

A building's last words

by Yvonne Badu-Nimako

Library, 1937” it says on the southern side of the building. The ivy climbs up a section of the wall while scattered daffodils adorn the ground around the rest. Trees stand like pillars at the corners of the structure, staring into the aged windows of this building named after a former president of Andrews University (at the time, Emmanuel Missionary College), Frederick Griggs Hall. But the interior is not how it used to be. The walls have been stripped, the cabinets emptied, last few pieces of paper and books scattered across the floor. Outside, surrounding the building, are little orange flags stuck in the ground, and a metal fence encircles the land a little farther out. Construction is about to start here, and that means that Griggs Hall needs to go.

“Yes, it’s about that time for me,” said Griggs as I sat for one last time in his upper room. “It’s been a long and good 73 years for me, but room always needs to be made for the new.” I ended up wandering around the building, taking glimpses into the classrooms, looking at the browning maps of the Holy Land, the wood paneling in one and tile in another. It made me wonder how

anymore, they planned for the building of James White Library. When that opened in 1962, I became the hall for Religion & Biblical Languages as well as International Language Studies.”

The sunlight grew a little stronger as the breeze blew in the smell of the trees. “Oh, if I could tell you everything I have seen over the years! So many students that have come and gone, so many changes that have happened since I was built here. I have seen teachers give lessons with fervor. I have seen study groups for class and Bible study groups learning more from the Word. I have heard passionate theological discussions and have felt the presence of God Himself as students prayed for each other within my walls. I have seen buildings constructed and destroyed, plants growing and dying. I have seen the progression of this campus and the students that come each year. I have seen friends having fun on the grass, lovers sitting together on the benches. I’ve seen students struggle with schoolwork, with their situations, and I’ve seen students give over their lives to God, not only for the first time, but all over again.” The breeze stilled and

Sure, I am not in the same situation as Paul was in, but knowing that I was here for a purpose, God’s purpose, brings me peace.” I could almost feel Griggs’ smile again.

“Besides, I am rather old. This top floor I have was declared unsafe by the fire marshal. In fact, I don’t even know why you’re up here.” I chuckled a little as I looked out the window to Nethery. “I am passing the torch onto Brother Nethery. I’m glad that he is going to still be here, and he gets a little bit of a makeover too. And when the new hall is built..., Buller is the name, right? Anyway, when that is built, Nethery will surely take him under his wing.” He paused for a bit. “It’s funny; I do remember an Allan Buller from my earlier years. He was always sweet on that girl Mildred.”

I started to laugh as I packed up my things and stood from the floor. Looking around one last time, I caught sight of one of the blackboards covered in scribbles. As I looked a little closer, there was a message across the board that read, “You can kill the building, but you can’t kill the legend...” Smirking, yet thoughtful, I picked up my bag and went down the stairs to the bottom floor. “It is at least somewhat true,” he said to me. “Parts of my walls will be saved by alumni and others, and the memory will live on. So I won’t be completely gone.”

I smiled one last time as I reached the glass doors. “Goodbye, Griggs,” I said. “You did serve well.”

As I stepped out the doors, I thought I heard a slight chuckle. “Well, as well as I could,” he replied. “Goodbye.”



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this building, and this campus, was like in the past.

“When I was first built, I was a library, you know,” mused Griggs. I could almost hear him smile with the wind rustling through the windows. “I was filled with books and students, so eager to learn more. I was the first separate library for this school. Of course, as time passes, knowledge grows, and so does the amount of books. Also, the Seventh-day Adventist Seminary that was in Washington, D.C. moved here which brought more books, and more donations came in to buy even more books as well. When they realized I could not house the amount

the light dimmed. “I think I am going to miss being a part of the students’ lives the most.”

I looked out a window to the sides of the building. The stone benches were gone already. Construction workers leaned on the fence and discussed further plans. I climbed back up the stairs to the top level and sat cross-legged on the floor. I looked around and heaved a sigh. I couldn’t believe that in a matter of days, Griggs would be gone.

“Do not feel bad for me,” he said. “As I had said, my time has come. And even in this, I remember what the apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:7, ‘I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.’

What’s your story?

We’d love to hear your reflections on the time you spent at Andrews University. If you’re interested in contributing, please e-mail focus@andrews.edu.