



The new school graduated its first class of 30 students in May of 1955. By the next fall, enrollment had grown to over 500.

In its first forty years, Belmont has had only three presidents: R. Kelly White, 1952-59; Herbert C. Gabhart, 1959-1982; and William E. Troutt, 1982 to the present. Warren F Jones, president of Union University, served as acting president during Belmont's first year

In 1964, the first new buildings in 40 years were completed. They were Williams Library and Striplin Gymnasium. In the next 10 years, five more new buildings were added. Wright Hall, women's residence in 1967; Massey Auditorium in 1968; the Center for Business Administration in 1972; and Hitch Science Center and Humanities and Social Science Building, twin academic buildings in 1974.

One of the most memorable and disastrous events occurred on the night of December 30, 1972. Blanton Hall, which provided the campus with space for classrooms, faculty offices and gymnasium, burned. All night long, firefighters fought the blaze. Morning light told the sad story that the building was almost completely destroyed. Many professors lost all their personal papers and libraries. One professor lost all his research and work on his doctor's dissertation.

After the rubble was cleared away, a portion of the building which included the gymnasium and swimming pool was recovered and used for 10 more years.

With the construction of Massey Auditorium, the old auditorium in North Front was abandoned. Dorm rooms on the

upper floors were used for a few years until Wright Hall was completed.

In 1984, after standing empty for 16 years, North Front was reclaimed and complete renovation begun. Studies had recommended razing the building and starting over, but a further study proved that the foundation and walls were sound. The building was completely gutted and a basement level dug out. Digging out the solid stone with jackhammers was so tediously slow that the construction period lasted over 2 years.

In October 1986, the new administration building was dedicated and renamed Freeman Hall. With the completion of this building, Belmont College again had a "front door" to the city. The 17-ft. first floor ceiling height, reminiscent of the old auditorium, was maintained and an ornamental, spiral staircase added in the main lobby. The 14-ft. front doors were custom made to fit the openings.

With the restoration of North Front, history had come full circle. The first building erected on the original Belmont College campus—older than the Parthenon and Union Station—was an integral part of campus life again, 96 years later.

In only 40 years the college has grown from 136 students and 18 faculty to over 2,800 students and more than 200 faculty. The diverse student body hails from almost all the states in the U.S. and from 46 foreign countries. About 30% of the students are over the age of 25.

Belmont's athletic program is recognized with national rankings in the National Association of Intercollegiate Ath-