

Mesa History: Goodwill visit yields treasure trove of MCC yearbooks

Jay Mark, Special for the Republic | azcentral.com 10:58 p.m. MST February 19, 2016

Although the first classes were held in 1963, the first yearbook didn't appear until the first graduating class in 1965



(Photo: Mesa Community College)

Here is my confession for the day.

I am in love with Goodwill stores, especially twice-monthly, half-price Saturdays. It is the surprise of unexpected finds that keeps me coming back.

Goodwill is often the recipient of estate stuff - once valued, but now discarded things from lives past, now in search of a new home.

Most recently I was at Goodwill - half-price Saturday, of course - rummaging through the ever-changing collection of books. All of a sudden there they were - a remarkable collection of Mesa Community College yearbooks, starting with the very first edition in 1965.

Well they made my day. Particularly since now they are mine.

First yearbook

Most important of the bunch is the Jacali Mesa Extension 1965 yearbook. Although the first classes were held in 1963, the first yearbook didn't appear until the first graduating class in 1965.

The origin of the Jacali name is uncertain. A modern history of the school says, "The name is the Spanish word for the Hohokam Indian dwelling."

"Jacal" is Spanish meaning shack or hut.

Despite its lack of clarity Jacali remained the title of the yearbook until 1979.

Another confusing word was "Hohokam," the name for the school's mascot, which was apparently a representation of a Hohokam Indian that today would be considered inappropriate.

Meeting in old church

When the Mesa Extension campus of Phoenix College opened for classes with 330 students on Sept. 11, 1963, it did so in a temporary location on the southwest corner of Main Street and Extension.

The complex of buildings was once the Alma Ward building of the Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. Constructed about 1908, the church occupied the site until the 1950s when it relocated to larger quarters.

Insurance and realty offices occupied the former church until MCC moved in 1963. Classes were held in the confined spaces for three years, while awaiting the completion of the new campus at Dobson and Southern.

What makes the first yearbook fascinating are the nearly two dozen exterior photographs that provide insights into the property's appearance in 1963.

Additionally, there are dozens of interior shots revealing how the confined interior spaces were used.

The original high-ceilinged sanctuary became the home to the school's meager library, and some classrooms.

When the building was converted to Rauch's Landmark Restaurant in 1971 after MCC moved to its new campus, the sanctuary was converted to a dining room.

Towering sign

Photographs reveal a towering sign on the northeast corner. At night neon lettering lit up "Maricopa County Junior College - Mesa Campus." A large arrow pointing to the campus wrapped the center cartouche.

The Mid-Century Modern sign advertised Rauch's and later The Landmark until 2015 when the restaurant closed, and was sold for use as a wedding-community center.

Sadly, the historic sign, which may have been built by local legendary neon sign maker Paul Millet, stood tall for more than a half-century until it was demolished.

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