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Nostalgia and swimming may have saved its life.

These two factors, at different times, probably kept the University from tearing down Nichols Gymnasium after it was gutted by fire in 1968.

"If it hadn't been for the swimming pools, that building probably would have been torn down the day after the fire," said Vince Cool, associate director of facilities planning.

"There was no thought, no concern about renovation. That concern wasn't generated until several years later," he added.

By that time, nostalgia for the gymnasium — shown through student rallies — generated consideration for renovating the site.

After Nichols burned, the state appropriated \$1.5 million to replace the building. The appropriation did not include renovation plans.

## Radio

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"What I had left was put out in a box (in Calvin Hall) and destroyed. Somebody picked it up and threw it out.

"For a year or two or three, I'd catch myself reaching in my desk for something before realizing it had been destroyed in the fire," he said. "We all lost things that were irreplaceable."

Titus expressed bitterness about the loss of Nichols, a building he said he was fond of because he had also done undergraduate studies there.

"It was obvious the University was not equipped to fight a fire," he said.

"I was in a state of shock for a couple of weeks," Titus said, and shock hung over the campus. Although there was a certain amount of outrage, he said a feeling of sadness and a sense of loss prevailed on campus.

To accommodate KSAC and KSDB radio stations, these funds were appropriated to the construction of additions to McCain Auditorium, Cool said.

Both the men's and women's swimming pools in Nichols remained in use until the Natatorium was built in 1975.

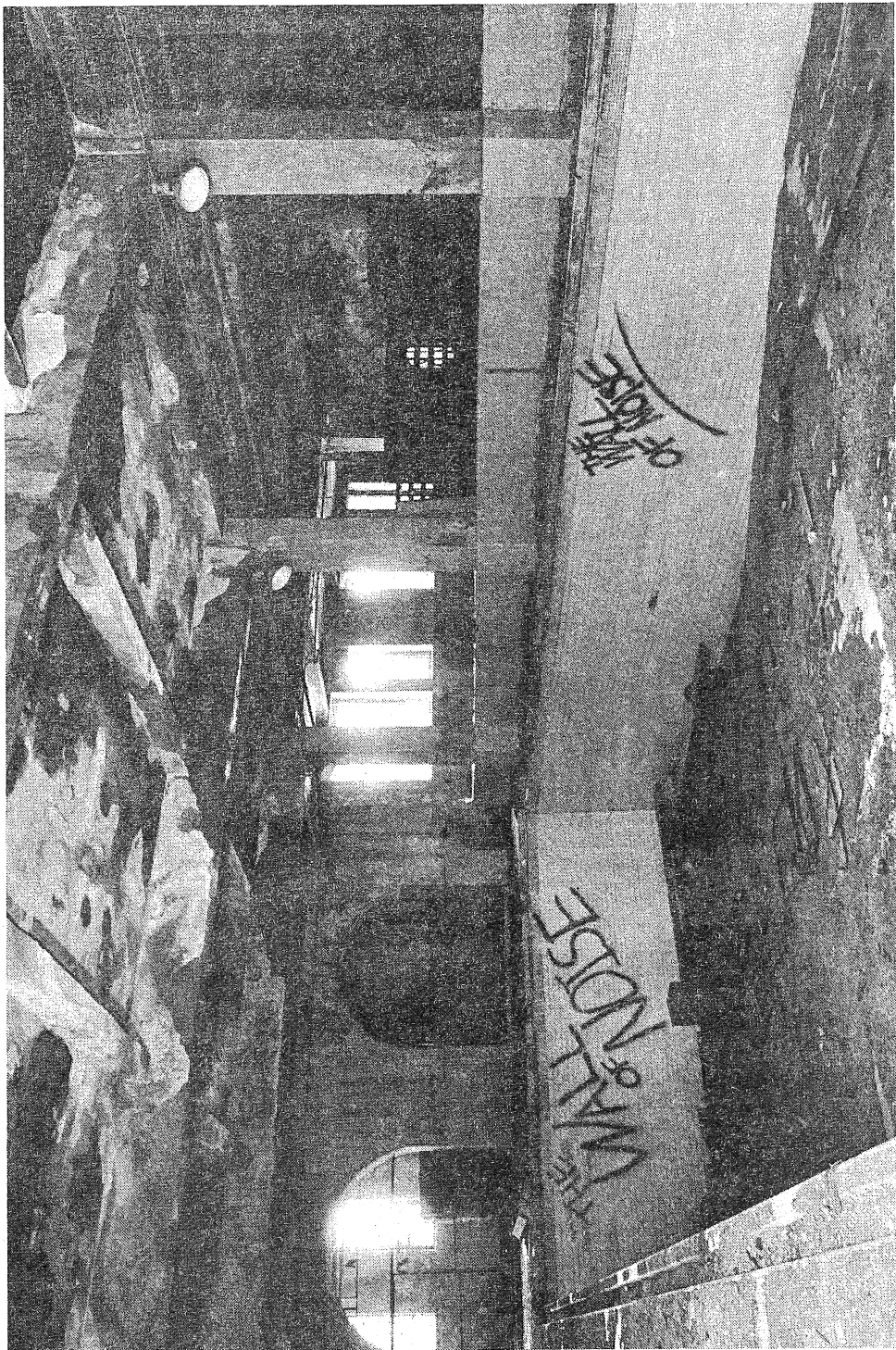
Approximately \$10,000 was taken from the University's maintenance and emergency funds to construct a temporary roof over the pools which were in the building's basement.

"That (the pools) was all they used over there," said Katherine Gire, retired storekeeper who operated the women's pool in Nichols. "It was kind of a spooky old place after the fire."

The pools weren't as big as the ones at the new Natatorium, Bigford said. The Natatorium pools are olympic size and, according to Bigford, weren't as nice as the pools at Nichols, which were lined with white octagonal-shaped tiles. The Natatorium's pools are concrete.

According to Orville Bigford, storekeeper for the Department of Health, Physical Education and Recreation, the swimming classes, scuba class and men's swimming team continued to use the facilities after the fire. The pools were saved from the fire by the concrete first floor from upstairs, he said.

Bigford said the two pools were divided by a wall and each side had locker rooms. The men's side also had bleachers for swim meets.



Staff/Scott Williams

Vacated... The swimming pool which remained in use after the fire is now without water and a victim of vandals. This is one of two pools which remain in the Nichol's basement.