

If only the gym walls COULD TALK

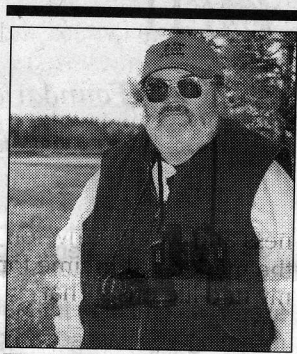
Last fall, I attended volleyball matches at Souris High. Looking down on the floor I thought "Oh no, a scuff mark!"

When I was a student, marring the floor was a sin right up there with skipping class. I was suspended for a week by Mr MacDonald from intramurals, once, for mistakenly wearing my snow boots.

I looked around and the memories came flooding back. It was and still is a classroom – a teaching facility and for many the most popular room in the school. Most if not all students, since the early 1960s, spent a lot of time there.

Some of the students excelled in sport beyond these walls, including Craig Jenkins and Kurt McCormack. Many went on to Canada Games and Intercollegiate competition. Others excelled in other facets in life.

Two washrooms connected to change rooms with showers opened to the gym. There was an equipment room. The football and weight rooms were upstairs on both sides of the stage. Until the early 1980s there were windows everywhere, includ-



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ing the famous set that overlooked the auditorium from the upstairs hall.

In my era more than a few students had a master key to the school. There were the "Sunday afternoon break-ins", when students could easily get in the equipment room. They would have a fun and harmless volleyball, basketball or ball hockey game. The respect for the custodians was such; they would put everything away when done and - clean up afterwards.

The school is different today. With security cameras everywhere, only someone wishing to get in trou-

ble would dare go anywhere where they shouldn't be.

Just about every sport known to Islanders was participated in this room. The celebrations when Souris thumped St. Dunstan's to win the Potato Bowl in 1966, were held here. Many of the badminton birdies became stuck in the ceiling. They would be dislodged by a loud band raising the rafters during the regular dances. This was the hall where April Wine made their first ever PEI appearance. The music was so loud my parents could hear every note and lyric in their bed - half a dozen blocks away. In the 70s, Kinkora's hockey team, coaches, cheerleaders and bus drivers over-nighted here during a snow storm.

It was sometimes the site of a bit of mischief. It was the site of pep rallies, graduations and school assemblies. When there was trouble in Mr Fogarty's time as principal, they were stand-up assemblies. You didn't dare crack a nervous smile. The Drama and Glee Clubs displayed their efforts from the stage.

For the community, it was the site of Interfaith

Church Services, Community School Closings, Queen of the Sea pageants, Sportsmen's Banquets, and wedding receptions. A political rally saw the Hon Robert L. Stanfield speak from the stage. In 1968, Dr. A.A. "Gus" MacDonald received the Order of Canada in front of a packed house.

The gym looks different today. The walls are a light blue and the windows are bricked over. Improvements include the banners hung on high celebrating athletic accomplishments and the piece of art on the south wall. With the talk of a new school being constructed, I wonder how the gym could be spared from destruction. A "historic site" for many, the collected memories of this hallowed hall could make a best best-selling book!

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