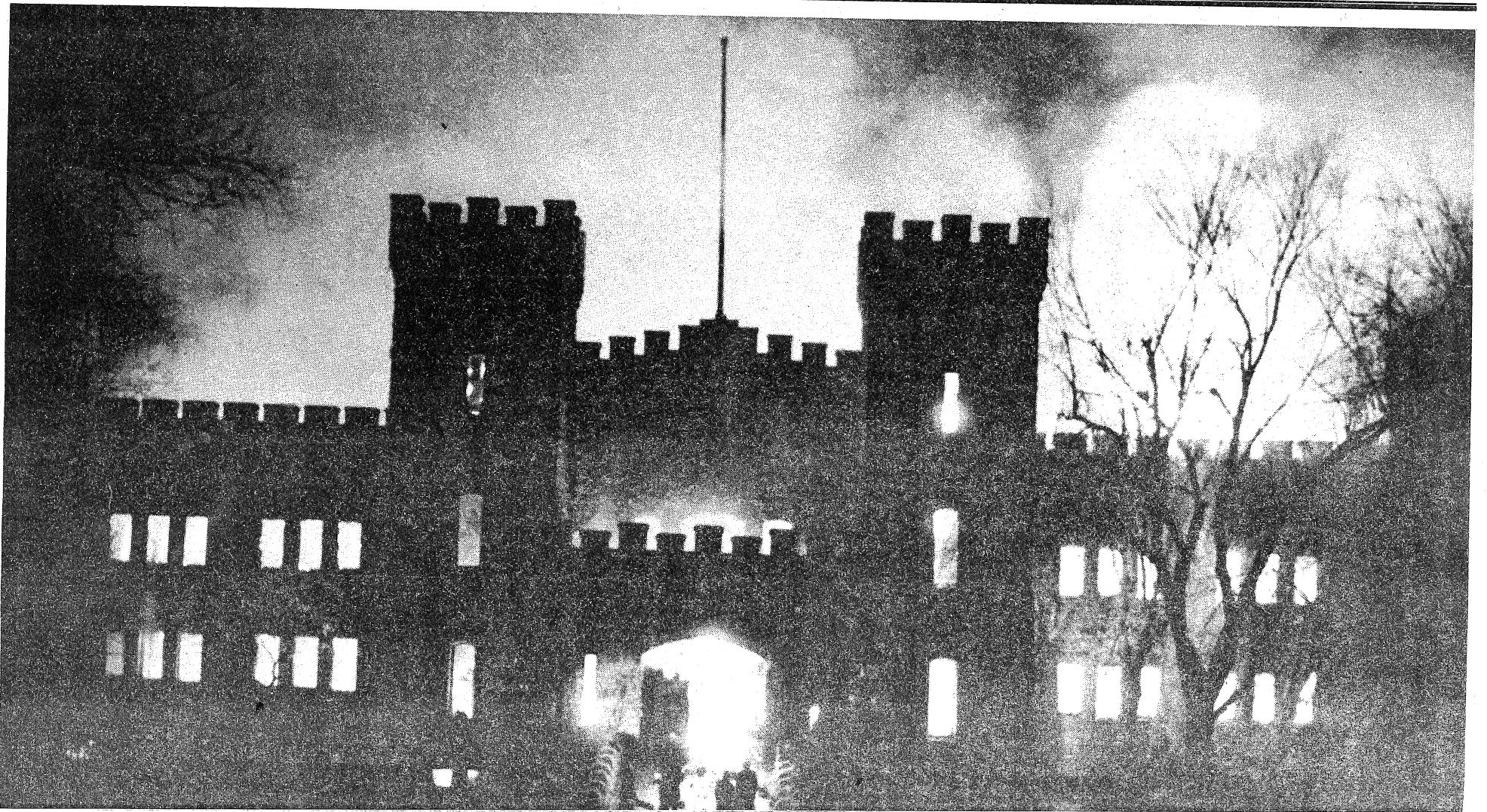


Focus on

Nichols

Kansas State Collegian, Wednesday, March 9, 1983 — Page 9



Fortress aflame...Nichols Gymnasium, commonly known as "the Castle," is silhouetted by light from flames which gutted the building.

Blaze still rages 14 years after fire guts the 'Castle'

Students chant, fire department loses battle because of inadequate campus water supply

By MICHELE SAUER
Collegian Reporter

"Burn, baby, burn" was the cry of "intoxicated students" who gathered around Nichols Gymnasium and watched it burn. That's what Manhattan Fire Chief Bill Smith remembers about the Nichols Gym fire of Dec. 13, 1968.

As the Manhattan Fire Department and the University Fire Department battled the fire, which gutted the fortress-like building, a large crowd gathered to watch.

"This was an era of campus unrest," Smith said. "Campus fires were fairly common and this was one of the examples of this unrest."

On the night of the Nichols fire, the Manhattan Fire Department received three calls about fires on campus. Smith, who was captain in the fire department in 1968 and fought the Nichols fire, said each call identified a different building. One caller said Nichols was on fire, another call said Anderson Hall was ablaze and the third caller said Waters Hall was burning.

"At the time, we were supplying the University with limited fire service," Smith said. "We would send one truck and five people." They decided to go by Nichols on Anderson Avenue and see if the calls were wise or not. If there was not a fire at Nichols, they planned to work their way across campus to the other buildings, he said.

"As soon as we got on Anderson (Avenue), it was evident that Nichols was involved," Smith said. "Upon arrival we were told there were people inside the building, but the first and second floors were burned so badly we could not get inside. Fortunately, there wasn't anyone inside."

Smith said it was apparent an accelerant, such as gasoline or kerosene, had been used. He said he believed the fire started near the

main doors on the north side of the building.

A major problem in fighting the fire was the water supply.

"The water facilities on campus were severely lacking," Smith said. "We hooked up a large-diameter hose which was capable of handling 250 gallons a minute, but the water mains only supplied 150 gallons a minute."

Water mains on campus have been upgraded since then, Smith said.

The University Fire Department hooked up to a hydrant on the east side of Nichols where there was a better water supply, Smith said. But this limited what the city fire department could do.

"Since we couldn't use this other hydrant, we were limited to outside measures only," Smith said. "Ordinarily we take measures inside a building to stop a fire. We ended up basically trying to keep sparks from starting other fires."

Burning debris was drifting off the top of Nichols and starting house fires across the street and as far as two blocks away, Smith recalled.

"We had two more trucks come down and stay across the street to fight house fires," he said. "We started out with five people and eventually a chief officer and two more

Crowd gathers on cold, windy night in 1968, watches Nichols Gym burn on Friday the 13th

By SUE SCHMITT
Staff Writer
and KECIA STOLFUS
Collegian Reporter

Recent controversy on campus centered on student dissatisfaction with the quality of teaching at the University.

The weather forecast came over the radio that December morning in 1968 — highs in the 20s and northerly winds were predicted. It was Friday the 13th, a bad day for the overly superstitious, and what started out as a normal day ended in tragedy.

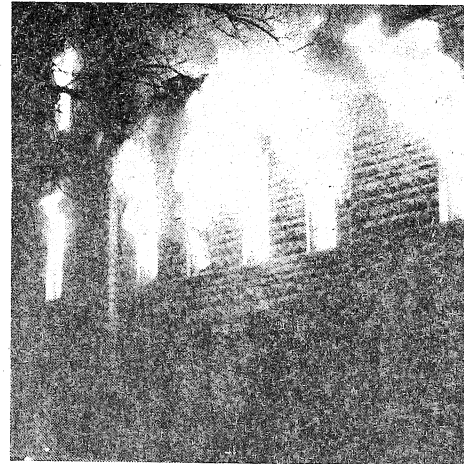
Lyndon Johnson was the President of the United States, Richard Nixon was about to take office. The front pages of the day's newspapers were filled with news of the Vietnam "conflict." Peace talks were in

progress, but it didn't seem peace would come soon. The North Vietnamese promised to allow delivery of Christmas cards and parcels to American soldiers.

Astronauts were preparing for a flight around the moon in Apollo 8 on Monday. They were planning to study the surface of the moon, and to gather information that would perhaps one day make it possible for a man to walk on the

moon.

There were only nine shopping days left until Christmas, merchants reminded shoppers. The semester was coming to an end. Students worried about papers and final exams.



University Photographic Services

Flames leap through windows.

(See FIRE, p. 16)

MUCH OF THE TALK on campus that day was about a meeting the night before. Students and faculty met at what was called a "free-for-all" to air their complaints. The students complained about the methods and quality of teaching, while teachers countered with arguments of student apathy in the classroom. The discussion got out of hand. One student said he wouldn't mind seeing Anderson Hall burn down.

That Thursday evening, President James McCain placed University watchmen and patrolmen on special alert. A few small fires were discovered around campus, including one outside Anderson.

K-State was host to the first half of the Sunflower Classic Tournament Friday night, and the second half was to be played in Lawrence the following night. Five players, including two starters, from K-State's basketball team were out of the lineup because of an influenza virus that had been plaguing the nation and the University.

There had even been rumors that school would close temporarily because of the illness. The Collegian reported that 300 women in Ford and Goodnow halls were confined because of the virus.

MANY WERE GOING to the game that night. Those who didn't go were probably planning to attend a movie or spend an evening at home in front of the TV. "Coogan's Bluff," starring Clint Eastwood, was showing at the Wareham Theater, "The Boston Strangler" with Tony Curtis and Henry Fonda was at the Campus, and the Sky Vue

(See MOOD, p. 16)

Fire destroys history, but not spirit of musicians

By DARCY MCPHERSON
Staff Writer
and KECIA STOLFUS
Collegian Reporter

"Eat-em-up, eat-em-up-KSU."

This familiar fight song, heard at every K-State football and basketball game, became a tradition because of the Nichols Gym fire.

According to Phil Hewett, band director when the fire occurred, the eat-em-up song was a way to get the band going after all its music and most of its instruments were destroyed by the fire.

"It was kind of a stupid idea, but we needed something to lift our spirits. Christmas was supposed to be a jolly time, but no one had anything to be jolly about," Hewett said.

Because of the fire, the entire band library was lost. There was no music for anything.

"There was no music for the fight song, 'Wildcat Victory,' for the marching band, pep band, concert band — for anyone," he said.

Many of the instruments were also destroyed, but because there was a Friday night basketball game, some of the instruments were saved.

"IT WAS A REAL BLESSING that some of the students took their instruments home with them after the game that night," he said.

The eat-em-up song was first played at the University of Kansas during a basketball game the Saturday after Nichols burned. The song was not on paper when first played, it was just an idea in Hewett's head, one he said he got from an old army bugle call.

"We didn't have and music to play from, but we had to play something. I guess it really caught on."

Hewett said the song was eventually written down on paper, along with "Wildcat Victory," and published.

"Before the fire, even the fight song had not been published. It was just written on a piece of paper and passed from one band member to another.

"When word got out about the fire we (the music department) got a lot of calls through various parts of the University, from high school bands and publishing companies who would loan us instruments and music until we could get funds to replace those destroyed," Hewett said.

The music department had to get its calls through other departments because its facilities were gone.

TOTAL LOSS FOR the band was about \$350,000, according to Hewett and Collegian clippings. But he said the loss of the music library and films of the band were the real tragedy.



many members of its faculty also lost their personal music collections.

Warren Walker, professor of music, returned to campus after the basketball game to watch Nichols burn.

Because only the gym area was burning when he got there, Walker and a fireman "tore up the stairs" to his studio on the east side in an attempt to save instruments and music.

Walker said he had his key in the door when the fireman's mask failed to work. So he accompanied the man back downstairs.

"I was really frustrated. I could have brought out my cello. That part of the building didn't burn for another hour and a half," Walker said.

Walker's cello was a 200-year-old Italian Tecchler, which would be valued today at \$150,000.

"Cellos are pieces of art," he said, and the loss of the Tecchler cello was "like burning up the Mona Lisa in the Louvre. Once they're gone, they're gone."

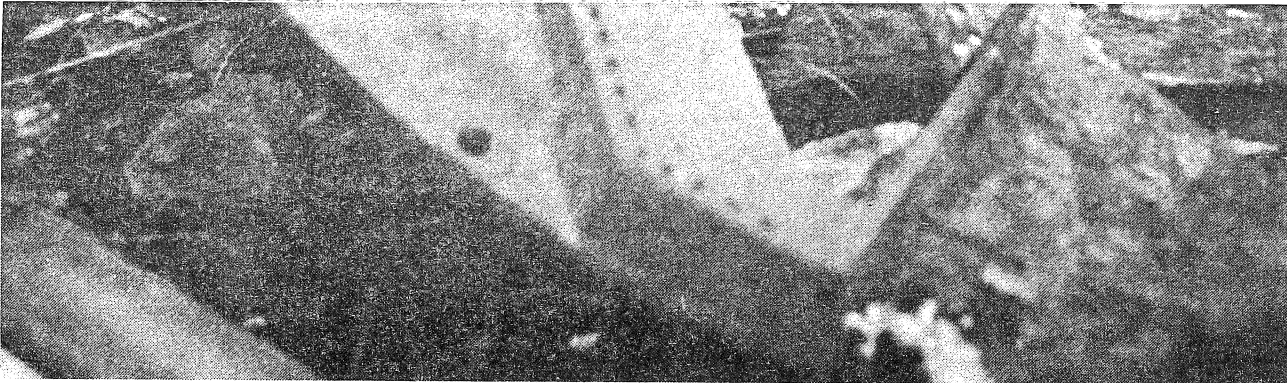
NOT ONLY WAS SHEET MUSIC lost in the fire, but musical ideas and directions were lost as well.

Walker said he considers the loss of sheet music, with marked directions from his previous instructors, to be a greater loss than even his cello.

Not everything can be remembered, he said, and the loss of the ideas that were written on the destroyed music hurts today's students most because they cannot learn these ideas beyond their instructor's memory.

According to Margaret Walker, assistant professor of music, another tragic loss was the life's work of Thomas Steunenberg, a musicologist and professor of music.

"As a musicologist, Steunenberg studied the history and



Staff/Scott Williams

Tuneless... The skeleton of a Steinway piano lays useless in the basement level of Nichols

scientific aspect of music. The loss of his works were a real tragedy," she said.

In the basement of Nichols, there are the skeletal remains of the Steinway pianos that were destroyed.

Several Grand and upright rehearsal pianos were lost in the fire, including an upright Steinway, according to Walker. These were replaced shortly after the beginning of the next semester.

"We kind of cleaned out the Steinway factory. They were very good about it; we didn't have to wait long at all for our pianos," she said.

WHILE THE BAND had little to play on or from, the choral department had little to sing about. It too suffered from the loss of music and instruments.

Gym. The piano was one of the music department's losses resulting from the fire.

The choir lost its choral library, practice pianos, robes and risers. It also lost the string instruments used for accompaniment in some of productions.

According to Rod Walker, associate professor of music, the vocal students practiced in what was then the International Student Center and now is part of the Manhattan Christian College.

"We were lucky to have some place to go," he said.

After the fire, parts of the music department could be found all over campus. The office was first located in Cardwell Hall, with studios and practice rooms in the trailers outside Calvin Hall. Some of the faculty had offices in East Stadium.

The department was relocated in McCain Auditorium in 1975.

Destruction fails to silence campus radio stations

By **DARCY McPHERSON**
Staff Writer
and **KECIA STOLFUS**
Collegian Reporter

Nothing.

When the fire that swept through Nichols Gymnasium Dec. 13, 1968, was finally put out, nothing was left of radio stations KSDB-FM and KSAC.

KSAC, the University's extension AM radio station, was located on the first and second floors, where it had been since its inception in 1924. Student-operated KSDB-FM was located on the third floor.

According to Jack Burke, manager of the

extension radio and TV department, the students and staff involved with the station at that time worked night and day to prepare new studios in order to broadcast on schedule Monday.

"We didn't have a fire sale, because we didn't have anything to sell," Burke said.

"We remodeled some motion picture studios in Calvin Hall during the weekend so we could broadcast on Monday," he said.

At that time KSAC was broadcasting from 12:30 to 5:15 p.m., Monday through Friday. Because of the hard work and long hours put in during the weekend, Burke said, no air time was lost.

Radio station KMAN offered KSDB-FM an unoccupied auditorium in its offices on North Fourth Street, Lowell Jack, general manager of KMAN/KMKF, said.

KMAN conducted a community campaign and raised money to build studios for KSDB-FM in the auditorium. Other Kansas broadcasters supplied equipment and the student station was back on the air within a month.

Destroyed in the fire was a new radio transmitter, valued at \$27,000, according to an article in the 1969 Royal Purple. Also lost, according to Collegian articles, was a history of the radio station and campus in more than 44 years of tapes.

According to Burke, some of the tapes were those of musical performances of the band, guests and tapes of Landon Lectures.

Ralph Titus, assistant manager of KSAC, lost videotapes of his last TV newscast and all of his radio work. Four original motion picture scripts, including "Bonnie and Clyde," on loan to him from the Writer's Guild West, a screenwriter's organization, also went up in smoke.

What films Titus salvaged from the charred remains he also lost.

(See RADIO, p. 11)

Funding

Appropriation for Nichols meets with optimism in Kansas Legislature

By LISA HOOKER
Government Editor

The bill which includes an appropriation for reconstruction of Nichols Gym is scheduled to be heard by the Kansas House of Representatives Ways and Means Committee "probably sometime next week," according to Rep. Bill Bunten, Topeka, chairman of the committee.

The bill is first subject to review by the Joint State Building Committee, and if passed in the Ways and Means Committee, will go to the full House. If passed there, the bill will go to the Senate, where it will be subject to the same review, according to Bunten.

"We will pay a great deal of attention to recommendations for K-State," Bunten said. "There are some other projects at K-State that people are interested in, too."

Optimism was also expressed by other legislators.

"I think the chances are probably pretty good," Sen. Gus Bogina, R-Lenexa and chairman of the building committee, said about recommendations for funding of Nichols. Bogina said the committee was scheduled to make an overview of the requests Tuesday night.

"I think we'll finally approve it," said Sen. Ross Doyen, R-Concordia and president of the Senate. "It should have been done 10 years ago. I intend to fund it one way or another."

DOYEN HAS BEEN an advocate of reconstruction of Nichols in the past when the issue has come before the Legislature.

"Nichols has been standing as a shell of a building for the past 10 years," Doyen was quoted as saying in the October 1978 issue of Dimensions. "Frankly, I'm tired of seeing a part of K-State history being ignored. The building is there — all we need to do is put it to practical use."

Local representatives in the Legislature

are fairly optimistic about the University receiving an appropriation for Nichols.

Rep. Joe Knopp, R-Manhattan, said he anticipates the Ways and Means Committee to support and "move the bill on through and get the project going." Knopp said the only thing he believes could change the distribution of appropriations would be a change in the University's priority system, but added he doesn't know of any plans for such a change.

SEN. MERRILL WERTS, R-Junction City, said if the committee does not recommend funding for Nichols, it won't be because it was left out of the budget.

Nichols' fate was very much up in the air until 1979, when a task force appointed by the Legislature determined that the gutted building should be reconstructed.

The task force was appointed as a result of the controversy and unrest surrounding President Duane Acker's decision to ask the Legislature for funds to raze Nichols.

"Finally the Legislature — at about this time of year — gave the president three choices, none of which was particularly good," Vince Cool, associate director of University Facilities, said.

THE CHOICES INCLUDED tearing down the structure and clearing the site, reconstructing the building, and an "interim alternative," which included cleaning up the site, stabilizing the structure and making a "seating, lounging-type area," according to Gene Cross, vice president of University Facilities.

Cross said Acker held "extensive meetings on campus" with large groups and talked with administration and alumni to "get a feeling" about the situation before making his decision.

Students and some others came forward and said 'We want to save it' after the University's recommendation to raze

Nichols was made and funds were requested.

"The students went to Topeka and protested on the steps of the state capitol," Cool said.

Werts was a member of the task force that made a recommendation about the fate of Nichols. Members also included Rep. Bob Arbutnot, R-Haddam; Bob Dahl, head of the Department of Architectural Engineering; Cross; and Greg Musil, student body president.

"**WE MET DURING** the summer of 1979 several times," Werts said. He said the committee recommended that the Legislature appropriate sufficient funds for reconstruction but no specific uses for the building were recommended.

"The initial funds we did not receive until fiscal year 1981," Cool said. These funds were for preliminary planning. The Legislature appropriated final planning funds for fiscal year 1983. The planning is complete, according to Cool.

"At this point we're waiting for construction funds," he said.

If the appropriation is made, Cool said, the University will be authorized to proceed, but the funds will not be available until July 1 of this year.

GOV. JOHN CARLIN recommended \$1.5 million for fiscal year 1984 and \$4.2 million for fiscal 1985. Cool said the University's original request was for \$3,739,760 for fiscal year 1984 and \$2 million for 1985. He said in any case the funds would come through a multi-year appropriation.

"This will probably be the only capital improvement item approved at K-State and maybe in the state from what we've heard," Cool said.

Plans for Nichols have come a long way since the building burned Dec. 13, 1968.

"It seemed very appropriate at the time

that the building be razed immediately," Cool said. "We had just had the experience of the old auditorium burning down two to three years before."

THE AUDITORIUM, which burned in 1965, was razed and Cool said "the initial reaction was to do the same thing (to Nichols) to protect the life and safety of those around the building."

Cool said students had just voted for a new natatorium, and preliminary plans were being made at the time of the fire. The administration was looking at the prospect of being without swimming facilities for two to two and a half years.

However, the old basketball floor was reinforced concrete-framed and analyses were made to make sure the concrete was not badly damaged. It was then decided to put a temporary roof over the swimming pool, clean up around the pool and add insulation, Cool said.

University officials went to the Legislature, Cool said, and outlined the loss of space for radio stations KSAC and KSDB-FM, women's physical education and the Department of Music. The Legislature agreed to appropriate funds to replace the space, Cool said.

At that point, the music department was moved to trailers borrowed from Washburn University at Topeka and placed south of Calvin Hall and west of Nichols until an addition was made to McCain Auditorium. A new program combined with the natatorium plans provided an addition for women's physical education, which called for a facility adjacent to the field house and gymnasium.

Cool said there was no strong pressure immediately to tear the walls down, and the University had no authorization to take such action.

By LUCINDA ELLISON
Staff Writer
and ANN SANDERSON
Collegian Reporter

Nostalgia and swimming may have saved its life.

These two factors, at different times, probably kept the University from tearing down Nichols Gymnasium after it was gutted by fire in 1968.

"If it hadn't been for the swimming pools, that building probably would have been torn down the day after the fire," said Vince Cool, associate director of facilities planning.

"There was no thought, no concern about renovation. That concern wasn't generated until several years later," he added.

By that time, nostalgia for the gymnasium — shown through student rallies — generated consideration for renovating the site.

After Nichols burned, the state appropriated \$1.5 million to replace the building. The appropriation did not include renovation plans.

Radio

(Continued from p. 10)

"What I had left was put out in a box (in Calvin Hall) and destroyed. Somebody picked it up and threw it out.

"For a year or two or three, I'd catch myself reaching in my desk for something before realizing it had been destroyed in the fire," he said. "We all lost things that were irreplaceable."

Titus expressed bitterness about the loss of Nichols, a building he said he was fond of because he had also done undergraduate studies there.

"It was obvious the University was not equipped to fight a fire," he said."

"I was in a state of shock for a couple of weeks," Titus said, and shock hung over the campus. Although there was a certain amount of outrage, he said a feeling of sadness and a sense of loss prevailed on campus.

To accommodate KSAC and KSDB radio stations, these funds were appropriated to the construction of additions to McCain Auditorium, Cool said.

Both the men's and women's swimming pools in Nichols remained in use until the Natatorium was built in 1975.

Approximately \$10,000 was taken from the University's maintenance and emergency funds to construct a temporary roof over the pools which were in the building's basement.

According to Orville Bigford, storekeeper for the Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, the swimming classes, scuba class and men's swimming team continued to use the facilities after the fire. The pools were saved from the fire by the concrete first floor from upstairs, he said.

Bigford said the two pools were divided by a wall and each side had locker rooms. The men's side also had bleachers for swim meets.

"That (the pools) was all they used over there," said Katherine Gire, retired storekeeper who operated the women's pool in Nichols. "It was kind of a spooky old place after the fire."

The pools weren't as big as the ones at the new Natatorium, Bigford said. The Natatorium pools are olympic size and, according to Bigford, weren't as nice as the pools at Nichols, which were lined with white octagonal-shaped tiles. The Natatorium's pools are concrete.



Staff/Scott Williams

Vacated... The swimming pool which remained in use after the fire is now without water and a victim of

vandals. This is one of two pools which remain in the Nichol's basement.

The Future

By DARCY McPHERSON
Staff Writer

An architect doesn't get many chances to redesign the interior of a building shell, said Crichton Singleton, one of the architects who designed the plans for the Nichols Gymnasium renovation.

According to Singleton, partner in Abend and Singleton Associates Inc. of Kansas City, much of the work his firm has done in the past has involved reconstruction of buildings that were either falling down or "in pretty bad shape."

Nichols is the first building he has ever redesigned that had its interior destroyed by fire.

Nichols did create some unique problems, he said.

"We're not starting with a flat piece of land and a bulldozer like usual, so we have a lot of analyzing to do. Like what's going to be kept and what's going to be torn down," he said.

The first major concern was the stability of Nichols' shell, Singleton said.

"Considering the weather elements and the lack of maintenance, the shell is surprisingly stable," he said.

The major reason the burned-out shell is in as good of shape as it is, he said, is the high quality of the original masonry.

The building's previous aesthetical qualities — and how they could be adapted into the new plans — were considered in making plans for the building, Singleton said.

RENOVATION PLANS call for the building's shell and arches on the south end of the basement to remain. Interior walls and the basement ceiling and floor will be removed.

Both swimming pools will be filled in and the sunken floor in the east end will be filled and leveled. The ramp on the north side will also be removed.

While no construction project is ever

structure without damaging the shell, he said.

Singleton suggested the beams be removed in sequence as new support beams go up.

"While bracing in this sequential fashion is my suggestion there are alternative ways of doing it, like bracing the building from the outside with scaffolding," he explained.

ANOTHER PROBLEM WILL be removing the debris inside Nichols and getting equipment inside the building for reconstruction.

"We see a way of driving in the front door on a ramp, removing the debris and then constructing the pier (lateral) foundation. But again, this will be up to the construction company," he said.

Singleton said the company will actually be constructing a building inside the shell and then joining the two with a steel frame which will "reach out and hold on to the outside walls." One reason for this type of construction is the uncertainty about the shell holding the new floor loads.

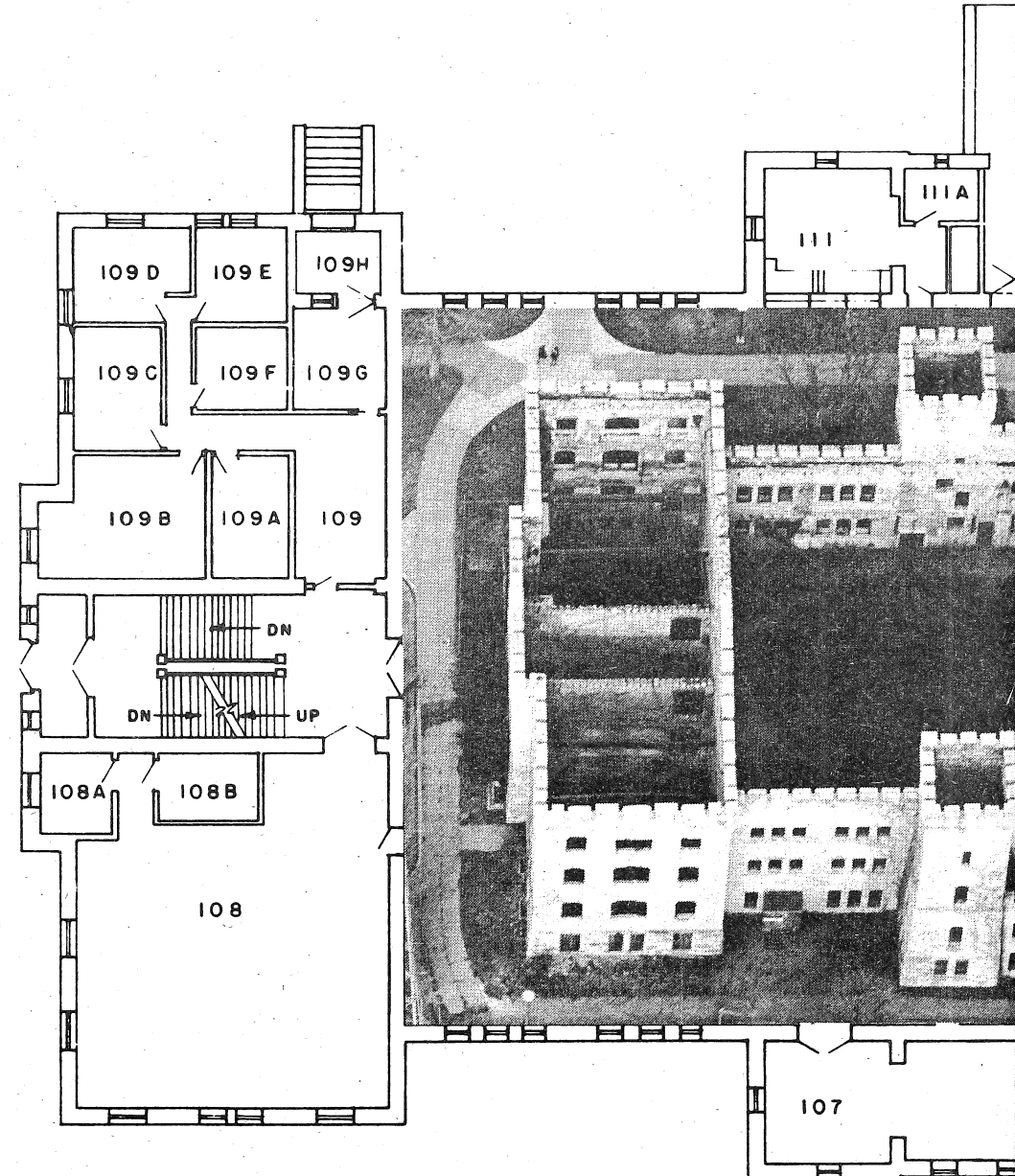
According to the Program for the Reconstruction of Nichols Gymnasium, the original interior of Nichols was a light-weight wood structure. The new structure must be fireproof light-weight steel or concrete to meet building codes.

"I'm not sure what would happen if they put the (new floor) weight on the old walls," Singleton said.

THE BUILDING WILL BE extremely energy efficient because of the shell's thick stone walls, added insulation and energy-saving windows, he said.

On the outside, Nichols will remain the same except for the removed ramp on the north side. The front entrance must be changed to make the building accessible to the handicapped, Singleton said.

"The ramp will look slightly different



Renovation of Nichols

By MICHELE SAUER
Collegian Reporter

The speech and computer science departments

Departments anti

One of the first obstacles will be removing the steel beams twisted by the fire and those added later to support the

(See ARCHITECT, p. 16)

The History

"The Castle" was a central building on campus before it burned that December night. Known for its architectural characteristics, the building was home to the Wildcat basketball and swimming teams before Ahearn Field House and the Natatorium were built.

The music department and University radio stations were also located there.

Construction of the building began in 1909 when Ernest R. Nichols, president of Kansas State College from 1899 to 1909 and head of the Department of Physics from 1890 to 1900, appropriated \$25,197 for the building.

According to the book, "History of Kansas State College of Agriculture and Applied Science," by Julius Terrass Willard, former K-State historian, additional appropriations were required in 1910 and again in 1911 for completion of the building.

Nichols was a man who liked to remain in the background. He didn't want to be president of the college but accepted the post on the condition that he would return to the physics department when a successor was found.

The first president of Kansas State Agricultural College to close a fiscal year without a deficit, he never permitted a deficit on the books when the college was rapidly growing.

The college grew from 600 students when he took office to more than 2,000 when he stepped down.

Nichols received vocal opposition when he decided to build the gymnasium instead of a new livestock pavillion.

The gymnasium housed the physical education and military science departments, according to the book, "Kansas State University: A Walk Through Campus," by Emil C. Fischer.

Before Nichols was built, K-State had organized instruction for physical educa-

tion for women only, but with the construction of Nichols a men's physical education curriculum was added, Fischer wrote.

The "Castle" was used for registration in its early days and "husky athletic lettermen" waited nearby "to paddle first-year boys who hadn't purchased their freshmen beanie caps," according to the book, "Kansas State University: A Quest for Identity," by James C. Carey.

In February 1914, the senior class voted 143 to 102 in favor of holding a dance in Nichols, but the Board of Administration (a forerunner of the Board of Regents) overturned the decision, according to Carey's book.

Inadequate seating for basketball games is nothing new at K-State.

When Nichols was used for men's basketball games, a heavy demand for tickets caused tickets to be sold in two groups, with each group allowed to attend alternating games.

Dev Nelson, extension sports director and long-time sports announcer, said Nichols held around 2,800 fans who often sat on and hung from the gym's rafters for a better seat.

"In '49 and '50, when we were really getting salty, they (fans) would hang from anywhere," he said.

Lines to get into a basketball game stretched past Seaton Hall, he said.

Nelson said when the University was seeking funding in the late 1940s to build a new fieldhouse, a group of 15 to 20 legislators attended a game one night. That night a dummy was dropped from the rafters and a catsup packet broke open on impact.

The packed arena went "suddenly stone silent," he said. A student picked up the dummy and revealed a sign, stating, "We need a new fieldhouse."

mined the library would move into Nichols.

"Committees from speech, computer science and the library worked with the architects in the preliminary planning," William Stamey, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, said. "The plans were drawn up based on information from these three groups."

Stamey said the next step is for the Legislature to appropriate money to start construction.

"If they appropriate as much as the Board of Regents has asked for, construction could feasibly begin July 1 of this year," Stamey said.

If less money is appropriated, the construction will begin later in the year.

"I think it will be an interesting project," Stamey said, adding he is starting a one-person campaign to stop calling the building Nichols Gym.

"I think we should call it Nichols Hall or something like that because it won't be a gym anymore," Stamey said.

THE MOVE TO NICHOLS is a way to survive until the library has on-site construction, Brice Hobrock, dean of libraries, said.

Because of overcrowding, Farrell Library acquired storage space in the basement of Dickens Hall last year to house 15,000 volumes. This year the library is experiencing even more overcrowding, Hobrock said.

"There is much evidence of overcrowding," he said. "We are very crowded in terms of equip-

area the library acquired. The area is located when a person requests materials, a worker must pick them up, Hobrock said. "This was intended to be temporary," he said. "These items, which are lesser-used government documents, will go to Nichols."

A COMPACT STORAGE area in the basement of Farrell houses 40,000 volumes. The site has problems because it is hard to find and the area isn't very accessible, Hobrock said.

Adding to the crowded facility is its rapid growth. Farrell acquires approximately 100,000 volumes a year, Hobrock said.

"We have 10,000 square feet allocated to Nichols," he noted. "Much of this area is for extraordinarily high shelving for books."

Hobrock said the biggest problem was identifying what materials to move to Nichols, adding that he wants to move items people need often.

"Off-site storage is not the No. 1 priority. Anytime you start splitting up a collection, it's difficult to know what to send."

HOBROCK SAID HE HOPES the new automated check-out system, which will be in operation in six to nine months, will help library staff determine what materials to move to Nichols. The computerized system will track records of the frequency of checkouts, he said, and will help determine which volumes are not in strong demand.

We have the technology. We can make it bigger, better and able to accommodate more. The \$6.2 million project.

The project, if approved by the Kansas Legislature, calls for the renovation of Nichols Gymnasium, now only a skeletal reminder of the 1968 fire that destroyed the original structure.

Included in the University's 1983-84 budget proposal, Gov. John Carlin has recommended \$1.5 million for the project, according to V. Cool, associate director of facilities planning.

Funding, if approved, will be allocated over a two-year period. An appropriations bill has been submitted for debate in the House of Representatives.

"Usually those appropriations bills are for final action. I wouldn't be a bit surprised

The Cost: \$6.2 million

The Collegian

By ANDY OSTMEYER
Staff Writer

It was a hot story.

Nichols Gymnasium was burning late Friday night, Dec. 13, 1968, and word was spreading almost as fast as the fire itself. Gathering in the light of the blazing structure, the Collegian staff decided to put out an extra edition for the next day.

Jim Morris, associate professor of journalism and mass communications, was director of Student Publications, Inc. at the time and his permission was needed before the group could start. He granted it but said he had nothing to do with producing the extra.

Most of the organizing was done by the editor, Liz Connor, Morris said.

According to Ernie Murphy, a Collegian staff member and now with the San Jose (Calif.)

Mercury, Connor grabbed the staff and said, "We're going to try to put out a newspaper. Get your act together and get to Kedzie Hall."

MURPHY SAID little news was known at the time and the four-page extra consisted mostly of pictures. Most of the staff wasn't called in, but either went by Nichols or learned about the fire through word of mouth.

"I think there were quite a few people who just sort of wandered in and went to work," Laura Scott, now with the Kansas City Times, said. Scott served as editorial page editor for the Collegian but did not play a key role in the extra.

Some Collegian editors were at a party, known as a "Kedzie Kaper," that night when they learned of the fire, and went to the scene.

According to Kerwin Plevka, a Collegian photographer in 1968 and now with the Independence (Mo.) Examiner, it was a team effort among the photographers to get pictures working

recall shooting," he said, adding he was the first photographer on the scene and didn't think the fire would amount to much when he first saw it.

"The fire was pretty localized at first and it looked like it wouldn't amount to much," Plevka said. But then it started to spread and explode.

"The thing was rigged — it spread pretty fast," Plevka recalled. "It went up like a tinderbox."

Jim Parrish, assistant news editor of the Collegian at the time, said it wasn't much trouble to put out the extra.

"WE HAD no trouble getting people to rise to the occasion," he said. "It was just a matter of a special edition."

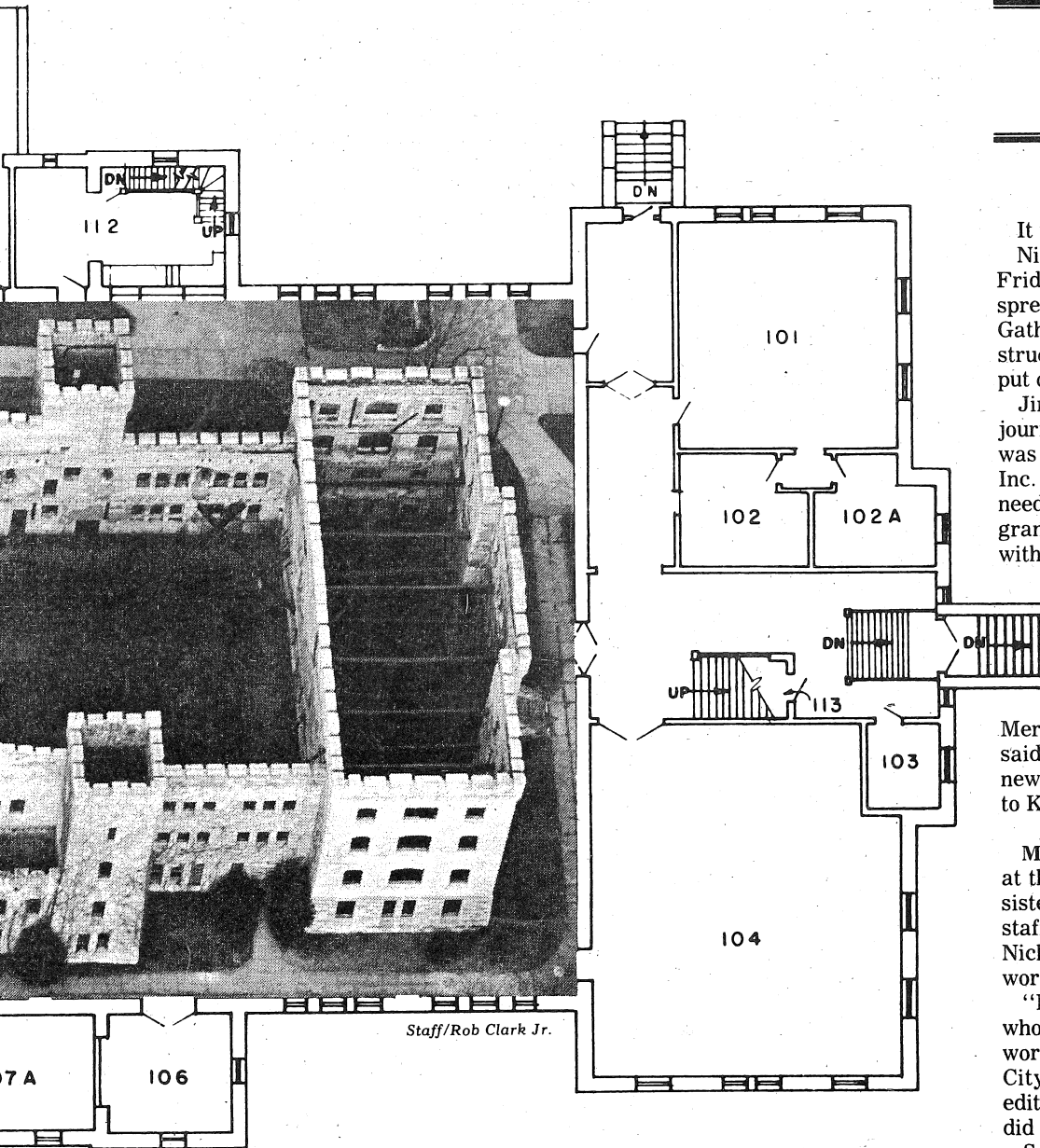
The lead story for the paper was written by Tom Palmer, now with the Boston Globe, who said he spent most of the night at the scene of the fire.

One of the most vivid memories Palmer has of the night is sitting in the editor's office with wet pants, shoes and socks, typing away at his story.

"Word went out about the fire very, very fast that night," he said. "I don't think we had to call anybody. There were plenty of people, given the limited production that we had."

According to Palmer, the longest part of the night was waiting for the extra to come out after it had gone to press. The pages were pasted up early Saturday morning and the extra rolled off the press about 11 a.m.

THE PAPER consisted of two major articles: Palmer's story headlined "Midnight Flames Engulf Nichols," which described the fire, and an interview with officials on campus about the blaze, headlined "KBI Seeks Blaze Origin." The story contained interviews with State Fire Marshal Authur Ramey and James McCain, president of K-State at



ols awaits approval

ate new location

Although extra space has been acquired a little at a time. Wallentine said it is not contiguous

any staff aides in Nichols.

"Because of budgetary limitations, we'll probably use a paging system," Hobrock said. When someone submits a request for materials, a student worker will go to Nichols and retrieve them within the hour, he said.

"We hope this will not be permanent," Hobrock said, explaining that an off-site collection can be "troublesome in the long run."

A STACK FACILITY attached to the existing library has been discussed before, but Hobrock said it is not a high priority on the University's capital improvement list. Several alternatives have been proposed, such as an underground addition to the north side of the library, construction on the site of the Art Building or a third-floor addition to Denison Hall.

"We don't have a timetable," Hobrock said. "We are just beginning to do the planning now."

The Department of Computer Science also is in need of space in Nichols because of overcrowding and recruitment problems, according to Virgil Wallentine, department head.

"A real problem for our department is recruiting faculty," Wallentine said. "For every new Ph.D. in computer science, there are 25 job opportunities. We need good facilities and good computer resources, because they are in very, very high demand."

THE COMPUTER SCIENCE department is short on space, mainly office space and lab space, Wallentine pointed out. The department has three times as many majors now as in 1979.

"We are an experimental science," Wallentine said. "It is very difficult to get the proper wiring in this building."

The area in Nichols allocated to the computer science department will probably be used for faculty offices and a few classrooms, he said.

"The remote computing lab will probably stay in Fairchild, although I'd love to have it in Nichols if we could," Wallentine said. "Lower-division courses will probably still be taught outside Fairchild."

THE DEPARTMENT OF SPEECH has safety considerations concerning Nichols, in addition to overcrowding.

"Heaven knows we need a facility," said Norma Bunton, head of the speech department. "We need that small theater. We don't have a theater besides Purple Masque. We use McCain, but it's not our facility."

Bunton said she's worried about safety in East Stadium, especially water leakage and fire escapes.

"In Room 108 last week, for instance, water was collecting above the ceiling tiles, about to overflow," Bunton said. The tiles had to be removed and replaced. The room doesn't have an outside door or window, either, which may be dangerous in the event of a fire.

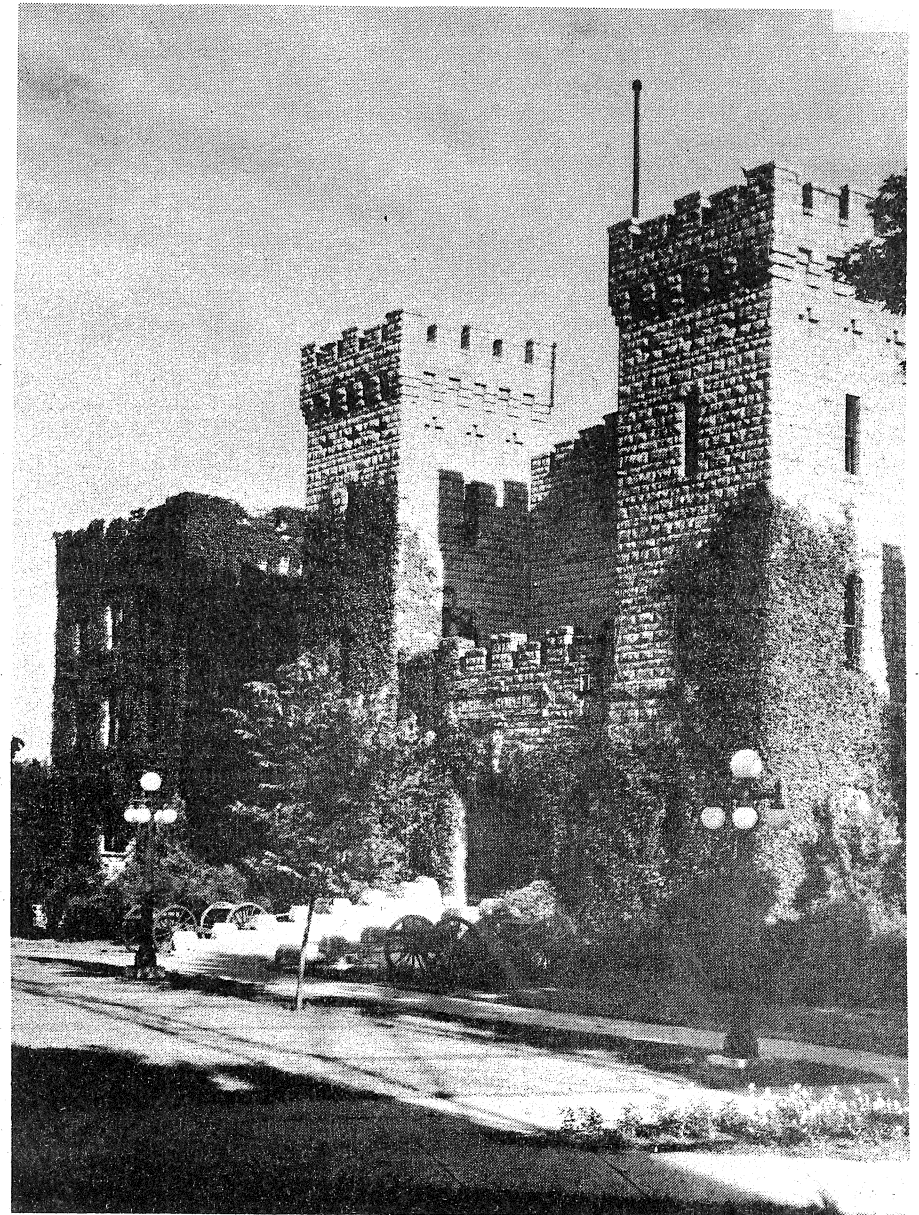
"All of the office space above the Purple Masque is potentially dangerous," Bunton said. "If there were a fire, people would have to jump out of the windows. With air conditioners in the windows, I don't know what they would do."

PLEVKA SAID he had shot pictures of that night's basketball game between K-State and Syracuse. He was developing the negatives when he heard about the fire.

"It was one of the more graphic fires I

professor saddened by the loss of important sheet music and instruments, and students volunteering to help.

"It went over real well," Morris said, "at a time when you rarely saw an extra."



University Photographic Services

An unburned Nichols... A picture shot in the 1930s reveals the building in its original state. Note the lampposts which have now been moved to Anderson Hall, and the cannons which flank the ramp leading into the gym.

nothing happens before the middle of next month," Cool said.

Once authorization has been received, the University will publish a notice stating bids from contractors will be accepted. A contract for construction will be given to the lowest bidder.

"We have to take bids and they have to come within the estimate," Cool said.

A breakdown of the estimated \$6.2 million includes construction plans and the cost of construction itself.

According to Cool, the cost of preliminary planning will be approximately \$120,000, which includes site surveys and soil investigation. Final plans for construction and renovation will cost approximately \$322,000.

Other costs will include the construction

itself, with an expenditure of approximately \$5 million. Expenses included in construction are fixed equipment, costing approximately \$265,000; movable equipment, totaling approximately \$200,000; and construction administration, with an expenditure of approximately \$45,000.

Other costs of construction, such as moving of departments, utilities and landscaping, will total approximately \$202,000.

On completion, the newly renovated building will house the departments of speech and computer science and will provide storage in the basement for Farrell Library.

Plans for the new structure include a small theater for the speech department, replacing the Purple Masque Theater, offices, classrooms and labs for the various departments.



University Photographic Services

Pointing a finger... Vice President for Student Affairs Chet Peters responds to student questions at the April 1979 protest.

Acker's 1979 decision to raze Nichols ignites rallies from students, faculty

By MELINDA BRZON
Collegian Reporter

"The early mourning crowd shuffled through the dew-wet grass in front of Anderson Hall Wednesday morning, slowly falling in behind a huge black and white banner as it was carried through the area."

This was the Collegian's description of Oct. 15, 1969, Moratorium Day. The banner the students carried read, "That the young may live — peace now."

In a time when other universities were making headlines for demonstrations against the Vietnam War, K-State remained silent. Moratorium Day was the University's chance to march for peace — silently.

Almost a year earlier, on Dec. 13, 1968, some of these marching students had remained still as Nichols Gymnasium burned.

K-State students in 1968 were described by the Kansas City Star as "naive" and "in need of enlightenment" for their lack of "physical protest" during the Vietnam War.

ALTHOUGH THE unsettled spirit of the 1960s was never quite as apparent in K-State students as in other students of that time, it seemed that a bit of the 60s came alive on campus in the spring of 1979 to jolt some students into rallying against President Duane Acker's decision then to destroy what remained of Nichols.

At 1:30 p.m. April 4, 1979, students and faculty converged on Anderson Hall to protest Acker's recommendation to the Legislature to demolish Nichols.

"To raze the 68-year-old gym and erase the 10-year-old 'monument of indecision'" was Acker's recommendation to the state Legislature in 1979, as reported by the Collegian.

Cries of "We want Duane" by approximately 800 people could be heard that April day. Acker never showed. He wasn't in Anderson Hall. He was giving an address in Emporia.

A COPY OF the Office of Information's release of Acker's decision was read. Also read to the crowd was a letter to Acker from Greg Musil, student body president at the time.

Chet Peters, vice president for student affairs, spoke to the crowd that afternoon in Acker's absence.

"I thought it was a wholesome, genuine response by a good number of people who felt fairly strongly about the issue," Peters said.

"I like to see the interest when it's a real issue if there's something we can do to resolve it and if the students are searching for a resolution that seems reasonable. They were searching for a resolution. At least

those there didn't want that building torn down," he said.

The crowd dispersed only to return later in the afternoon. Acker returned. The Collegian said, "Acker met with the boos and catcalls of the crowd..."

ACKER ADDRESSED the crowd only to confirm that he would not retract his recommendation to raze Nichols.

Some of the students who took part in the 1979 protests are still at K-State.



University Photographic Services

Signed statements... Concerned about President Duane Acker's plans for Nichols Gymnasium, students aired their views at a protest April 4, 1979.

"It was a pseudo-mob scene," according to Bill Arck, director of Edwards Hall. However, Arck, who was in the Graduate School at the time of the protests, said the crowd wasn't violent.

"There were police on the steps who seemed anxious," Arck said, "but everyone else was just standing around."

A lot of people were there because there wasn't a cause at the time, Arck said, and Nichols gave them one. Arck said he thought the older faculty and architecture students seemed the most interested in saving Nichols.

On April 5, 1979, students took their case to the state Legislature.

ABOUT 120 K-State students and four student representatives "arrived at noon and gathered on the south steps of the capitol in Topeka," according to the Collegian. They read their official statement opposing the razing of Nichols.

Musil told Gov. John Carlin, "What we've been trying to get across is that the 1960s students were upset and they decided to burn it (the gym) down. The students of the 1970s would like to build it back up."

And Peters said of the campus and Topeka demonstrations:

"There was no demanding, no harsh dealing with it. They just said 'Hey, this is what we feel. We'd like to have you hear what we feel'."

A "Nickels for Nichols" campaign was launched in 1979. In this campaign, each student was encouraged to donate a few cents to save Nichols. The money was needed to match the \$2,500 the state provided to pay for the feasibility study of Nichols going on at the time.

APPROXIMATELY 18,000 students were enrolled at that time, but only \$79 was raised by May 1979 for the campaign. The money was later stolen from a file drawer in Musil's office.

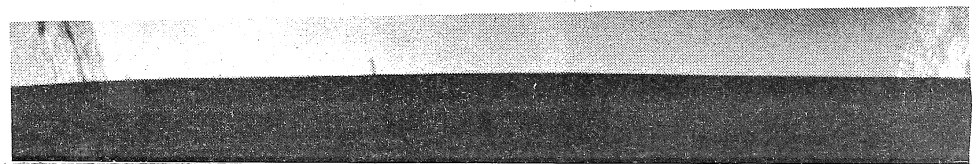
On May 10, 1979, a Collegian editorial by Debbie Rhein, editorial editor, said, "If students were really concerned about Nichols they would have contributed more

(See PROTEST, p. 16)



Names of athletes can still be read on lockers in the basement of Nichols, adjacent to the men's swimming pool.

A silent tour



from cheers of basketball fans and delicate strums on a harp to a solemn stillness broken only by the occasional flappings of birds.

To students who pass by the building daily, the "No Trespassing" signs attached to fences serve to deter entry, although a curious mind cannot be kept from exploring, if only in thoughts.



ABOVE: A diver's platform remains next to the swimming pool. **MIDDLE:** Wood remnants remain primarily in only one area of the building, next to the women's swimming pool.

Photos and story
by Scott Williams

Various items reveal hints of the past. Rusty gym lockers and radiators litter the basement level. Old-time woodwork still graces the frames of remaining doors, and bits of broken glass with patterns engrained hang above, next to bare light bulb filaments without shells.

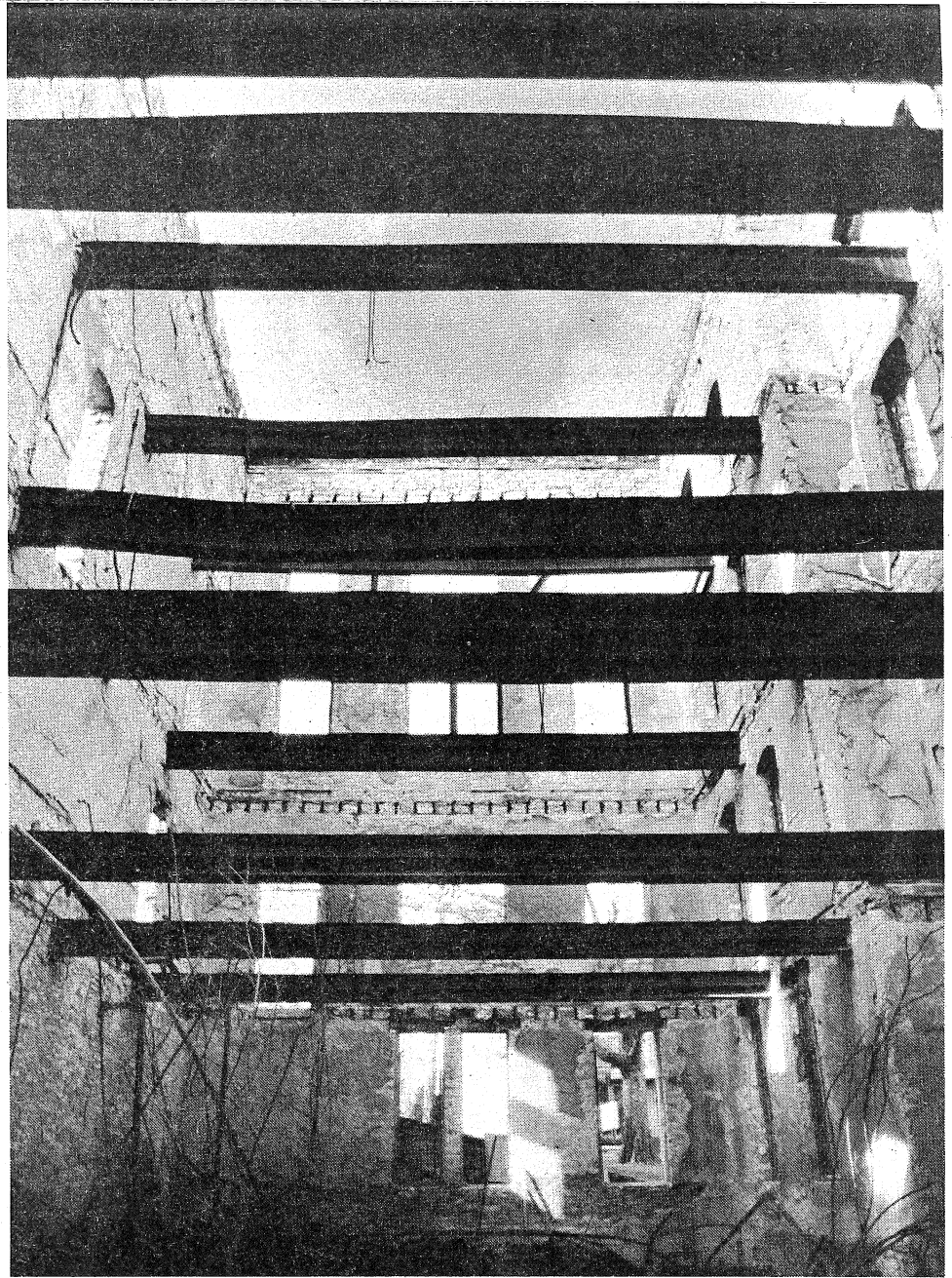
Pipes run along the stone walls, some sway and creak in the wind and provide service only as perches for weary birds.

The two swimming pools contain scattered pieces of trash covering the tiny tiles which line the pools' floors.

Showers remain without curtains or drips. The contents of file drawers have since vanished, but the cabinets remain, scattered and rusted.

The only wooden stairway still standing has six precarious-looking steps which cling to the structure. Only the dead air above leads to the second floor.

The years of seasonal changes have virtually erased the evidence of fire — the char has washed away. The observer sees only the shell, and with it a suggestion of destruction reminiscent of war.



Looking up from the basement of Nichols, steel beams stripe the sky. A point of interest to Nichols' construction lies in the fact that steel reinforcement was not in common use when the structure was built.

Fire

(Continued from p. 9)

units came. There was a total of 20 to 25 fire people being used."

No firemen were injured fighting the fire.

Manhattan does not investigate fires on University property, Smith said.

"Here in the city, we investigate every fire fully, no matter what the size. But we never investigate fires at the University," Smith said. "Since they are a state agency, they have the services of the state fire marshal's office available."

He said he had never seen the investigative file on the Nichols fire.

Officials of the state fire marshal's office worked with the Kansas Bureau of Investigation on an inquiry of the Nichols fire. According to George Rogge, state fire marshal, the investigative file on the Nichols fire has been destroyed.

"I didn't work on it (the investigation) and neither did anyone presently working

here," Rogge said. He has a card in his files indicating the fire had been investigated but the file had been destroyed.

"I have a sneaking hunch that after 10 years the file was destroyed. We don't throw them away anymore," Rogge said.

Rogge was appointed state fire marshal in 1972.

Lt. James Tubach, Security and Traffic investigator, participated in the investigation of the Nichols fire. Tubach was sheriff, with about two weeks left in his term, at the time of the fire.

"I don't have any of the actual investigation reports on the fire," Tubach said. "I don't know anyone who has a copy."

Tubach said the investigation, led by the state fire marshal's office and KBI, showed the fire was the result of arson.

"Samples from the fire are collected and tested in the lab to see whether an accelerator was used," Tubach said.

"Although the investigation determined it was arson, there was never enough evidence for an arrest or conviction."

It was hard to tell what type of an accelerant was used because the old gym floor had lots of oil or varnish on it, Tubach said. The fire began on the north side of the building near the doors, he noted.

Several people were questioned as part of the investigation, Tubach said.

"People who were at the scene of the fire, or who had been seen at previous fires, or who had been seen around the scene of the fire previously were questioned," Tubach said. "Professors were asked to identify disgruntled students who may have possibly been connected with the fire." He said mainly people from the University — not from the community — were questioned.

"The only conclusion the investigation reached was that the fire was the result of arson," Tubach said. "There were eventual-

ly some suspects, but there was never enough proof for a charge or conviction."

Most of the investigation was completed when Tubach left office in January 1969.

The University Fire Department has undergone several changes since the Nichols fire, according to Mike Bodelson, senior in architecture and business, who is crew captain.

"The students who worked at that time only worked at night and weren't trained," he said. "Now we go through four hours of fire school every week. We learn fire-fighting techniques and first aid."

He said the new water mains are a big improvement. Part of the reason the fire departments lost Nichols was the lack of sufficient water supply, he added.

Although the equipment is basically the same, Bodelson said it has been overhauled and upgraded and would be better able to fight a large fire.

Mood

(Continued from p. 9)

Drive-in was showing a horror movie marathon.

Those who opted to stay home had a full evening of TV viewing in front of them. They could choose from "Wild, Wild West," "Gomer Pyle," "High Chaparral," "Judd" or "Star Trek." After the news, "The Tonight Show" and the "Joey Bishop Show" were scheduled.

No matter what form of entertainment people chose, the real show was to begin at 11:15 that night.

As basketball fans filed out of Ahearn Field House after the game, someone saw smoke and the crowd was drawn to Nichols. Word of the fire spread quickly, and soon there were about 1,500 people witnessing the event.

"It was Friday the 13th," Ralph Titus,

assistant manager of campus extension radio KSAC, said.

"I was home sick in bed. I got a call about 10 or 10:30" from a student at the radio station saying there was a small fire in Nichols Gymnasium. But the student told Titus not to worry about it because "it's not very big."

Fifteen minutes later, Titus said, the student called back with an updated account. Titus walked from his home at Eighth and Bluemont and said, "I could feel the heat by the time I got halfway there."

IT WAS SPECULATED that the fire was the work of an arsonist. According to the 1969 Royal Purple, wooden tables "doused with a flammable liquid" had been stacked at one entrance to Nichols Gymnasium.

The Collegian's Dec. 14 extra reported the wind caused some concern as it blew burning cinders onto houses and even presented a chance for danger to bystanders.

"A cold north wind blowing hard in

Protest

(Continued from p. 14)

money. All those students — were they out there protesting because they hated to see Nichols razed or because they thought it might be fun to tell Mom they participated?"

A "Nichols Gym Picnic" took place in front of the gym in April. It featured live music and entertainment as well as a photo display.

As stated in a Collegian editorial, the picnic was an "outward display of concern on the part of those who have watched the Nichols Gym controversy drag out for too many years."

ANOTHER PERSON who took part in the protest is Michael Zorn, now a special student in business. He said he made an effort to go to it (the rally in front of Anderson). The campus "never did anything" and students seemed apathetic, he said.

Nichols raised student interest, Zorn said.

Architect

(Continued from p. 12)

have been working on the plans for about a year.

"I've done quite a bit of prowling around the building, taking measurements and looking at the foundation and the masonry. I've even spoken a couple of times on campus to special interest groups," Singleton

Abend and Singleton was chosen by a University negotiation committee that met with several firms before selecting the firm, said Vincent Cool, acting director of University Facilities Planning.

"They have been very good to work with and I think they came up with an imaginative design for building. We gave them

