

COURIER – PRESS, Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, January 9, 1969

Letter to the Editor:

As SUPT. Of Buildings and Grounds and Nonacademic Personnel at Champion High School, I wish to acknowledge our deep gratitude to the Prairie du Chien Volunteer Fire Dept., and Fire Chief, Mr. Ray Burgess, for their valiant efforts to save Kostka Hall from destruction by fire. We realize the great difficulties faced under some very frustrating circumstances, and obstacles to fighting the blaze. Being up on the fourth floor briefly at the time the firemen were striving to put the first blaze out --- and seeing their efforts in the dense smoke and visible flame – gave one a sense of admiration for brave men who frequently risk injury and even life in the pursuit of civic assistance. This same civic dedication was evident throughout the period of burning and throughout the night --- providing Guards and watching for new outbreaks of blaze. We regret the injuries suffered by Vern Fishler, Paul Mara and others, and know that little can be said that will alleviate the pain suffered --- except that through their heroic efforts, they helped to keep the fire sufficiently contained to save the large Champion Hall Class Room Bldg. to the east and Xavier Hall to the west --- which destruction could have definitely put Champion out of operation for some time. Special thanks also to the Marquette-McGregor and Bloomington Fire Depts. for their able assistance.

We also express our appreciation to the Police Force in their direction of traffic and protection throughout the night and the many ways they helped, and to the Prairie Rescue Squad who stood by. The news coverage by the local and area papers was fine, especially in view of the telephone being cut off by the fire and thus verification of statements could not be made. We extend appreciation also to WPRE Radio Station for their coverage and messages urging traffic to stay away, so as not to hinder firemen.

The magnificent cooperation by the Wisconsin Power and Light Co., Joe Cosgriff and assistants, and The General Telephone Co. and Mac McKillip assistants to restore service --- and the immediate aid by Blair Dillman and his crew on Sunday in removing the danger to Xavier Hall by the high wall which was left standing --- all helped in the crisis.

Always much taken for granted --- yet a vital part of Champion's lifeline of operation, the loyal employees of the School --- John Novey, Chief Engineer --- Frank Bozek and Arnold White, Electricians --- Ed E. Bouzek and Leo Pulda and the other Boiler Room men whose vast knowledge of Champion's heating, water and electrical network, helped to save thousands of dollars and property by knowing what valves to shut off --- how to cap this, turn off, that, etc. and by their working far into Saturday and Sunday nights to restore heat, etc. They were ably assisted by Bro. James Kirsling, S.J., Asst. Superintendent and Bob Gillitzer and other employees who returned or volunteered during this time of crisis. Also the Kitchen Food Service who provided coffee etc and kept calmly to their duties throughout the excitement.

Kostka Hall was the venerable building of the Campus – attached and associated with many memories and changes during its 84-year old history. The 1884 section was especially strong and rugged. It was not a very attractive building --- but was in its way like the giant redwood trees of California. Withstanding rigors and abuse, yet able to be

remodeled and changed to accommodate itself to the changing generations --- and in fact was once again about to be remodeled, with new floors, walls in some areas, new electric wiring, etc. Wednesday, December 18 was to have been a day of decision. It burned on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

To older members on the campus, like myself, who have been here 20 years others even longer, like Bro. Daley, Bro. Eakin, Bro. Stockley, Fr. Siebauer, Fr. Zachman, Fr. Hipschen, Fr. Scott and Fr. Aspenleiter, Prof. DeRanitz and also other priests who were in the school here and some who had their Scholastic years here, memories bring forth the merry laughter or quiet study of youthful Sophs and in the 4<sup>th</sup> floor rooms, Kostka Alley Rooms, or the rush of Freshmen youth to prepare or arise in the then dormitory area --- or the rushing through the halls to get to class, etc --- or the shuffling of feet --- a cough here --- a book dropped there, as Study Hall took place on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and 1<sup>st</sup> floor.

Kostka Hall had a sort of magnetic attraction for youthful students with its high ceilings --- its long halls --- its many unusual rooms, etc. While the pictures of past graduates from 1932 forward looked down upon the passing younger generation, and the trophy cases gave evidence of traditional past achievements.

Kostka Hall, named after the youthful boy Saint, St. Stanislaus Kostka, S.J., proved as rugged as the one it was named for, who, walked 1500 miles or more across the then rugged Europe to enter the Jesuit order.

All knew that some day Kostka Hall would have to come down --- none, however, wanted to go in quite the manner it did.

Again --- thank you to each person who helped.

Bro. S. J. Staber, Supt.