Sacred Heart Academy Integrates Usable Past

How does it feel to be 158 years old? The answer is getting better every year.

In a day when discovering one's identity is becoming ever more important, the Academy of the Sacred Heart, Grand Coteau, which has been in continuous existence since 1861, is ever more in touch with its philosophical and historical roots. The search for identity is not a love for the past, but an attempt to integrate into contemporary education the values of a usable past.

The philosophy of the 158-year-old school is even more evident recently on the occasion of a reception for the 115-year-old school, one of whose sketches of Academy scenes have been made available through Evangeline Galleries.

The day of the reception was a regular day, so the hallways were quiet as girls struggled with the finer points of trigonometry, or the science, or began the review of British literature of Spanish vocabulary. In the auditorium a final rehearsal of the musical version of "The Hobbit" was in full swing, so that occasionally a costumed dwarf appeared in the hall to be greeted normally by other students and faculty as if dwarves were part of the landscape.

The "feel" of such a normal day is the sense of people who know and care for each other, who take school seriously but not without a sense of family and affectionate attention to the total situation of the individual student. The school's philosophy explicitly supports such a family atmosphere. Its liveliness appears confirmed by Eidenberger's comment as he toured the historic buildings and visited the student art exhibits: "If only I had had my visit before I did my etching, I would have put much more feeling into it."

That feeling is further exhibited by both regular and special activities. A regular occurrence is morning assembly, at which the student body gathers, announcements and recommendations are made, birthdays are noted, visitors are welcomed and introduced and schedules are clarified. But often information is secondary to being together and "feeling" family. Special occasions include visits from Religious of the Sacred Heart, faculty and students from Sacred Heart schools all over the world.

Earlier this spring, the student body had the opportunity to hear from Religious of the Sacred Heart from Zaire, Kenya, Poland, Korea, and New Zealand. Eidenberger noted his acquaintance with schools of the Sacred Heart in Prussia and in his native Vienna.

Sacred Heart schools in the United States have recently inaugurated an exchange program whereby a student can attend another Sacred Heart Academy in another part of the country. This is even possible on an international basis, if credits and courses can be transferred reasonably easily. Presently a sophomore from Grand Coteau is trying to decide whether she will go on exchange to Seattle, San Francisco, New York City, or Chicago.

That's education, with feeling.

ETCHING DONATED — Mrs. Carrell Trego presents Grand Coteau Academy Principal Sr. Lucie Nordman with an original etching of the school by Austrian artist Josef Eidenberger (center). Mr. and Mrs. Carrell Trego, owners of Evangeline Galleries, held a reception for Eidenberger Thursday while the artist was in Lafayette during his vacation in the U.S. He is one of a few artists in the world who do color etchings and his works are handled by the Tregos. (Staff Photo by Mike Breaux.)