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BLASCO HALL

Construction 1963/Massman *Constructi*
Occupancy Spring, 1964
COST \$1,200,000 for O'Rielly and Blasco

Only those administrators who have had the experience of moving from a self-contained building to a separate administration building can appreciate the physical isolation from the rest of the college community. It was a visible growth, more professional, businesslike and sophisticated to a degree.

The late Spring of 1964 saw the short move from the academic building to the administration building. The upper level of the new facility consisted of two large open areas on either side of a wide hall. In the northeast corner was the office of the President with an adjoining reception room; in the southeast corner, the temporary chapel with an adjoining large closet for the chapel sacristy. Corresponding to these areas in the northwest corner were the office of the academic dean and a reception area and the office of the registrar with a reenforced concrete room for the fireproof files containing the permanent student records and the collection of catalogs from 1916 to the present.

In the southwest corner, two rooms were to serve as lounge areas for the lay and religious staff members. In the first years, these rooms served as a dormitory for three of the pioneer sisters: Sisters Anne Gregory Kelly, Ann Schorfheide and Marie Cecile Bennett (assistant librarian from the southern province). One of the janitor's closets had been converted into a shower room. Our one observation was that Sister Cecile used most of the hot water unbeknown to her. This was corrected by working out a plan satisfactory to all of us. The other lounge area became the kitchen and dining room for the sisters who lived in the administrative offices. The stove consisted of an electric skillet and hot plate and toaster. These plus other household items rested on a stainless steel surgical table received from St. Joseph Hospital. Sister Blanda kept us in mind and gave this piece of equipment plus some tray carriers to Sister Margaret Reinhart. These are in use today. The surgical table on wheels is in the Marian Center Diningroom and has been a bar for refreshments in the alumni lounge. Although some of our benefactors wept for us in our meager surroundings, we felt privileged to have two buildings.

The Provincial had given permission for us to sleep in chairbeds in our offices instead of in the mechanical room over the science laboratory in O'Rielly Hall. The chairbeds deserve to be described: pullout sofas in the evening, the dignified naugahyde upholstered chairs resembled small satees during the day. They were manufactured in Chicago and cost five hundred dollars apiece. Three sets were purchased; green, yellow and white. The Sisters who lived at St. Joseph Hospital ate lunch and dinner in our make-do diningroom. The Sisters who lived at St. Teresa Academy depended on Sister Ann Dominic Tassone who had the charge of packing the lunches and taking care of the food. These Sisters ate with the lay faculty and students in the corner of the Actors' Laboratory Theater outside the first bookstore in O'Rielly Hall. For a time, a single bulb suspended by wiring provided the necessary lighting. As weeks passed, vending machines were provided for drinks and snacks. It was not surprising to put in a quarter and pull out a mouse. As Sister Margaret Reinhart observed: "These creatures had been robbed of their natural habitat by our construction. It was we who disturbed them."

The open space between the President's office and Chapel began to be divided into single unit offices when quiet and concentration necessitated partitions to be built by Art Schlumpberger and his staff of one. Dave Gebauer became his assistant when he graduated from high school. Dave has proved an able apprentice and is still with Avila College today. The open area harbored the Admissions Office of one person. Margot Thornhill became the first fulltime admissions director. Margot recruited locally and around the two hundred and fifty mile radius of Kansas City. She was her own secretary and handled her first professional job with ease and skill, though not experienced before coming to Avila. She merited the applause of all of us and after five years at Avila, she went to Truman Medical Center where she has remained these past decades, a tribute to her mother and father who are good friends and benefactors of the college. Mr. Edward A. Thornhill co-founded the President's Scholarship Club with Ron Bennett, first lay comptroller, in 1972. Margot shared space with Sandra Edelman who served as Public Relations Director. As Margot had succeeded Helen Jane Gray Wald '46, in her position, Sandra Edelman succeeded Sister Gonzaga as Alumnae Director and Marian Anderson, as Public Relations Director. Both of these young women proved their capabilities and worked hard. They laid the groundwork respectively for the succeeding

Public Relations, Alumni and Research Personnel. In the 70's, Julie Waters'67 served as our first Director for writing grant proposals. She was succeeded by Jan Kreamer who remained with Avila for seven years.

In that same large area on the north, Sister Marie Georgette Eschbacher chaired and developed the Education Department besides teaching fulltime with the assistance of Tom Taff. Sister Marie is responsible for the excellence of the teacher education curriculum. She brought to the department an indefatigable zeal and expertise. Having been an elementary teacher, co-author of the Laidlaw English Series, Superior and Supervisor in the elementary school system, she knew the basics to be involved in the preparation and education of teachers. The Education Department functioned in Blasco Hall until 1973, when the lower level of Carondelet Hall was remodeled and refurbished for the Hodes Education Center. The twelve thousand plus square feet were a welcome addition. The Special Education classrooms, the Montessori Children's Classrooms, the Curriculum Library and faculty and staff offices plus classrooms and kitchenette were needed and used well. A children's playground in the rear of Carondelet Hall was constructed and fenced in for safety. The Hodes Education Center was a complete facility. Herman and KaRose Hodes'25 contributed to the remodeling of this basement area. Having ten children of their own, Herman and KaRose knew the importance of education. Avila College is truly an institution of its time. Having become a senior college in 1942 with seven graduates who earned their baccalaureate degrees, it had combined the liberal arts with the three professional degrees: teacher, nurse and business education.

The business office was situated in the open southeast area between the registrar's office and the temporary kitchen of the sisters. The office housed a large walk-in safe. The new building had been occupied less than a month when thieves blew a hole through the side wall of the safe. To their chagrin, they found only dishes and crystal which had been put in the vault for safe keeping. This was Avila's first robbery.

On the lower level was housed the temporary library. Since Sister Liguori Tackaberry, head librarian, was in poor health, she did not move to the new campus. Temporary help was had until Sister James Marie O'Reilly assumed the responsibility. Some books were still in boxes and some unshelved. The Kellogg Foundation had awarded Avila College a grant: the OCLC:

the computerization of cataloging, On-Line Computer Library Center, a nation-wide data base for cataloging and inter-library loan. The Foundation Administrators assured us that our grant would be honored and put on hold until the permanent library was constructed. (This permanent library became a reality in 1977, groundbreaking.)

The North Central had sent notice in 1963 that the College was due for its accreditation visit. It was the revitalization of the North Central itself. Most colleges in the region had not been visited for decades. Avila College was one of these. When the North Central officials were notified of Avila's pending move to the new campus in the fall of 1963, they, in turn, informed the Academic Dean that the accreditation visit would take place as scheduled, no exception. Simply have your card catalog up to date and the census of library use updated were the directives received by the President and Dean. The Academic Dean with the assistance of the Department Chairpersons prepared the Preliminary Report. The College received its continued accreditation status. Since this visit in 1965, the North Central has maintained its regularly scheduled visitations every eight to ten years. Avila has been RE-accredited successively and successfully since 1965. Its first accreditation was given in 1946. No visit had taken place between these decades until 1965. Dr. Jagow, Chairman of the Team, noted: "Avila is a bootstrapper institution. Having come up on its own, it has managed its funds well and is in control."

Since the college was granted status as a senior college in 1942, and since the college at one time carried both the three-year nursing program as well as the bachelor's degree in nursing in conjunction with St. Joseph Hospital, the Registrar, Sister Anna Schlett with the assistance of Sister Marie Authaire, had the monumental task of reconstructing the student records in keeping with the college requirements. After a decade of constant work, this task was accomplished. Meanwhile with the changes in the health area, the BSN was retained in the curricula. Sister Mary Mark Duranty is credited with the development of an excellent nursing curriculum upon which the reputation of the Department of Nursing continues.

The wooden statue of the Mother and Child in Blasco Hall was sent to the College of St. Teresa by Patsy Maggard Neal '52. It was purchased by the newlyweds on their honeymoon while in Germany. Patsy had married a graduate

of West Point. In the Fall of '52, Patsy performed her senior theater recital, ANTIGONE. At the time of its receipt, the beautiful sculpture was placed on top of a cupboard in the art room of the Music and Arts Building for safekeeping. The Blessed Mother and Child have graced the hall of the Administration Building since its opening. This Spring '92, a plaque of Avila, Spain, created by Dr. Bill Louis, was adhered to the wall. This work was done in honor of Avila's SEPTUAGINTA-QUINQUENNIAL. Outside the business office hung a plaque of Judge Henry A. Bundschu, an early benefactor of the College after whom the library is named. This bronze plaque was hung here until the refurbishing of Blasco Hall in 1993. It was the desire of the Judge to continue his annual money gift with its accumulation for the permanent library. Judge did not have the joy of seeing the library completed and named in his honor. He did come to Avila to celebrate his ninetieth birthday and saw the temporary facility with the elegant new furniture of table and chairs purchased with his gift dollars.

The naming of the Administration Building, Blasco Hall, seemed a natural thing to do: to honor a man whose expertise was respected by Sister Mary Berenice, President and Superior of the College in 1952. Alfred J. Blasco, as Chairman of the Board of Counselors, was asked by Sister Joan Marie Gleason, Provincial of the Sisters of St. Joseph, to assume the Chairmanship of the Board of Trustees in the Fall of 1969. Up to this time, five Sisters of St. Joseph including the Provincial and her Assistant and the President of the College were the trustees. In the early years of 1960-1969, the President visited the Provincial at the Motherhouse at Carondelet and proposed the business of the College asking for the necessary permissions to conduct the business of the College. The necessary Charter of the College had been found and the Bylaws of the College were in the process of being written with the advisement of Father Stanford of Villanova University. Father Stanford was one of the consultants provided by the Lilly Foundation to Avila College in 1962 and 1964. This service by Father Stanford was provided through the generosity of the Lilly Foundation to small private liberal arts colleges who were seeking federal funds for construction during the 1960's. It is important to keep in mind the valuable expertise provided by Mr. Alfred J. Blasco, CEO businessman and trustee chairman, Mr. Norman P. Gordon, attorney and trustee of the college, and Mr. Ole Jensen, CPA and trustee. All three of these men served on the Board of Counselors from its inception (1961) and on the Board of Trustees for several decades. Their daughters had attended the College of St. Teresa. Their loyalty, commitment

and devotion to Avila College cannot be overestimated.

After the first semester of 1992-1993, the refurbishing of Blasco Hall began. The Academic Dean, Registrar, Business Officer, President, Admissions Director, Financial Aid Director, Counselors, Student Services Staff and Members of the respective Departments moved to Carondelet Hall and the lower level of O'Rielly until the remodeling work was to be completed. Word has been received that the moving back to the newly refurbished quarters would take place the week of July 11th. President Kramer has done an excellent job in keeping us all working in areas apropos for the conduct of our respective work. As he would put it: "I did it all with the help of all the people involved." His work philosophy!



Spring of 1993. The construction webbing surrounded all of Blasco Hall during its renovation from the close of first semester '92 to the summer of 1993. The move back to the refurbished offices began the week of July 11th.

7/15/92
Read by
J. Ellen
A. Ann S. 7/15/92

8.
4/11/92
P. Rita 7/24/92
Jude L. D. 8/30/92

1 JRF 7/27/92
1 SMR 7/30/92
1 P. Martin 7/31/92
1 SUM 8/27/92

A snapshot showing the netting placed around Blasco Hall at the time of its complete renovation. This occurred the second semester of the 1992-1993 academic year. The entire staff housed in this building moved to the first floor of Carondelet Hall (academic dean and staff members, admissions officer and his staff members, student services staff members). The other staff members moved to the lower level of O'Rielly Hall until the second week of July '93.

