problems have ended due either to modern disposal techniques, other legal requirements or some of the industrial businesses no longer being in operation. The result is a clean, quick creek where folks again can fish from the bank or the stream.

It is now time to do work on this extensive area of campus, and that is what we intend. We have engaged a landscape architect, and she has developed a plan to plant meadow flowers throughout the entire area and provide picnic table space along with bike paths. We also will do some creek bank stabilization and provide areas for fishing. And we will light our famous Rainbow Bridge at night. It should be a wonderful project and, when finished, will be shared and used not only by our students, faculty and staff but also by our town neighbors. Included as a final page here are sketches of the project.

The cost to do all this is about \$750,000. The College will invest some of its monies from restoration and renewal funds plus we will look to interested foundations and alumni. If, as an alumnus or friend, you find this project to be of interest, please contact our Vice President for Advancement, Jeff Prokovich '89, at (724) 458-3846 or [jprokovich@gcc.edu](mailto:jprokovich@gcc.edu). He will be glad to give you more information.

All in all, it should be a wonderful project, and stays true to Joseph Newton Pew's exhortation to "make the campus beautiful, for that, too, is an education." We continue to honor Mr. Pew's timeless challenge and always will – and **that, too, is a promise.**

Yours for Grove City College,



Dick Jewell '67  
President

P.S. Be sure to visit campus for Homecoming on October 17-19, 2008. I hope to see you there!

## Artist renderings for the Wolf Creek Project



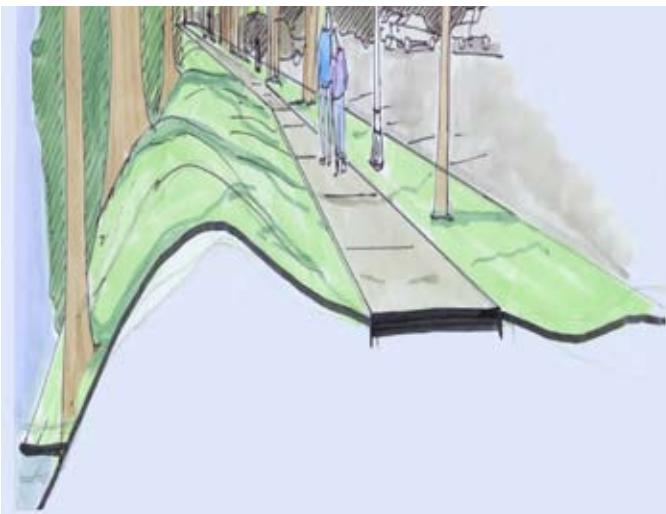
*creek overlook*



*Rainbow Bridge lighting*



*natural area*



*wolf creek trail*



*mascot fieldhouse*