

WARD-BELMONT SCHOOL

Nashville 5, Tennessee

April 26, 1951

Dear Alumnae and Friends:

The response of alumnae and friends throughout the country to restore Ward-Belmont to its traditional basis has been heartwarming. Because of limited facilities we cannot send each of you a personal letter of appreciation for your generous pledge and co-operation but our gratitude is nevertheless sincere.

Many of you have requested information about the recent developments at Ward-Belmont. If there are any questions you wish to ask after reading this letter, please let us hear from you.

As you know, Ward-Belmont originally was privately owned by a group of stockholders and, as such, could not solicit aid from any educational foundation toward an endowment fund to which alumnae could contribute. To meet requirements of the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, a regional accrediting association of which Ward-Belmont for many years has been a member, and for tax reasons, Ward-Belmont was changed to a non-profit institution two years ago. At that time most of the stockholders changed their stocks to bonds, accepting a fraction on the dollar in debenture bonds. The same board of trustees which had represented proprietary interests agreed to serve until more suitable arrangements could be made.

Pressure by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools that Ward-Belmont secure permanent commitments or an endowment sufficient to bring in \$17,500 annually above and beyond all student tuition and the fact that the enrollment was lower this year than usual made the financial agents of the school skeptical about entering a period of deficit financing. Although attempts had been made to get help from educational foundations, the board felt that it was forced to secure immediate help from a group which would assume the school's indebtedness and continue Ward-Belmont.

At no time were the alumnae informed of these developments or given a chance to undertake a fund-raising drive. Instead, the board, fearing the school's standing would be jeopardized in the eyes of patrons if the accreditation problem were announced, approached Vanderbilt, Peabody and several church organizations. Their efforts were to no avail until they contacted the Tennessee Baptist Convention.

The Tennessee Baptist Convention assumed the bank indebtedness of \$275,000 as well as the bonded indebtedness which they now are seeking to liquidate for approximately \$150,000—or slightly more than one-fourth the face value—and the deficit for this school year. The former Ward-Belmont board of trustees understood that, in exchange, the new trustees would continue Ward-Belmont with only such modifications as would make it conform to the Baptist system of education. But not until later did it come out that these modifications called for the transfer of the College of Arts and Sciences of Cumberland University, Lebanon, Tennessee, to the Ward-Belmont campus. Also, it turned out later that the group planned to move their state offices to the campus.

At the time of the offer the Tennessee Baptist Convention was preparing to erect a big office building in Nashville to serve as state headquarters at a cost of about \$750,000. By acquiring Ward-Belmont's extensive properties, the Baptists obtained a site with buildings and furnishings valued at some \$4,000,000. It became apparent that the group had the right to rent the school properties for income purposes, even to the point of discontinuing the school if they so wished.

When these facts were known, a group of Nashville alumnae and businessmen set up an organization to raise \$1,000,000 in an effort to negotiate with the Tennessee Baptist Convention and to set up the nucleus of an endowment fund with which to operate the school. Each of you was sent a pledge card at that time.

A thorough study of the school's financial operations was made under the direction of a group of Nashville businessmen who shared our desire to see Ward-Belmont continue on its traditional basis. The study indicated that the school could be operated without a deficit. However, the Initial Gifts Committee waited until the study had been completed before soliciting businessmen. Many businessmen had expressed interest in our plans and had promised their support.

Several attempts were made on the part of the alumnae to negotiate with Dr. Charles W. Pope, executive secretary of the Tennessee Baptist Convention, and with members of his executive board. Shortly after the announcement of the school's transfer to the Tennessee Baptist Convention, the alumnae secretary and a representative of the Nashville Ward-Belmont Alumnae Association met with Dr. Pope to express the wish of the alumnae to retain Ward-Belmont as a girls' school with its traditions and academic standing. The following day the newspapers reported the new board's decision to

establish a co-educational college and move the College of Arts and Sciences of Cumberland University to the Ward-Belmont campus.

During the next week at a called meeting of the Nashville Ward-Belmont Alumnae Association a group of resolutions were adopted unanimously to be presented to the Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention. The resolutions stated that the alumnae should be given a chance to negotiate with the Tennessee Baptist Convention to restore Ward-Belmont to its traditional basis. A committee of alumnae delivered the resolutions to Dr. Pope and sent a copy to each member of the board. Also, many of the members were contacted personally. Dr. Pope did not call a meeting of the Executive Board but sent a letter to the alumnae chairman stating that, due to various commitments, the Tennessee Baptist Convention could not turn back.

Because a vote had not been taken by the Executive Board of the Tennessee Baptist Convention and because several prominent Baptist laymen were in sympathy with our plans, we felt that we stood a good chance of forcing a reopening of the issue.

Before a formal offer could be made, we learned that Dr. Pope had taken a ballot by mail with an overwhelming majority of board members opposed to considering the alumnae resolutions.

In spite of this news, favorable response from alumnae in Nashville and throughout the country encouraged us to make a formal offer to the Baptist group. A committee of alumnae with two lawyers met with Dr. Pope and offered the Tennessee Baptist Convention the amount of money they had spent in the transaction plus a generous compensation for their time and effort. The committee requested sixty days in which to collect the money. Again the committee was told the Executive Board would not reopen the issue.

Our lawyers advised us that there was nothing we could do to force the Tennessee Baptist Convention to sell to us. We are sorry to have to say that our efforts failed. But, at least, we did all that we knew to do to save Ward-Belmont for the alumnae.

Recently an announcement was made that a new girls' preparatory school will be opened in Nashville next fall. Mrs. Souby, principal of the Ward-Belmont Preparatory School, and many of the preparatory school faculty will be teaching at the new school. Of course, this will be a day school only but the same high standards will be maintained. If you are in Nashville, come to see the new school. You will find some familiar faces there and you certainly will be welcome. If in the future anything develops concerning Ward-Belmont which will be of interest to you, we will let you know. In the meantime, please come back for a visit this spring. A cordial welcome awaits you!

Cordially yours,

Patty Cradwell

President

Nashville Ward-Belmont
Alumnae Association

Donna Fournier Stephens

General Chairman

Mary Ann Moore

Alumnae Secretary