

The Address by Vladimir N. Ossipoff

Delivered at the Consecration of

The Davies Memorial Chapel



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First of all let me say that I am honored that Reverend Kunichika asked me to speak to you on this important day in the development of the Academy, to try to explain why this Chapel was designed as it was.

As you probably know we have our Chapel largely through the generosity of the Davies family. Mr. Geoffrey Davies has been on the campus here many times but now makes his home, as do all the Davies family, in England, a country steeped in tradition. I doubt that this Chapel's appearance is what the Davies family might have had in mind, but I do trust that they will agree that it is fitting for the purpose for which it was built, and that it fits the location where it finds itself.

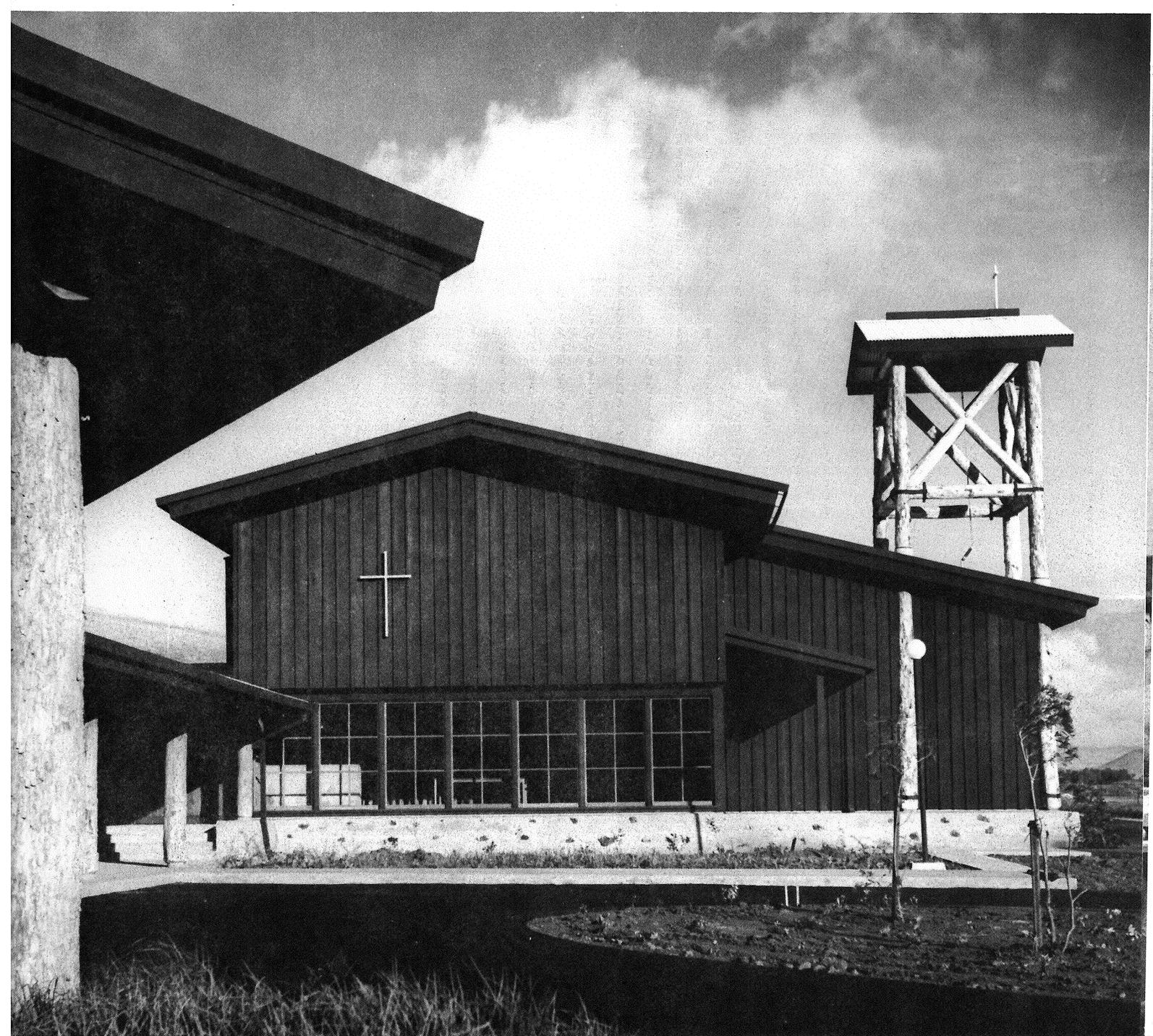
The size of the Chapel was dictated of course by the anticipated future enrollment of the Academy, while its structure was dictated to a degree by the funds available. Although these funds represent a substantial sum, they nevertheless were quite limiting in relation to the required size of the Chapel.

This limitation however was, I think, a blessing in disguise for reasons which will soon be apparent to you.

During the course of my travels here and there, it has been my experience that often the church building one remembers, the one that seems to endure, more often than not is a small building, a simple structure built of indigenous materials and with local labor. While the results of the efforts of today's local labor don't seem to have this enduring quality, the cause lies I think in the fact that the parishioners are not working with indigenous materials, but with whatever latest materials that may have struck their fancy. Indigenous ma-

terials in themselves impose limitation both of structure and choice and by working within these limitations—by improving one's skill within the imposed limits through repetition and constant striving for betterment—enduring structures do result. Such was the case in centuries past when the transport of materials from one locale to another was a big problem. As an example the very limitations of the local materials used are largely responsible for the stable quality of the early California missions.

To bring the subject closer to home, one is impressed with the genuine qualities of Kawaiahao Church in Honolulu





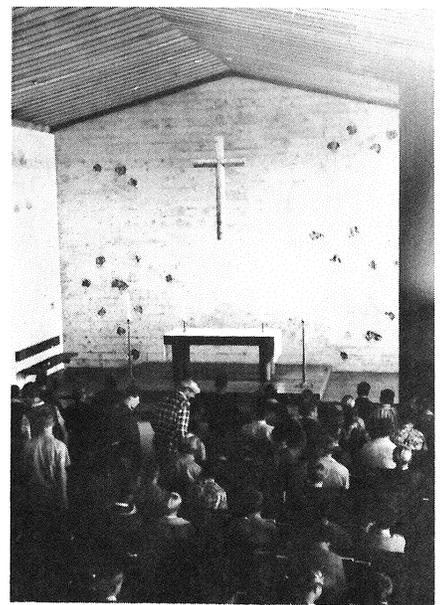
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and of the church in Kailua-Kona, both built of local coral blocks and Koa. One is impressed, or perhaps intrigued would be the better word here, by the early small Christian churches scattered about on this Island, such as the "Painted Church" above Honaunau. You might say that indigenous materials weren't used here and you would be right. They were built of Douglas Fir brought here from the Northwest and owe their charm to the fact that they are diminutive and unassuming. They were built in a style with which their ministers, who probably were also the head carpenters, were completely familiar. In spite of the surface decorations and fanciful painting, they are basically simple and don't try to appear to be more than what they are.

One of the simplest churches I have ever seen is one in the Indian pueblo of Acama, New Mexico. It stands aloft in solitary monumentality at the top of a high, precipitous butte. In plan it is a simple rectangle, narrowing slightly at the apse. Plain dirt serves for the floor, the walls are of adobe; the roof is flat and of adobe also, plastered onto twigs laid on long tree trunks that span the church horizontally from side wall to side wall every three feet or so. A few unglazed openings in the wall set rather high are the windows. That is all there is to it. The tree trunks that form the roof were felled on a mountainside about fifty miles away. Each trunk was carried across the hot desert on the backs of some twenty Indians. *There* is an impressive church, and built with no funds at all.

Today with ships and containers on the ships bringing anything and everything from far away to within one's reach, the sense of appropriateness to a given locale can be easily lost. Thus the blessing in disguise I spoke of earlier, whereby monetary limitations made one look about and use local materials to the greatest degree possible.

In spite of the enrollment of a few members of the fair sex, the Hawaii Preparatory Academy is a boys' school. Its curriculum, its interests, even its location, which by Hawaiian standards could be called rugged, all underline and reinforce the fact that it is a boys' school. It is therefore you, young men, that I had in mind in the design of the Chapel.



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1. Bishop Kennedy strikes the door of the Chapel to gain entry.
2. Students entering the Chapel for a morning service.
3. Geoffrey Davies, grandson of Theo. H. Davies and a member of the Board of Governors, at the Chapel.
4. A view of the interior of the Chapel with its massive ohia pillars.

Let me try to illustrate that it does make a difference in the design of a chapel, as to who might be making up its congregation and when in history this congregation might be gathering. Let us assume, just as an exercise, that my problem was not to design a chapel for you, but for one of the Kings of France, his retinue, and his society of say the 17th century. Imagine the men arriving for services wearing wigs of long, white, marcelled hair, with make-up and powder on their faces, dressed in long coats over embroidered waistcoats. They would be wearing knee breeches, silk hose and shoes with large silver buckles. Their shirtwaists would be flounced at the neck and cuffs would be heavily embroidered and a long lace handkerchief constantly would be being pulled out of a coat sleeve to clear a nose from a self-inflicted dose of snuff. These would have been the men. The ladies would have been dressed to suit. I leave to your imagination as to what a chapel for such a "society" would look like. One thing we can be sure of is that it wouldn't look like this one! We are of a different time, of a different era, of different mores and standards.

Since we're not building in the 17th century, why didn't I build a "modern" church, you might say. I think I did: modern in the sense that it was built now and is not dressed in the romantic ecclesiastical fashion of a few years ago when all chapels, to be at all acceptable, had to have their roof trusses in the form of Gothic arches. To me, one can be modern without having the building revolutionary in nature or unusual just for the sake of being different. Such architectural acrobatics are no longer necessary.

You, young men, believe in simplicity, in directness, in strength and in honesty; and it is these virtues which I have tried to express in this building.

SIMPLICITY through its plan which is a simple rectangle, the narthex and sanctuary being barely demarked by a screen of Ohia sapplings and the barest of altar rails.

Simplicity too through the repetitive use of the same materials. The same Ohia screen as denotes the narthex is used on the exterior to shield the colored glass wall.

Ohia again, but slightly refined, forms the cross over the altar.

DIRECTNESS through the use of materials in a direct way. There are no moldings, no curlicues. Concrete is left to look like concrete and wood looks like wood. No paint obscures its natural grain.

STRENGTH AND HONESTY, again through the use of unplastered concrete with some rock showing, clearly indicating that there is a mass to this wall—that it isn't paper thin.

Ohia tree trunks used as supporting columns, by being left alone as they grow in the forest with the bark on, look and feel strong.

The board on board ceiling adds to the feeling of strength through its rugged texture.

No thin finish coat of cement is on the floor. The basic rough concrete floor slab is left exposed.

This is not a chapel for the effete society I described a few moments ago but *is* a chapel for you, strong boys: a rugged building with no nonsense, a building where you may find solace when you need it, and one in which I hope you will feel at home to worship as you will.

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