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Guests at the White House

BY TOM ROSICA

Young people today have many dreams they would someday like to see come true but too many times they never come true as planned. For Aquinas students, Kevin Lynd a sophomore, Larry Costanz a junior, and myself (now an alumnus) the dream of meeting the President of the U. S. and sitting at his desk in the Oval Office came true in June.

Originally, our trip was to have been to New York City. This year's Aquinas yearbook had borrowed the theme of 'People' magazine and part of the agreement had been to deliver a copy of the book to the company's headquarters in New York. But then we also decided to visit Washington. There were many reasons for doing so: each of us had supported Jimmy Carter in his campaign for president; each of us had worked on Midge Costanza's campaign for Congress; Larry was closely related to her — in the role of nephew. A few phone calls and letters and our Washington adventure became a reality.

First of all, I must comment on the security checks needed to get into the White House. The Saturday before we left, each of us received calls from the FBI as to pertinent information about Social Security numbers and other identification cards.

We traveled via Amtrak and after arriving at our Washington hotel, about 8 p.m., we received a message to call the White House. After speaking with Midge's assistant, Sandy Adams (also a Rochesterian) who had arranged the visit, we found ourselves being whisked by taxi through the streets of the Capitol to the White House gate. We imagined ourselves to be three foreign ambassadores paying an evening visit to the Chief Executive.

At the gate our names had already been cleared with the guard's desk so admittance was quick. A special 'AA' tag was placed on our jacket's to show that the Secret Service had cleared us. It is one thing to look into the White House grounds through the big black fence, another to stand in the White House grounds and look outside! Quite a remarkable feeling to look closely at the majestic white pillars and the beauty of the west wing entrance.

Midge, who is the President's Special Assistant for Liaison, greeted us warmly in the lobby where we could hear a dog barking. It was Gritz — Amy Carter's pet, roaming the downstairs corridors.

It is in the west wing where the Oval Office, all the formal meeting rooms and many of the offices of the President's assistants are located. Our private tour included the Roosevelt Room (conference room used by the President for senior staff meetings), the cabinet room, Oval Office, President's private study office, Vice president Walter Mondale's office, and Midge's suite. After a session of picture taking, each of us tried out the President's chair in the Oval Office.

The following day began with an early morning visit to the Capitol for a session in the Senate and House galleries. At 11 a.m. we returned to the White House where minutes before we arrived President Carter had his news conference at which he halted the production of the B1 bomber.

President Carter holding conference in the Oval Office was just one of the many exciting events witnessed by the Washington connection, Kevin, Father Mull, Larry and Father Valenti, pictured in center photo. In right hand photo, Tom tries out the President's chair for size.

We were joined by two friends from Rochester, Fathers Tom Mull from St. Ambrose and Tom Valenti from Blessed Sacrament. We lunched at the White House Mess. The name is totally unfair 'mess' for the exclusive dining room which is strictly for senior staff members and their guests. All staff food facilities are run by the military and our waiters were all navy men. Surrounding us at other tables were key White House people who are usually only read about in papers.

After lunch, we toured the old Executive Office Building. In it are housed the majority of the White House office staff and all the President's select committee headquarters. We also saw the room where the President's news conference had been broadcast from earlier in the day. Security in the EOB is just as tight as the security at the White House.

We proceeded out to the rose garden and were joined by a group of students from all over the U. S. who were members of the Future Governors of America. The host for the reception was Vice President Mondale and Mrs. Rosalynn Carter also stopped to visit with us.

We were then escorted by Midge into the cabinet room where we joined six students from grammar schools throughout the nation. Each had conducted a survey through "My Weekly Reader" on how to better American Life and were there to meet the President who soon arrived.

The factors that really impressed me about this man were, of course, his smile but also his quietness and deep human interest and concern for everyone. He doesn't appear to be the average American political president but the people's president. As each of the students presented their ideas, President Carter listened intently, taking notes for each of the questions. He joked with each of us and after a 40 minute meeting he left for other appointments.

On Friday morning we were taken on a special tour of the central section of the White House — the formal stately rooms, the downstairs receiving rooms and the grand hallways of the Executive Mansion.

For Larry, Kevin and myself, our trip was one that will never be forgotten. It was a lifetime experience. It was American History coming alive before us.

In Judo Nicolini is No. 1

By JOHN DOSER

No. 1 in the U.S.A.!

That's Bishop Kearney High School graduate Mark Nicolini — at least in the amateur world of judo.

Nicolini, now a junior at St. John Fisher College, became the top heavyweight judo competitor in the nation earlier this month by winning the heavyweight title in the World Team Trials meet in San Francisco.

His next big judo competition is the World Cup championships in Spain in September.

"I can't wait to get there," he says. "I took two years of Spanish in high school and I forgot it all. I'm going to have to brush up on it."

The top five competitors in each weight class scrambled for the U.S. national title and the right to represent the Stars and Stripes at the world championships in Spain.

"I fought against four other gentlemen — all of whom were bigger than I am — all of whom were older than I am. They all had much more experience too," Nicolini explains.

For the record, the BK grad isn't exactly small. He stands 6-1, weighs 225 pounds, and is all muscle!

He lost a bout to San Jose State College's Shawn Gibbons, on a decision which was not favorable to either Nicolini or the fans in the audience, but he defeated Ed Rountree of New Jersey by a wide margin for the championship — the absolute highlight, so far, of his judo career.

Gibbons won the senior national heavyweight title at St. Louis last April and Nicolini finished third; but Nicolini didn't have the chance to meet Gibbons in St. Louis.

Two years ago Nicolini took fifth in the nationals and went on to the U.S. Olympic trials where he finished fourth.

It's his fervent hope that the World Cup competition will prepare him for the 1980 U.S. Olympic Team.

Nicolini is a student of the art under the expert direction of Dr. Sashio Ashida, a seventh degree Black Belt holder and professor of psychology at Brockport State.

Ashida accompanied Nicolini to San Francisco and served as his coach. He is also the director of the Brockport State Judo Club.

"He just came out to help me out and he did a helluva job," Nicolini says.

A second degree Black Belt holder himself, Nicolini says the highest degree most active judo competitors manage to achieve is fourth or fifth degree.

"We don't worry about rank too much, it just comes," he adds. "If you keep winning national championships, obviously the rank is going to go up."

Nicolini is optimistic that his ranking will jump to third after his national victory, but he isn't worrying about it.

In fact he says since Dr. Ashida is such a high-ranking judo official in the national organization, it's pretty much up to him. "He'll decide when I'm ready. There's a board and I have to go before it and take several tests — oral and technical — plus my achievements," he explains.

Nicolini pays his own way to most of the meets — but from here on in the tab is picked up by the national organization because he's now a member of the U.S. Team

By winning his weight class in San Francisco, he was also reimbursed for his air fare from Rochester

Nicolini runs six miles every day with Fisher wrestler and friend Bob Spinelli.

He also says training to stay at a national or international level (of competition) is unbelievable.

"I have to train every day, no matter what day it is — on the 4th of July I was out there running while everybody was at the family picnic.

"I get up at 7 o'clock every morning to run because I have to be at work by 9.

"I also have to hit the weights because I'm one of the smallest heavyweights in the United States, and I have to keep my weight and muscle up to match strength against the 300-pounders."

He says he also has to get out and practice on the mats at least four or five times each week.

Nicolini started out in judo more or less on his own when he was 10 years old; he never dreamed he would one day be the best heavyweight in the country.

There was no judo program at Kearney (there isn't at any Monroe County high school), so, Nicolini went unbeaten in wrestling in his senior year.

At Fisher last year he was 8-2 and he admits the Cardinals under Coach Roger Woodworth are making greater strides every season.

His only losses last year at Fisher were to seniors.

Losing or gaining weight never has been much of a problem for him because he's always been a heavyweight.

"But I've seen a lot of guys make themselves vomit and not eat for a month — I think it's kind of ridiculous — sometimes they take it to extremes and lose 30 to 40 pounds below their actual weight."

Nicolini's diet can be summed up in two words — macaroni and pasta.

He agrees his mom is a good cook.

"It's all homemade, whenever I want it," he says.

DeSales Officers

DeSales Student Council officers for the 1977-78 school year are: senior Debbie Murphy, president; junior Tom Ninestine, vice-president, senior Sally Walsh, treasurer and senior Sue Dendis, secretary.

Chris Lynch and Maria Koelbel, both seniors, will serve as co-editors of the yearbook