



Welcome Back, Rock

The old-timers who knew you, Rock, sat silent and deeply affected last night when you returned again to the stage of Washington Hall, that same stage from which you so often faced them in "pep" meetings in the days gone by.

It didn't seem to be just a picture, Rock. It really seemed to be you. Pat must have venerated you greatly to give such a true portrayal. He has caught your mannerisms, your smile, your voice and your drive. In fact, when the show was over and the old-timers went outside, they half-expected to run into you again on the campus. They half-expected to see your choppy wave of the hand and to hear your cheerful "Hyah" with which you greeted everybody — everybody from the President down to the smallest kid.

Above all, Rock, he got across your spirit, your principles and what you stood for. You were not only a go-getter in the field of sports, you were, best of all, a go-giver. And now, after almost ten years, you've given us the message that all of us need so much today: the warning that all of us must harden ourselves morally, physically and intellectually. We must learn to "take it" with a smile.

The old-timers almost stood up and cheered when, facing that Board of Investigators, you told them from your soul:

"If I have learned any one fact in my twenty years of work with boys, it's *this* — the most dangerous thing in American life today is that we're getting soft, inside and out! We're losing a forceful heritage of mind and body that was once our most precious possession.

"We — these men and I — have given our lives to working that flaccid philosophy out of our boys' minds and bodies. We believe the finest work of man is building the character of man. We have tried to build courage and initiative, tolerance and persistence — without which the most educated brain in the head of man is not worth very much."

Soft bodies and soft brains and soft souls, your "Two-lump" O'Brien type, Rock, are filling the homes, the schools, the professions, the market places and the country. Now you have come back for another season as a leader and developer of men. You have come back, not only as a developer of the youth of Notre Dame, but the youth of America. We hope you aren't too late, Rock.

May you win the National Championship this season as a developer of character. Notre Dame never demanded that you win any game, did she, Rock? But the old-timers think Our Lady has sent you back this time with orders: "Rock, you've got to win this game. Show them that to be successful in any field, whether it is winning Heaven or winning a football game, there is no easy road. Tell them success in any field can come only with sacrifice and toil, with sweat and blood. But show them also that there can be a lot of fun and satisfaction in doing it."

As you and Fathers John Cavanaugh, Charles O'Donnell and Nieuwland — and Gipp, too — looked down on the superb performances of your counterparts on earth here last night, that old smile must have wrinkled your face as you recalled these lines:

*"A golden hour in Heaven
When your sons, O Notre Dame
Kneel to their Leader down
There by the hem of your gown."*

It's true, Rock, they didn't show you death, and the old-timers understood. The old-timers also remember that when your body was gathered up, there, twisted round your fingers, was Our Lady's rosary. Truly, you were faithful to her, even to the end. Be faithful to her now! Win *this* game!

Yes, welcome back, Rock. We won't say good by, either, as long as the boys here on earth are imbued with your character and influence, as long as they don't "get soft, inside and out" — especially inside.