

POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

How the other half lives

The Hill School is rightly proud of its famous alumni and lists many of them on its website, from Gov. Tom Wolf to former Secretary of State James Baker, going all the way back to Edmund Wilson, class of 1912.

But there's no mention that two sons of our current President, Donald Trump, are both graduates of the Hill School. Donald Trump Jr. graduated in 1996, when the Hill School was still an all-boys school, and Eric Trump graduated in 2002 after the Hill School went co-ed. Eric later served as a Hill School trustee.

Recently, in a campaign speech at a re-election rally for Kentucky Gov. Matt Bevin, Donald Jr. brought up his time in Pottstown without specifically mentioning the Hill School.

"When I was young, 12 years old," he told the campaign crowd, "I went to a boarding school in central Pennsylvania in a little town called Pottstown, it was the home of Firestone Tires, so I lived in the rust belt during my formative years. Puberty and college I was in Pennsylvania, those were people I went hunting with, it was really a formative time for me and I saw a lot of that old Democratic blue collar tradition, so I get it, I understand it..."

Interestingly, during Donald Jr.'s senior year, *Philadelphia Magazine* published a profile of the Hill School entitled "Sons of Riches."

In the 1995 article, we learned that Hill boys referred to the natives of our fair borough as "Pottstoids" and char-

acterized Pottstown girls as "white trash."

The Hill School's classical languages chairman proclaimed "We need to have elitists in this country."

The magazine article generated predictable outrage from Pottstown residents whose tax dollars indirectly support the exclusive school. Then-headmaster David Dougherty and the students quoted in the article apologized.

In fact, despite Donald Jr.'s reminiscences, there was virtually no interaction between Hill School students and the town. Students were discouraged from leaving campus. If they walked downtown, they were instructed to stay on High Street.

One of the goals assigned to the current headmaster, Zack Lehman, appointed in 2012, was to improve community relations. The Hill set up a non-profit called Hobart's Run to encourage development in the school's immediate neighborhood. It has held forums generating positive publicity for Pottstown. Hill students participate in trash clean-ups.

However, given its non-profit status, which allows it to avoid \$2.2 million in real estate taxes annually, its wealthy constituency, and its \$168 million endowment, The Hill School could do more — much more — to strengthen the community.

Tom Hylton is a member of the Pottstown School Board. However, the views expressed are his alone and not the board's.



Commentary by
Thomas Hylton



TRUMPS VISIT POTTSTOWN — Acting on a tip, Mercury photographer John Strickler captured Donald Trump and his then-wife, Ivana, buying bedsheets for Donald Jr. at the Sanatoga Kmart in 1991.