



Bricks and Mortar and More

Married Student Housing by Dr. Wayne G. Marty

Apparently married students were rare in the early years of Western Union College so the college made no effort to provide housing for these few students. However, the many veterans returning to college following WW II provided a totally different scene.

The immediate need for married student housing was met by the post war availability of military barracks buildings from the Sioux Air Base. The president's report, dated April 9, 1947, to the College Board of Trustees states, "The units were completed and occupied November 1, 1946. Each apartment has a living room, dinette and kitchen, two bedrooms and a bathroom. The facilities include a gas cooking range, gas water heater, gas space heater, and an ice box. The fair rent set by the Federal Public Housing Authority, including electric light and water, is \$28.00 per month with a minimum of \$20.00 a month for veterans with an income of only \$90 a month. The Units have proved to be very satisfactory. Beds, mattresses, chairs, blankets, sheets, pillows and towels may be rented at a nominal fee."



These five "newlywed cottages", with two apartments in each, were located south of the Memorial Hall men's dormitories but were in place and occupied before the dorms were completed. These "Huts", officially known as the Campus Court, were the homes for young couples into the early 1960's. It would be interesting to know how many newborns spent their first months in the "Huts". One resident, Duane Buttenob '53, recalls that the little stove and no A/C resulted in considerable temperature variability for their kids, Carole '70, and her siblings.

In 1947 the new Eastview Apartments were completed and provided homes for 8

married student couples. Rent was \$45 per month including utilities. Eastview heat



was provided by the campus Central Heating Plant and Bethel (Johnson) Kienitz '50, recalls encounters with cockroaches that wandered from the heating plant pipe tunnels into their apartment. She tells of returning to their apartment at night and moving carefully into their bedroom, without turning on lights, to pick up their slippers so the cockroach "slipper tenants" could be discarded to reduce the population by at least a bit. Eastview, through the years, had a mixed population of married students and faculty. In 1999, after the college closed in 1997, Eastview was sold to Leo Langel and the building was renovated and continues to be an apartment complex with units now renting for \$325 and up.



Trailers (mobile homes) placed at various locations on campus also provided for married student housing. One location in the 1950's was east of the Student Union before the building was modified for the Home Ec. department and later the Art department. In addition to normal home and study activities, the trailer home of Ray and Joyce Scott also served as a popular "Barber Shop" for some of the nearby dorm residents. Ray clipped my hair regularly.

The Kluckhohn "Mansion" at 700 4th Ave. SE was acquired by the college in 1940 and was modified and separated into five apartments, primarily for faculty housing, but married student couples occupied various apartments at various times as they were available. The house was sold to



physics professor Sheldon Cram in 1972 and continued to be used as apartments under several changes of ownership until 1992 when it was purchased by the Matt Ahlers family and beautifully restored to the one family dwelling as it is today.

In the mid 1960's, as college enrollment grew, the Campus Court was demolished and the space became a parking lot for the newly constructed men's dormitory and two new married student apartment buildings that provided a total of 24 additional one and two bedroom apartments. These two apartment buildings were sold to John Meis after the college closed and continue as a fully occupied apartment complex.

The College Yearbooks would suggest that the occupants of married student housing were often not in the mainstream of campus social life. They probably had different obligations and responsibilities. But Rueben and Beverly Job '54, who lived in the "Huts" their senior year, remained sufficiently involved to be selected as the 1954 Homecoming Duke and Queen, even though they were now buying groceries, cooking meals, and "catching the rodent residents" that were commonplace in the Campus Court.

The married students were an important part of the Westmar Family.

Next time we will either take a look at the president's houses or we may take a break from this column and replace it with an interesting Westmar story.

Your comments and suggestions are always welcome.

We want to thank Wayne Marty for taking the time to get these columns ready for us. He is helping to preserve the history of Westmar College.

(Photos for this column were found in the 1950 Eagle yearbook.)