

# 1939 and 1940s: Good years at St. Joseph Academy

This column continues the story of St. Joseph Academy.

In 1939, St. Joseph Academy met requirements for affiliation with the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and became the only school in the area with this distinction.

In 1940, sisters joined the faculty for the first time, and school bus service was established, providing transportation for students to and from other Rio Grande Valley communities.

In 1941, a six-man football team was organized, joining a league with other schools. The St. Joseph enrollment exceeded 300 students for the first time, reaching a high of 318, and the faculty included three sisters.

The faculty in 1942 consisted of nine brothers and three sisters.

During these years, the United States was engaged in World War II, and all high school students took military training, provided by soldiers at Fort Brown. The faculty and students helped the war effort by collecting scrap, which was sold, and war bonds were purchased with the proceeds. In 1944, the enrollment increased to 344 students, and summer courses were offered for the first time, with an enrollment of 76 summer scholars. The beginning of school in 1944-1945 saw another increase in enrollment, with 409 students on the rolls. There was discussion of building a basketball court on the school's newly acquired property near Palm Boulevard, but that turned out to be too costly. The school playground on the Elizabeth Street property continued as a basketball court.

The late 1940s saw an increase both in population and in economic activity in Brownsville, with a positive effect at St. Joseph. The enrollment in 1945 increased again, to the extent that many prospective pupils had to be refused admission due to lack of space. The St. Joseph Bloodhounds were cochampions of their football league, having won all games but one. The Bloodhounds also engaged in basketball and softball, though it was reported it was difficult at times to schedule competition with other schools. The educational resources were improved by acquisition of two sets of up-to-date encyclopedias. For the first time, a school annual book was produced and copies sold to students and others.

Paul Urban, who had graduated from St. Joseph in 1940, returned in 1946 as Brother Paul, and began teaching the 7th grade. He recalled that he lived upstairs with the other brothers, all of whom endured austere living conditions. They were short on funds much of the time, but did have a cook who prepared meals for the brothers and the boarding students. He recalls that there were about 15 to 20 students in the classes.

It was noted that Brother Francis, who had been at St. Joseph for around 30 years,

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