

When Dr. J. Will Harris, Founder of Polytechnic Institute of Puerto Rico, retired on the 25th. anniversary of its founding, March 2, 1937, he and Mrs. Harris were fêted appropriately, and I became his first successor, and Polytechnic first inaugurated President. Since Dr. Harris just grew up with the school, he was never formally inducted into office.

Some years before 1935 the grade school had been discontinued, in about 1935 the high school was closed, and there were 143 enrolled college students when I arrived. Of these, 96 lived on campus, and 47 were day students. There were 8 faculty members on campus and one on vacation. There was an accumulated deficit of about \$8500. and faculty members had not been paid for four or five months. The depression was really "sore in the land" and that deficit looked titanic to me.

The Trustees in New York had asked me to assume the Presidency with the assurance of the Carnegie Corporation that it would supply \$25,000 per year for five years to help develop the college and protect its investment of \$250,000 then held as endowment. Dr. Harris, with his genius as a dreamer and promoter, had raised a like amount largely from individuals, to match the Carnegie grant in order to erect buildings. There were in all about 20 re-inforced concrete buildings including such large structures as Marquis Science Hall, (mostly given by the Presbyterian Church), the big dormitories, (Phraner and Borinquen Halls), the Costello Guesthouse, Loma Vista, the Dining Hall and faculty homes. All of these had been built, partly by student labor, of concrete made of unwashed river sand and gravel from the Guanajibo Valley and with re-inforcing steel rods, under the direction of Mr. Clarence Harris, the younger brother of Dr. J. Will Harris. Some of the smaller structures had

sloping and tiled roofs, but all the larger buildings were flat-roofed and were leaking badly with each rain. Dampness in the "soft" concrete caused the steel rods to rust and swell, making increasingly leaky and dangerous cracks.

Since the Carnegie Corporation was giving the money for development, I resolved we would not use any of it to pay up the deficit, but pay up the deficit we had to do. With the first \$25,000 in 1937 we started repairing the flat roofs on a dozen buildings with built up layers of roofing paper and native lake asphalt from the island of Trinidad. At the same time we began to tap various sources of private philanthropy. For the first time in Polytechnic history we appealed to the students and their parents to help us cover the deficit, which had been accumulated for their benefit. Some parents gave nothing, but many sent from \$1.00 to \$25.00. I urged the students to give \$5. a piece in either cash or work, for which we would pay them 15 cents per hour. For these efforts the students quickly nicknamed me Shylock and Jarvis S. Money. Actually because the final s is softened in Puerto Rico, Dr. Harris was Dr. Harry and I became Dr. Morry, not so far from money after all. What humor, sometimes with a cutting edge, those students had.

I found that about one-fourth of the deficit was in debts to San German merchants, mostly for food the students had eaten. To all of these I offered an immediate payment of the accounts if they would help us by giving a 10% discount. All responded eagerly, for some of the debts were of long standing, and the first \$200. raised toward the deficit came from them. Grumbling sometimes, the students contributed about \$700. in small sums or in labor.

To my amazement, one day I discovered from Miss Patria Tio, the

Treasurer, that graduates owed the college over \$24,000. on notes they had made for their education which made possible their holding good jobs as teachers, attorneys, physicians, and business men and women. To all these I app^ealed for payment of their obligations, which I felt to be sacred. This did not increase my popularity among the Alumni in general, but many of them responded and a lion's share of the deficit was covered in this way. We never collected the entire \$24,000. but we did establish the fact that notes were obligations to be met. We neither threatened nor used ^{any} legal action, but we were insistent by letter and in personal contact.

That first Carnegie check became a catalytic agent to get a great deal accomplished. We installed a telephone in Science Hall and phones in the dormitories, guest-house and dining hall. These surely saved many a minute and many a step.

Since everything was on those "pintorescas ^{colinas} ~~lomas~~ de Santa Marta" we were usually walking or driving either in dust or mud. After repairing the roofs we began to build concrete steps and walks and hard-surfaced roads.

We soon learned that we could make considerable savings by paying all bills before the 10th. of the month. After the first month or two we discounted all bills. We joined an institutional purchasing agency and made as many purchases through it as possible, making additional savings. We still purchased much from local merchants, but we found that canned fruits and vegetables could be brought in 100 case lots of 10 pound cans shipped by Libby and Del Monte direct from California via the Panama Canal and unloaded in Mayaguez. We were able to give our students a richer diet at a lower cost. At the same time we were expanding the college gardens, dairy, poultry plant, and "piggery".

We added beef cattle to the farms and butchered our own beef and pork. Waste from the farms and food scraps from the dining hall, along with wild mangoes and royal palm seed, made the pork production very profitable.

The Great Depression had taken the heart and the hope out of some people, but it made us more determined than ever to help the youth of Puerto Rico. Polytechnic had two strikes against it, being an American type college in an island with a growing "independentista" movement and a Protestant college in a Roman Catholic Society. As a little unaccredited college, which up until recently had had no financial credit either, we were suffering from lack of students. It became my job to "sell" its merits to the educational forces of the Island. To this end we published and distributed literature and I visited every high school in Puerto Rico every year and spoke to the upper classes about our program. I also visited the Virgin Islands and Santo Domingo. We offered full scholarships, covering all tuition, to valedictorians of all high schools, however small, and half-scholarships to all second honor students. We had to increase tuition and student fees, but we did it in small increments at the same time we raised scholastic requirements for admission. In 1937 tuition, fees, room, and board were only \$180. per year or \$20. per month. Our policy was never to reject X students for lack of financial resources. We dealt with each case individually. Somehow we found work, scholarship aid or N.Y.A. (National Youth Administration) jobs; in 10 years of our administration every student was provided for, if he or she was willing to work.

So, year by year, the college grew until when my wife and I left Puerto Rico in June 1946, because of her ill health (she had the sprue), there were 550 students, 350 of whom lived on campus. Each

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year we made a budget, but each year we exceeded its planned expenditures. Foreseen income was always exceeded as well and we never came to the close of a year with a deficit. In those nearly ten years the faculty grew from 9 to over 40, the annual budgets from \$60,000. to about \$360,000.

• Polytechnic got its Pre-medical course accredited by the Pennsylvania Department of Education several years before it received general accreditation from the Middle States Association, and the latter of these made it the first to be so recognized in Latin America. How we achieved this accreditation is not only a part of this account, but deserves a special article. A brief summary of my administration as second President of Inter American University, was the enduring of the Great Depression; the suffering through World War II with all kinds of shortages, and the becoming fully accredited.