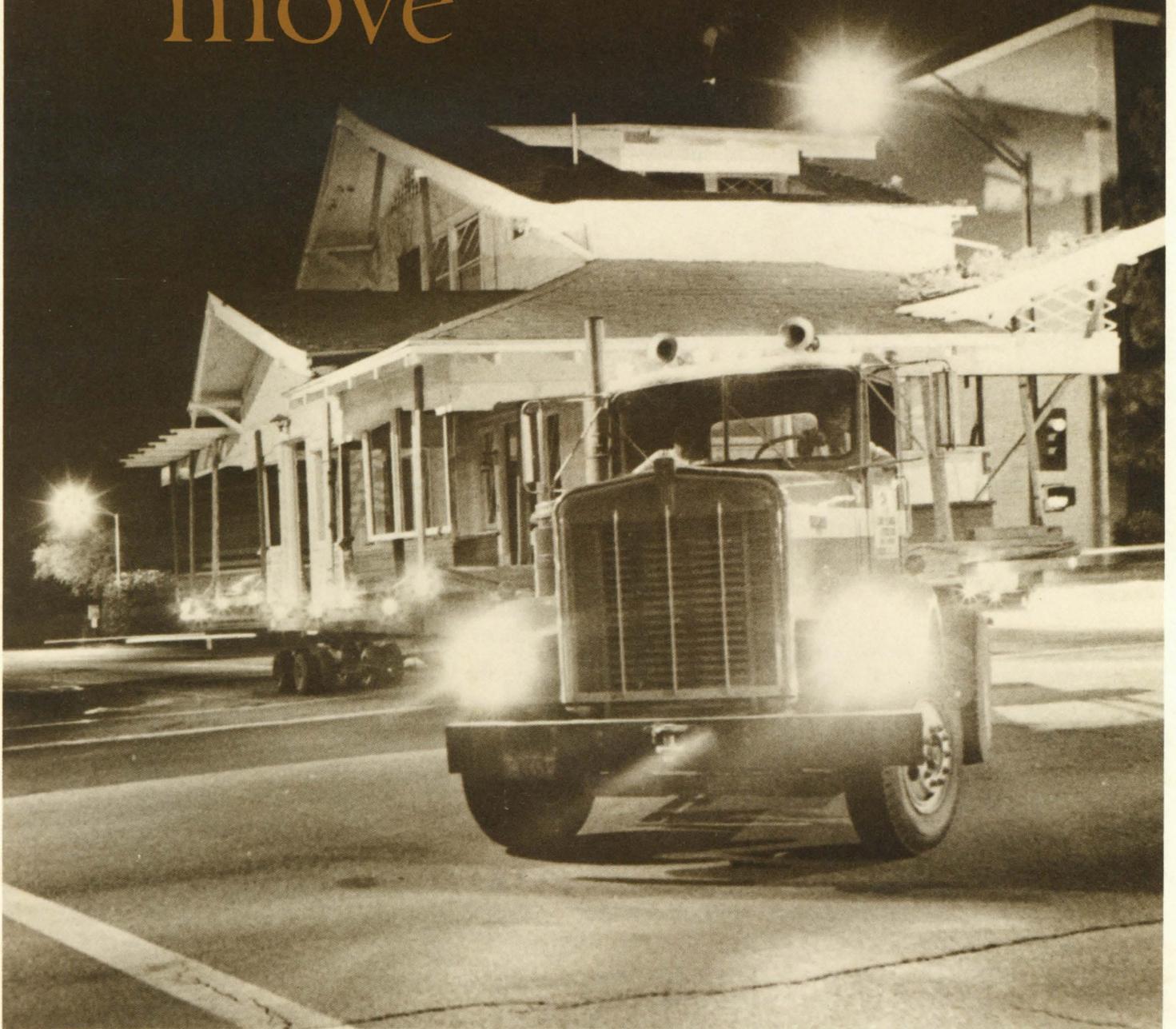

Pitzer on the move



Twelve small, liberal arts colleges began in the 1960s; only two remain. Pitzer College is one of them. And the story of Pitzer's house move explains its power to survive.

Pitzer lacked a comfortable place for students, faculty and staff to sit and talk, read, or just relax with a cup of coffee. A new building could have been built — the normal solution — but at great expense. And given modern construction regulations and materials, a new building probably would have lacked the intimacy and comfort that were being sought on campus. Besides, Pitzer is not used to standard solutions; it has always met problems creatively. Here was no exception.

Students in a class — The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1876 to 1916 — decided that for its class project it would try to move a house from that period onto campus for a coffee house. Before the semester was over, students located a 4500 square foot house built in 1902 that was to be razed for a medical facility in Claremont. Pitzer could have it for one dollar. It was called the Zetterberg House, after the last family who lived in it. That was in the fall of 1975.

The project was controversial. But more and more students and faculty became interested in the idea, until finally both students and faculty voted overwhelmingly for it. The Board of Trustees, convinced of its merit, approved the project, with the understanding that money must be found outside the College budget. Then the real work started.

The John A. McCarthy Foundation of Los Angeles made a generous grant and, along with contributions from students, faculty, and others, the Zetterberg Committee managed to raise the required money. In the fall of 1977, Pitzer moved the Zetterberg House. Then the real problems started.

The House, it turned out, was set down twelve feet off its intended location; and work was halted on the project. So the House set, for two years, in three rotting sections, on its mis-placed foundation. The Board voted to demolish the House, due to rising construction costs — unless students and faculty could once again find money to re-move the House. That was December 1978.

A new student-faculty committee was formed: the Committee to Save the Zetterberg House. They tried desperately to find the money, but could not. So, after four years, the Board heard the last arguments to save the Zetterberg House.

Or so it thought. At the last moment, in the spring of 1979, a Pitzer senior, Sheila Kemper, unhappy about the fate of the House, told her father. Long interested in

restoration and preservation in the midwest, R. Crosby Kemper III, through his foundation, granted the College the necessary money to re-locate the House, restore and furnish it with Mission furniture from the Arts and Crafts period. Given new life, the House was re-christened The Grove House, appropriately renamed for the original place it had occupied in a Claremont citrus grove.

In 1980 the dedication of The Grove House was happily planned, nearly five years after the project was first announced. During that time, the students in the original Arts and Crafts class were graduated. But other students picked up the cause. And they finished the project in Pitzer style — independently and with determination. Students, faculty and staff stubbornly saved a wonderful house from the wrecker's ball — several times — but they restored something more important: an old sense of community and spirit. Now, The Grove House is being used as a coffee house, a women's center, a small library, a reading room, a photography gallery; there is also lots of room for sitting and talking or just dreaming in rocking chairs, around tables, in Morris chairs, in the living room, or out on the porch.

Moving a house is not a big deal. Lots of people do it. But most schools don't. Necessity has, however, over the years given birth to some pretty good ideas. Without a large endowment, Pitzer College has had to dream up some crafty solutions. And, if the sixties can be described as a time when we let it all "hang out," we are, during the seventies, being forced to stuff it all "back in." And now we're cinching our belts tightly. The "ME" generation of the seventies may have given way to the "RE" generation: to re-cycle, re-store, re-use, re-furbish, re-strict, all out of necessity. Old buildings, long vacant, are being re-defined and re-used. The Grove House is a fine example of craftsmanship in the service of an easy, relaxed way of life during the early part of this century. Pitzer is re-vivifying it for that same use.

The Grove House is perhaps Pitzer's most visible example that innovation and daring are rewarded, even in the hardest of economic and political times. Moving The Grove House has taught us that institutions and individuals are alike. In William Faulkner's phrase, "in order to endure and prevail, we must take risks."

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