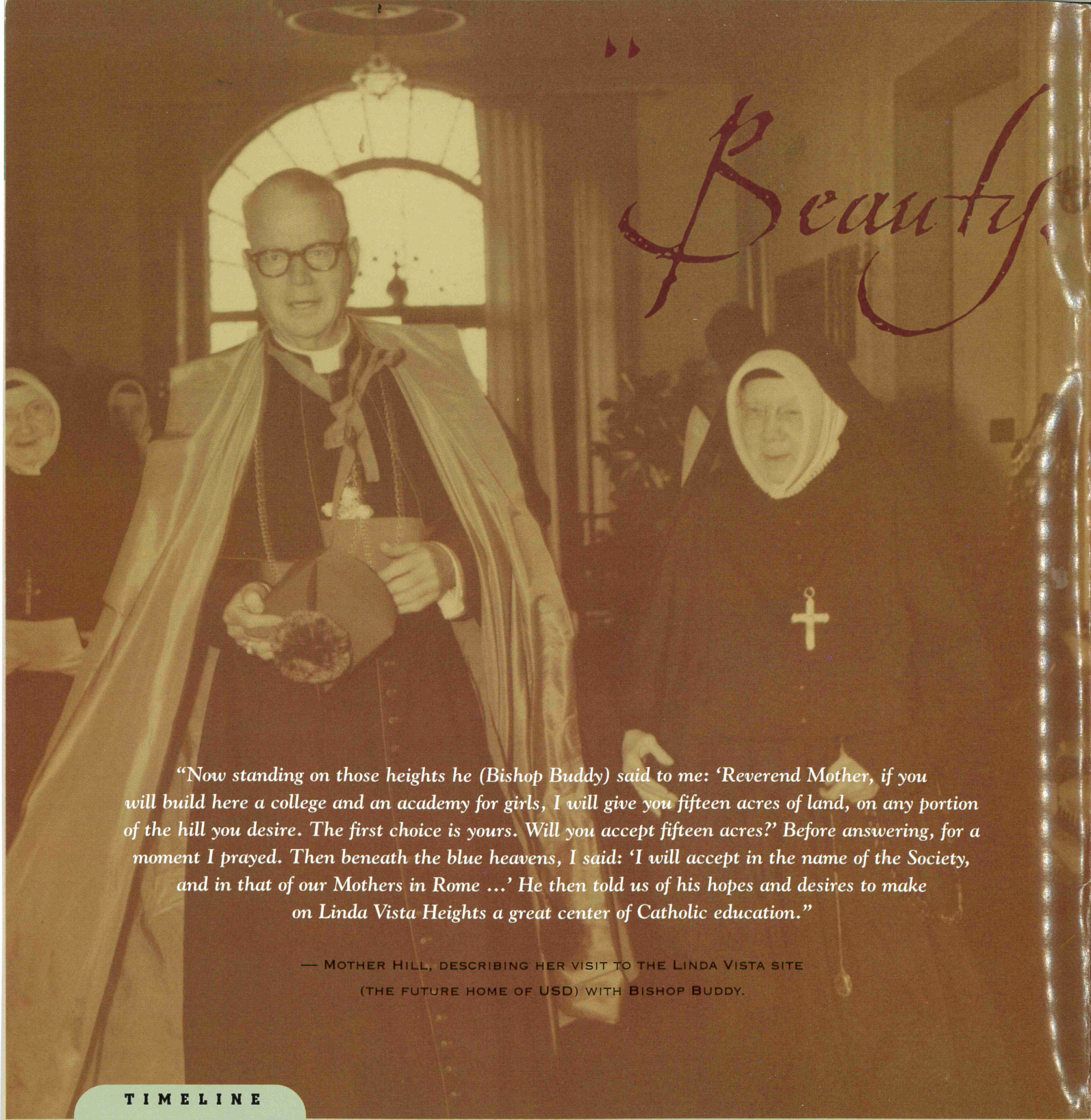


Beauty, Truth and Goodness

BY JILL WAGNER '91



“Now standing on those heights he (Bishop Buddy) said to me: ‘Reverend Mother, if you will build here a college and an academy for girls, I will give you fifteen acres of land, on any portion of the hill you desire. The first choice is yours. Will you accept fifteen acres?’ Before answering, for a moment I prayed. Then beneath the blue heavens, I said: ‘I will accept in the name of the Society, and in that of our Mothers in Rome ...’ He then told us of his hopes and desires to make on Linda Vista Heights a great center of Catholic education.”

— MOTHER HILL, DESCRIBING HER VISIT TO THE LINDA VISTA SITE (THE FUTURE HOME OF USD) WITH BISHOP BUDDY.

In a 1942 letter to his friend Mother Rosalie Hill, Bishop Charles Francis Buddy lamented about the newly formed San Diego diocese “where faith is weak and Catholic traditions sadly lacking.”

The bishop’s concern was that the area’s Catholic high schools graduated bright young men and women each year who had no local Catholic university to attend. Determined to open such an institution of higher learning for men, he asked Mother Hill to consider establishing a similar college for women.

Seven years later, after much prayer and more determination, construction began on a hilltop overlooking Mission Bay.

Mother Hill and the Society of the Sacred Heart won approval from Rome to build and run the San Diego College for Women. Dressed in full habits, their faces barely showing, religious of the Sacred Heart taught math, science, literature and foreign languages, and managed the administrative offices, all the while cooking up meals for the dining hall and caring for their charges as resident directors in the dorms.

The students under the care of the nuns called them “Mother” — and rightly so.

“The relationship the founder of the Society of the Sacred Heart wanted in our educational work was that of a mother,” says Sister Sally Furay, former professor of English and dean of the College for Women. “It meant to the students that they were cared about and that we loved them, which sometimes meant it had to be tough love. We demanded that they live up to their intellectual potential.”

On the same hilltop, to the east, a second school developed under the watchful eye of Bishop Buddy and the Diocese of San Diego. The College for Men, School of Law, Immaculate Heart Seminary and The Immaculata Church completed the bishop’s grand dream for a Catholic campus.

Although the two colleges maintained separate courses and facilities, students at both campuses enjoyed a similar spirit of quiet faith and academic excellence conveyed by the nuns and priests.

“The professors at the College for Men were the best I’ve ever had,” says John Bowman ’60. “You can’t top those people, because most of all they were human beings. They were always available to us. Many of the best lessons came from sitting around talking in the cafeteria.”

Bishop Buddy and Mother Hill clearly wanted the campuses to be Catholic in nature, yet USD has always been open to students of all backgrounds. For those not accustomed to Catholic schools, the nuns and priests lent an air of solemnity to the campus. But former students recall their college years as a whole lot of fun, too.

“The sisters weren’t totally out of it and they weren’t fussy,” recalls Sister Ann McGowan ’61, a teacher in Atherton, Calif. “We were so inspired by these women because of their spirit of generosity and spirit of prayer.”

That spirit was established early on by the mother superior.

“Mother Hill had one of the simplest, yet most profound philosophies of education I’ve ever heard,” says Sister Furay, who was named provost of USD when the two colleges merged in 1972. “She believed in three things: Beauty, truth and goodness.”

The words that co-founder Mother Rosalie Hill lived by are evident a half century later in the university she dreamed of, prayed for, and built with Bishop Charles Francis Buddy.

TIMELINE

1949

March 31 — Religious of the Sacred Heart approves plans, grants \$4 million to build College for Women.

April 14 — NATO treaty signed.



Dec. 16 — Bulldozers level ground.

1950

Jan. 31 — President Truman orders production of the H-bomb.

April — Bishop Buddy and Sister Hill consider bids for two buildings, chapel, theater and kitchen/dining room.

June 27 — Korean War begins.

Sept. 22 — First concrete poured for San Diego College for Women.

1951

May — Construction continues on Camino Hall.



June — Color TV introduced.

August — Founders Hall and Founders Chapel nearly complete.

1952

Feb. 6 — Elizabeth II becomes Queen of England.

Feb. 12 — First day of classes, 50 women enrolled.

Hemingway writes “Old Man and the Sea.”

Sept. 25 — First Mass in Founders Chapel celebrated.



Fall — Camino Theater opens with 900-plus seats.

1953

February — Associated Students founded.

May 29 — Hillary, Norgay claim Mt. Everest summit.

June — Therese Truitt Whitcomb first College for Women graduate.

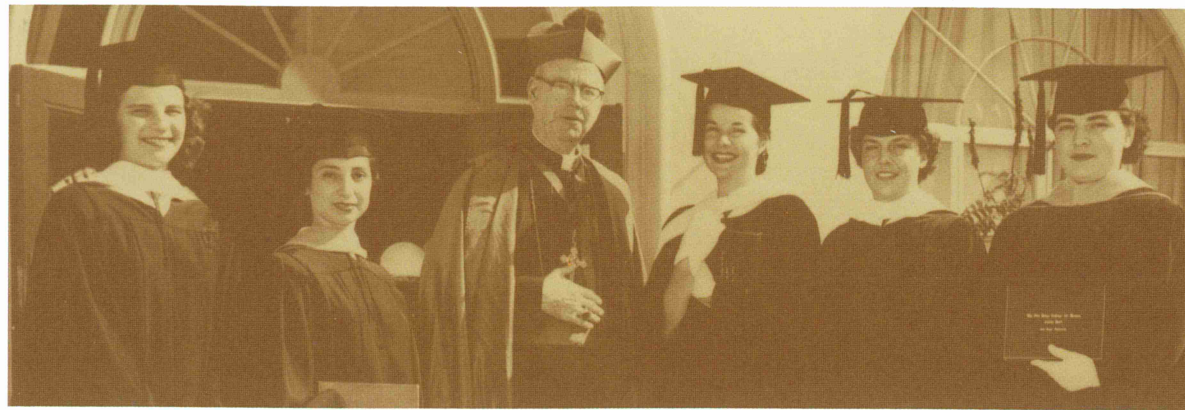
July 27 — Korean War ends.



1954

March 15 — College for Men opens in temporary quarters at University of San Diego High School with 39 students.

April 5 — School of Law classes begin with 60 students.



Bishop Buddy with College For Women graduates.

“For many years it has been my ardent hope to have both the Religious of the Sacred Heart and the Jesuit Fathers take an active part in building up Catholicity in this newly formed diocese where the faith is weak and Catholic traditions sadly lacking. ... The time seems opportune for the foundation of a San Diego College for Women conducted by the Religious of the Sacred Heart, who have more than the required (academic) degrees.”

— BISHOP CHARLES FRANCIS BUDDY, ISSUING AN INVITATION TO MOTHER ROSALIE HILL TO PARTICIPATE IN A CATHOLIC COLLEGE IN SAN DIEGO.

Mother Hill’s belief in beauty’s ability to stimulate learning inspired her to pay close attention to the development of the campus. She is legendary for following architect Frank L. Hope and construction crews around the buildings, inspecting and critiquing their work. From the drawing of blueprints to the final touches of paint, the mother superior made it her daily responsibility to be involved.

Sister Melita Attard, one of six nuns who lived in an Old Town convent with Mother Hill during the construction, remembers those days vividly.

“Mr. Hope used to come to the door with a big roll of blueprints under his arm and we’d say, ‘Oh my, another change!’ ”

With \$4 million in initial funding from the Society of the Sacred Heart, which celebrates its 200th anniversary next year, the College for Women received everything from furniture to library books needed to open for business. A \$1.5 million loan helped finish Camino and Founders halls.

The College for Men, meanwhile, shared a building with the School of Law until a fund-raising campaign run by an alliance of religious faiths raised \$4.5 million for Serra Hall. San Diego’s Catholic parishes raised \$2 million for Desales (now Maher) Hall, which housed the seminary.

The Society of the Sacred Heart and San Diego diocese further supported the colleges by assigning faculty and administrators to staff the departments. On average, 20 nuns and 20 priests taught in the College for Women, with another 20 priests in the men’s college and law school during the early years.

“A great university is not built in 50 years, maybe not in 100. Still there must be start. Here we have a start.”

— BISHOP BUDDY

“It has come — 1946 — the world has changed. The pendulum will swing further still, but keep a prayerful hopeful outlook. In a perhaps far-off future that pendulum will swing back. Men and women will themselves know, will have LEARNED, that education, real education, makes for finer relations between man and wife if the girl has been educated by women and the boy by men. There will be a solid basis for human relations and happiness with no regrets for the past.”

— MOTHER HILL, ON CO-EDUCATION OF THE SEXES.

Nearly 20 years after the charters were granted, Bishop Leo T. Maher and leaders in the Society of the Sacred Heart decided in 1968 that the two colleges needed to stand on their own financially.

“They made clear that the men’s and women’s college would have to operate on their own, without subsidies,” says President Emeritus Author E. Hughes.

University administrators acknowledged that a co-educational institution would better serve students, hiring Hughes in 1971 to manage the merger.

“My charge was to put the institution on a sound financial footing,” Hughes says. “We realized that meant raising tuition, going into the fund-raising business in a big way and increasing enrollment.”

For those who have watched the changes, the growth to more than 6,700 students on a nationally recognized campus has not changed the soul of the university. The Catholic tradition remains a defining characteristic of USD: An average of 25 nuns and priests work in various offices each year; each undergraduate is required to complete a theology course; university ministry retreats and daily liturgies in Founders Chapel are open to everyone; and many of the religious symbols and artwork brought to campus by Mother Hill still grace the buildings.

“The feeling and spirit we enjoyed at the College for Women is still there,” says Sister Furay. “The religious of the Sacred Heart have communicated that feeling to the merged institution.”

For Monsignor Dan Dillabough, vice president of mission and ministry, the university’s roots in Catholicism are best illustrated by the people who work on campus.

“It shows up in the way we treat people,” he says, “and in our respect for the human dignity of each individual.”



Sister Catherine McShane plants a tree with the class of 1962.

After a short conversation of courtesy, the bank president said: “Mother Hill, what amount do you propose to borrow from the Bank of America?”

“Two and a half million dollars.”

“How many Houses do you govern?” the bank president asked.

“Nine.”

“Would you sign a mortgage on one of them ... as bank security?”

She turned toward him, eyes wide open with astonishment. “No, I would not! Do you suppose for one instant I would impose this on any House committed to my care?”

Replied the president: “What security DO you propose giving the bank, Mother Hill?”

“MY WORD.”

The bank president paused.

“This is not a security customary for banks — but — very well, Mother Hill, we shall make out the papers.”

— MOTHER GENEVIEVE CLARKE, ON MOTHER HILL’S NEGOTIATING A LOAN TO COMPLETE THE SAN DIEGO COLLEGE FOR WOMEN.

April 22 — Televised McCarthy anti-Communist hearings begin.

June 1 — First College for Women graduation ceremony; nine degrees granted.



May 17 — Race segregation in schools declared unconstitutional.

1955

Spring — Football field completed.

Dec. 1 — Rosa Parks refuses to give up her bus seat to a white man.

1956

Spring — First year-book, the *Alcalá*, published by women.

June 1 — College for Men awards first degree to James Vernon Freed.



Sept. 25 — Transatlantic cable telephone service established.

Sept. 29 — Pioneers football team plays first game against Air Force Academy at Balboa Stadium; loses 46-0.

December — Fidel Castro lands in Cuba, overthrows regime.

1957

Feb. 5 — Immaculate Heart Seminary opens (later known as DeSales then Maher Hall).

Oct. 4 — USSR launches Sputnik; Space Age begins.

Dec. 7 — Law School (now Warren Hall) completed; serves as temporary home for USD College for Men.

1958

May — First law school graduating class awarded eight diplomas.



Fall — College for Women begins offering graduate degrees; overall enrollment passes 400.

“Dr. Zhivago” hit film.

Sept. 4 — National Guard blocks black students from entering school in Little Rock, Ark.

1959

May 4-5 — Dedication of The Immaculata, largest Catholic church building in San Diego Diocese.

Spring — First microchip invented.

