

Home away from home for generations of women



ITS PILLARED PIAZZA, once a side entrance, is now the chief approach to the Anna Louise Inn, facing the new Lytle Park after 4½ years by "the hole." The home was founded in 1909 to provide housing for working girls at a price they could pay.

BY MARY LINN WHITE
"Drinking a Coke was practically a felony then!"
The merry reminiscence comes from Mrs. Harvey (Jane) Zwerin, who's recalling her 6½ years of residence at the Anna Louise Inn on Lytle Park, which, she insists, "Still has one of the most beautiful lobbies I've ever entered."
Jane's mother, too, lived at the graceful porticoed building prior to World War I.

THROUGH the years, since its founding by Union Bethel in 1909 hundreds of young (and not so young) women have come in from small towns in Ohio and Kentucky, and from Cincinnati too, to "make their way" either as working girls or as students at the bargain housing and board rates offered by the handsome home named for the late Anna Louise Taft Semple.

And still they come to the downtown dorm.

House rules have been modified (there is no curfew now though you sign out after 11 p.m. and in after midnight).

"There was a midnight curfew when I was there," Jane said. "You could have two late nights after 12, but the doors closed at 2 a.m. Then you'd go over to the old Broadway Hotel and take a room. There was a bar there called the Stephen Foster Bar. Sometimes we would go there for a beer. It was terribly racy."

"I had one of the largest rooms. There was a pecking order. They thought I was going to become part of the institution."

SHE REMEMBERS The halls as beige, "then hospital green. I understand it's all redecorated now—even carpeting."

The present director, Mrs. Ruth Sedgwick, has had the corridors painted a welcoming off-white with turquoise carpeting. Attractive paintings are hung, some from Ruth's own brush, and every where light-hearted colorful touches have been added.

"When I lived there," continued Jane, "there was no fear of walking the streets, at night. Many of



to pick up their dates at the Inn. "There is a certain amount of safety in this."

JEANNINE THOMAS, who came to Inn in 1948, about the same time as Mrs. Zwerin, was from Lima, and picked the Inn because other girls from her hometown were there. She was a student at Miss Affleck's school of art.

"I remember I came with no washcloth, and a girl down the hall gave me one. She was a darling person. Her husband owns Swallen's now."

Though recalling her time at the Inn as happy, she moved after a short time to Union Bethel, where rent was \$3 a week as compared to \$5 at the Inn. She had kitchen privileges at the Bethel and knew more girls there.

"The Inn is so much prettier now. I like the new side entrance... I was overwhelmed the first time I ever saw the lobby." The lobby is still a long, enchanting vista of Oriental carpets, with niches along the side walls for a chapel, ornate gold-framed mirrors, movie-set fireplaces and television areas.

Jeanine married a Lebanese who lived in the area; he is an engineer and the two of them are in charge of a volunteer gym program at St. William's in Price Hill.

GIRLS STILL SUN atop the deck at the Anna Louise Inn, but Delores (Teena) Taube of Holland, O., an airline stewardess with a tan baked in Hawaii, looks out on a view far different from that of long-ago Inn-dwellers. Gone are the tenement homes of southern Europeans and mid-Easterners to make way for the highways and stadium.

Anderson, Ind. She rated a corner room with cross ventilation. She now lives across Lytle Park at the Phelps.

Hazel Jacobs, who came to the Inn from the YWCA when her five-year-limit was reached, left the Inn only last year on retirement. In her 20 years' residence, she occupied a room looking out over the porch, where the office now is. When her space was pre-empted, she moved to another from which she watched the stadium go up.

"I'VE LIVED in many rooms there," the former government worker recalls. "I always enjoyed the walk through the park. The freedom of the girls is much greater now."

"I guess the Inn has to follow the times. I never did get locked out. When a girl did get locked out all she had to do was go to the Broadway. I thought it was a terrible thing, contributing to the very thing they were trying to block. After a lockout, a girl would be called in for a

place that could keep a stranger from feeling she was being swallowed up in the big city."

"We consider ourselves 'transient housing,'" muses Mrs. Sedgwick, "but some of the girls stay 20 years or longer. We have no age limit, though probably 70 per cent of the residents here are under 30. There's no age stratification."

"Nobody is accepted under 18, and each resident is interviewed. Some residents develop a strong sense of stewardship, assisting an occasional blind or mute resident. One Inn graduate, Mrs. Jane Sherman Lamb, 21, was courted at the Inn by a blind young man. Their seeing-eye dogs were the only animals ever permitted in the Inn. Mrs. Lamb is a Jewish Hospital employee."

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"When I lived there," continued Jane, "there was no fear of walking the streets at night. Many of the girls worked in stores and had to walk home after dark; no one was scared."

She mentions the feeling she had that the "old gals" at the front desk "looked the boys over" when they came



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VENITA KELLY, former Post and Times-Star fashion editor now lecturing on fashion, remembers paying \$6.50 per week room and meals at the Inn when she made \$18 a week coming here in 1940 from

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EILEEN WALL, now a Latona resident, lived at the Inn from 1948 to 1968 and has happy recollections about the birthday dinners with special flowers that Bea Percival originated some years ago.

"It was good for a girl who had to be away from home on her birthday. The Inn was a

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MRS. SEDGWICK is available every evening for those who need "a listening ear." Where there are health economic or emotional problems, Ruth makes referrals. As a type of surrogate mother, she invokes the house rules including wearing of shoes in the dining room and lobby, a covering for hair-curlers there.

Lowest room-board rate is under \$21, including a meal ticket worth \$8 in food. There's a custom grill service on weekends.



SURROGATE mom to about 185 girls is Mrs. Ruth Sedgwick, who operates the Inn from a background of dietetics, health, social and welfare work.