



A WELCOMING SPACE

*THE ORIGIN OF CROSBY COURT:
AN EPISTOLARY GLIMPSE OF GENEROSITY AND REMEMBRANCE*

On the west side of Perkins Chapel facing Hillcrest Avenue, matching plaques designate a paved area with benches as “Crosby Court in memory of Stanley W. Crosby, Jr.” Like the ubiquitous plaques sprinkled on everything from bricks to benches, fountains to faculty offices, and stadiums to student lounges across the SMU campus, the plaques identifying Crosby Court are often overlooked. Dr. William Lawrence, dean of Perkins School of Theology, inquired about the origin of Crosby Court. Research unearthed a treasure – a series of letters exchanged in 1950-51 between Dr. Eugene B. Hawk, then dean of Perkins, and Stanley W. Crosby, Sr. that reveals the remarkable tale underlying Crosby Court.

The letters, tucked away in a financial office file, are carbon copies imprinted on the onion skin paper used before the era of photocopiers. The delicate pages chronicle a philanthropist’s endowment for students interested in ministry, his son’s heroic death during the Korean conflict, a dean’s empathy, and the ensuing dedication of a chapel courtyard.

Bishop William C. Martin initiates the letter exchange by written introduction of Hawk

and Crosby, Sr. Initially, the letters cordially discuss options related to a scholarship fund. Then Crosby shares with Hawk letters from soldiers serving with his son in Korea. The letters were written to his daughter-in-law and express great concern and confusion about Crosby, Jr.’s condition and whereabouts following a battle near Pongam-ni. After Hawk learns Crosby, Jr. was killed during an attempt to save other soldiers, he is so moved that he suggests naming the courtyard for Stanley Crosby, Jr.

The tale’s timelessness resonates with events today. Renovation of Kirby and Selecman Halls is complete – these very buildings were among those in the planning, construction, and dedication stages as Hawk writes in 1950. Today, a new building, Elizabeth Perkins Prothro Hall, has been dedicated – then, the theology quadrangle was a new addition to the SMU campus. Both eras are overshadowed by military conflict. The letters exchanged more than 50 years ago, excerpted in the following sequence, show some things don’t change – the need for equipped pastors, SMU’s ongoing growth, construction challenges, politics, war, self-sacrifice, grief, and generosity.

March 14, 1950

Dear Mr. Crosby:

... you expressed an interest in making an investment in some phase of religious and educational work that would continue to produce constructive results through all the years ahead. I proposed for your consideration the providing of ministerial scholarships for young men who will be preparing for the ministry in the Perkins School of Theology.

As you doubtless know, this School is in process of being relocated on the campus of Southern Methodist University in seven buildings which are now under construction—the chapel, the Library, the Administration building and four dormitories.

... I have conferred with Dr. Eugene B. Hawk, Dean of the School of Theology and Administrative Vice-President of Southern Methodist University, and he expressed genuine pleasure in knowing that you would be here and assures me that he will be pleased to give to you and Mrs. Crosby the opportunity of seeing what is in prospect at the Perkins School of Theology in the way of new buildings and an expanded program and of talking with you about the scholarship idea. ...

Cordially yours,
William C. Martin

March 15, 1950

Dear Mr. Crosby:

Bishop William C. Martin informs me that you and Mrs. Crosby are likely to be in Dallas April 6th and 7th, and he also says that you are considering an investment in the training of young men and women for Christian leadership, especially young men who are looking toward the ministry as a life work. ...

Sincerely,
Eugene B. Hawk, Dean

The letters do not indicate whether the Crosbys visited SMU in April. Crosby has offered assignment of a portion of the royalties from a potash mining venture in New Mexico as income to support a scholarship fund. In the next letter, Hawk thanks Crosby for a recent update on the status of the mining venture. He also maintains contact by commenting on the progress of construction in the theology quadrangle.

July 4, 1950

Dear Mr. Crosby,

Thank you very much for your letter relative to the location of the potash shaft and the encouraging word that payment of royalties may take place within two years. Of course we can

never tell how these things are going to turn out, but I certainly appreciate your wonderful spirit and your desire to have a part in the training of ministers for the church. I feel that you and Mrs. Crosby will have a great satisfaction in this work as the years pass.

Our building is delayed somewhat because of a strike but we hope things will be under way again by the last of this week. I am enclosing a picture which was taken some three or four weeks ago. I thought you would like to see it. The world situation is looking pretty bad and I certainly hope we will not be involved in another world war. It almost ruined this country economically and every other way the last time. ...

Cordially yours,
Eugene B. Hawk, Dean

July 14, 1950

Dear Mr. Crosby,

... We have had a strike on among the workmen here since July 1. It has delayed our building program. All the laborers are at work now except the lathers and plasters and we expect them back Monday or Tuesday. They struck for a 12½ cent raise per hour. I believe this gives painters \$26 per day and others run along pretty much in line. Building is an expensive matter at the time. However, there is no indication that it will get cheaper in the near future. ...

We have had to close our enrollment in the seminary for September. We now have 125% more than we had in 1946. ...

Cordially,
Eugene B. Hawk, Dean

In the midst of correspondence regarding the scholarship fund, the Crosby family receives news that Crosby, Jr. has been awarded the Silver Star for his courageous action in Korea.

First Lieutenant STANLEY W. CROSBY JR, 050845, Infantry. Company B, 5th Infantry, United States Army. On 11 August 1950 Lieutenant Crosby was leading his platoon as advance guard of the company in the vicinity of Pongam-ni, Korea. When the platoon attacked a strongly defended ridge and came under heavy machine gun and mortar fire, Lieutenant Crosby, though seriously wounded, remained in the advance position and covered the withdrawal of his men. As the platoon withdrew Lieutenant Crosby was observed charging a machine gun position in an attempt to neutralize it. The outstanding courage and devotion to duty displayed by

(continued on next page)

Lieutenant Crosby enabled the members of his platoon to reach safety and are in keeping with the highest traditions of military service. Entered the military service from New Mexico.

BY COMMAND OF MAJOR GENERAL KEAN:

OFFICIAL:

JOHN W. CHILDS

Colonel, GSC

Chief of Staff

Crosby, Jr. does not return from the battle identified in the Silver Star commendation. The family and soldiers serving with Crosby, Jr. believe he is missing in action. Two fellow servicemen write to Crosby, Jr.'s wife to express their support and concern.

29 September 50
Somewhere in Korea

... The patrol was unable to get all the way because of heavy enemy fire but they did get close enough to observe the area and were unable to see anything. Having held up the report 24 hrs. It was my unhappy duty to report Stan MIA.

Later the next day one of the men who had been missing with Stan returned to the company.

... There's still hope Betty that Stan is a prisoner of war. To give you added hope, I was a prisoner of war in the last war, and for seven months not a single person knew my whereabouts. I was carried MIA all the time until one happy day when I got away.

... As you know Stan and I were the best of friends and I certainly hope and pray he turns up safe and sound. ... Hope you and the baby are fine.

Best regards,
Dick
(5th Reg. combat)
3 October 50

Dear Betty:

... I am glad that you feel so sure that he is all right. ... He is not the kind of person to give up easily. Despite the fact that he was wounded, he could very well be all right. South Korean farmers would harbor him or he may be a prisoner. Prisoners did receive rather decent treatment after about 1 August.

Some prisoners have been repatriated in rather good condition - most of them are officers. ...

Ed
(5th Reg. Combat)

Hawk writes to Crosby, Sr. about the endowment; apparently he does not know about the events involving Crosby, Jr.

October 30, 1950

Dear Mr. Crosby:

I have just returned to the office and have taken up with the Business Office the papers received as I was leaving Dallas. Enclosed are copies duly signed by me as Administrative Vice

President of the University.

May I again express to you our appreciation of this wonderful gift. We usually announce any outstanding gifts during Ministers' Week, which is the first full week in February; for 1951, it will be February 5-8. This year a Homecoming and Dedication of the Quadrangle will be included in the events of the Week. I wonder if you and Mrs. Crosby could be our guests during the program. ...

Cordially yours,
Eugene B. Hawk, Dean

The Crosbys receive notification that their son was killed in action rather than missing. Crosby, Sr. explains to Hawk why they will not attend the dedication of the Quadrangle.

December 7, 1950

Dear Dean Hawk:

Recently we received word from the War Department reporting that our son was killed August 10, whereas he previously had been reported missing in action. As yet we have not received any particulars of this change in their report. Stan's wife and six months old baby boy were here with us when we received the news. I am enclosing copies of letters that Stan's wife received giving particulars of Stan's actions [excerpts above]. He was later awarded a Silver Star for his action.

I dislike coming back at you asking or having you consider any change in my original plans as to disposing of any of these proceeds you may secure from the Southwest Potash Company, but I wish to put the situation up to you for your consideration. My daughter was home for a few days last week and together with my wife and daughter-in-law, we have agreed that as far as possible we would like the lands deeded to you to go as a memorial to Stanley W. Crosby, Jr. ... We feel that [the baby's] father would be proud to have this memorial of something that his son could cherish in his later years. Along these lines there has been some discussion that perhaps a scholarship be set up which might be a little more personal than the general memorial. I am not too sure that it would mean anything more to the other parties concerned if the scholarship was to, perhaps, Southern Methodist University itself. To me it doesn't matter particularly. ...

Sincerely yours,
Stanley W. Crosby

Hawk replies promptly to Stanley Crosby, Sr.

December 12, 1950

Dear Friend:

I know something of your sorrow, in that my eldest son was a war casualty. He lived some three years after the conflict was over but the

recurrence of a brain hemorrhage such as he had suffered in France closed his life without a moment's warning. He was a young doctor and had before him a very promising life. My second son was wounded three times ... and because of his membership in the National Guard, is again in service stationed at Fort Sill. The third boy will likely be called back to service when the emergency is declared some time this week by our unfortunate president.

I know you cherish many precious memories of your son and the fact that he was a worthy officer and did his best to protect his men and literally died in the line of duty. Well do I know your concern for his wife and child and your desire to make the gift here at the University a memorial to Stanley, Junior. It is something that ought to be done and we will be glad to cooperate in every possible way. The scholarship memorial is a very popular one and one that has real merit about it. ... You have been very generous in making this gift. ...

Sincerely,
Eugene B. Hawk, Dean

Correspondence continues about the particulars of the scholarship funding. Additionally, Hawk suggests naming a courtyard on the west side of Perkins Chapel in Crosby, Jr.'s memory. His description of the court is somewhat vague and creates confusion over the function of the court. In a follow-up to his initial proposal, he clarifies usage of the court to Mrs. Crosby.

April 24, 1951

Dear Friend:

... Back of the chapel here facing the street

we have a paved court which is going to be very popular with the young people for various types of outside services. I have talked with President Lee and some others and we have the

feeling that we would like to name this court in honor of Stanley. We would call it the Crosby Court. ... I just wonder how you and Mrs. Crosby would feel about this. I think it is a very lasting memorial for your son. We could arrange the dedication service

for some evening. It would not be an elaborate affair. Please let me have your reaction to this suggestion. ...

Cordially yours,
Eugene B. Hawk, Dean

May 29, 1951

Dear Mrs. Crosby:

... The court we are naming for Stanley, Jr. is not a tennis court. It is much more meaningful to our campus life than that. It is a court where young people can have their vespers services and outdoor musical programs, etc. We will send you some pictures of it a little later on. We are getting some white metal outside furniture for it. To me, it is one of the most interesting spots on the Quadrangle. We have not dedicated it yet but will do so this summer and formally name it "The Stanley W. Crosby, Jr. Court." ...

Sincerely,
Eugene B. Hawk, Dean

Entry in the 1951-52 SMU Course Catalog in the Perkins section:

In 1950, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Crosby, of Roswell, NM, gave half their royalty on 22,170 acres of the potash land located near Carlsbad, NM to the Seminary. This will likely be one of the most valuable conveyances made to the school. It and an Endowed Scholarship are in memory of Stanley W. Crosby, Junior.

Epilogue:

Ultimately, Stanley Crosby, Sr. originated three endowed funds: Stanley W. Crosby Theological Endowment Fund, established 1950 (for operations of the theology program); Stanley W. Crosby, Jr. Endowed Scholarship Fund, established 1951; and Eugene B. Hawk Endowed Scholarship Fund, established 1962. Numerous Perkins students have benefited from these scholarships. Stanley Crosby, III lives in Roswell, New Mexico.

— Barbara Whitehead
Former Associate Director of Public Affairs