

# Catholic Schools: A Look at the Past, and Future

By Michael Walker

Frequently I ride the city bus to work. I enjoy these occasions as they permit time to read, chat with friends, or meet new and interesting people. On the bus route in late Spring of this year, I was able to observe the razing of the former Britton Road Junior High School in Greece and the subsequent construction of a "super" supermarket on the site. You may recall that the sale of the school property raised some controversy centered mostly around the nearby residents who did not want a supermarket for a neighbor. One does not have to go too far these days to see former schools boarded up and the "for sale" sign out. Many of these schools are not old and decrepit eyesores. The Britton Road School was only a few decades old. I heard the comments of many of my bus riding companions while the earthmovers were doing their job. "How sad," more than a few would say. One man stated that his children were very distressed to see the school go, that it was like destroying a part of their lives. He was somewhat surprised by their reaction since they had attended the school for only two years.



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that by the 1990's children would be learning mostly by computer at home, only occasionally going to neighborhood learning centers to interact with their peers. If so, I'll bet the mothers of those youngsters hope the computers will be of the silent type and not evoke a chorus of whistles and bells when Johnnie submits a correct answer. One would wonder if those children would remember their Ataris or Apples with the fondness I've held all these years for Sister Linus, my fifth grade teacher.

It seems we, as a nation, must be shocked into action regarding education; then later complacency sets in, and the cycle repeats itself every 20 years or so. You may remember that 1957 was declared the International Geophysical Year; and as part of our celebration and contribution, the United States was going to put into

orbit a six-inch diameter satellite. That was the year the Russians orbited Sputnik as our rockets kept blowing apart on their launching pads. I don't recall how big Sputnik was, but it wasn't long before the Russians had orbited something as large as an automobile. We were clearly behind, at least in space exploration. Educators at the time declared that education would never be the same! Colleges went through the turmoil of completely revamping their technical programs. I remember being caught up in some of that. Courses in a science program that were elective for seniors suddenly became required of sophomores. America took up the challenge. Our president in May of 1961 committed us to putting a man on the moon within the decade. No small feat! In July, 1969, I, and probably you, sat at the television set and watched history being made. "One giant step for mankind," Neil Armstrong proclaimed. Now, just 14 years after that proclamation and 26 years after Sputnik, our educational institutions are "drowning in a sea of mediocrity"? There must be a lesson here. Are we caught in the cycle? Is it so difficult to maintain the edge?

As I sit now in my backyard pondering these weighty thoughts, I hear the laughter of children and smell the aroma of hamburgers and hot dogs on backyard grills. The days are surely getting shorter. The summer fun classes that many children attended are over — swimming, horseback riding, and, yes, some computer classes. Soon pools will be covered and school buses will arrive to take my children to two different parochial schools. The tuition is steep, but the benefits, I think, are proportional.

There are more than 70 Catholic schools in the Rochester Diocese. Over the past year, none have closed or felt the wrecker's ball. In the past, a few have been closed, some consolidated, one destroyed by fire (that school is now being rebuilt). Our schools, of course, are much more than bricks and mortar. They are nurtured by teachers, principals, school staff, pastors, parish staff, children, alumni, custodians, clergy, parishioners, administrators, dioceses, friends, neighbors, communities, town, cities, states, the Federal Government and parents! Each of these groups of people probably has ideas pertaining to the ways our schools should change.

What will the future bring? No human being knows for sure. People make wild guesses, guesses to attract attention, and thoughtful guesses. My guess is that change is inevitable. "The most effective way to cope with change is to help create it" — this quote is courtesy of Salada Tea bags (one takes wisdom where one finds it). All of the above groups interact, more or less harmoniously, to form the properly educated citizens of our future. Yet the education of our children is clearly the parents' ultimate responsibility. Can we grasp the opportunities, or will we lose by default?

## Nazareth Students Elect New Leaders

Students at Nazareth Academy elected Shelly Clements president of the 1983-84 Student Council; Stephany Steinas, secretary; and Gail Allen, treasurer.

In addition they named class officers: Karen Kutsche, Joan Reid, Tammy Steff and Ann Stevenson, seniors; Lori Amato, Natalie Boland, Judy Sauter, and Liza Streb, juniors; Maureen Casselman, Diane Casey, Chrystal Russell and Lisa Zabelny, sophomores.

Student leaders are required to attend an all-day workshop in September and monthly leadership meetings during the year. These meetings are conducted by Sister Kathleen Clary and include the moderators of the Student Council and each of the four classes.

"It gives both students and moderators a chance to share ideas, but it also helps them to realize that they have the support of each other," Sister Kathleen said.

Student leaders plan activities, liturgies and assemblies, and are called on to represent the school at community functions. They also convene

### Population Up

Elmira — The student of Notre Dame High School is up this year by 5½ percent. This is due in part to a large group of students from Corning. To accommodate the influx the school has purchased a bus to transport the Corningites. Sister Mary Walter, principal, also noted that 150 ninth graders are enrolled.

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