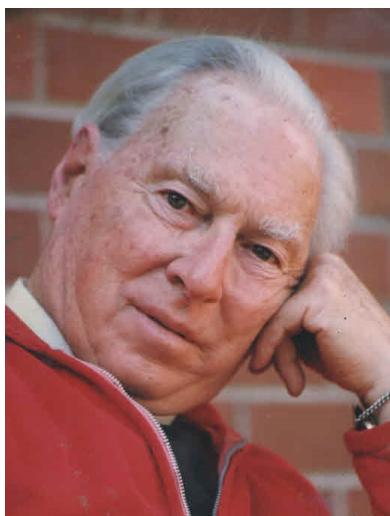


June 2

Fr KENNETH NIXON 22 February 1919 – 2 June 1997



Born in Dublin, Ken and his two brothers went to school at Beaumont. He joined the Society in 1938 and came to Rhodesia, as was, in 1954 to spend 39 nine years at St George's College.

In his young years, first in Ireland and then in England, Ken had a passion for all sports: cricket, rugby, athletics, boxing. Peter Meiring considered he was basically 'a fighter, highly competitive'. His two brothers became majors and won Military Crosses in the war and there was something of the soldier in Ken. Besides sport, his other passion was the cadets.

Yet, to meet him, he was 'urbane, courteous and sympathetic', 'a plodder in the classroom' as a boy. He was interim rector of St George's during the war and the mission superior, Henry Wardale, wrote to his designated successor, Michael O'Halloran, that it was urgent he come as soon as he could as there were pressing issues to be dealt with. Ken, on the other hand, presumably ignorant of Henry's letter, told O'H to take his time, have a holiday and come any time. Meanwhile Ken was getting up to a few pet projects, like building shelters for cricket practices. He was a man who believed in the traditional values of the English Public school about sport and discipline being good for building character and he was impatient and a bit hurt by those who saw St George's as 'elitist'. Mr M Whiley, a colleague, said Ken saw cricket as a way young people could learn much and enjoy themselves at the same time.' He would have appreciated Fr Arrupe's call for Jesuits to be 'men for others' and would have interpreted it as meaning 'receiving the best possible education oneself so as to able to serve others effectively later'.

In tune with this attitude he was not comfortable with some of the changes in the Church and Society in the 1960s and '70s as he would have seen them as too easily abandoning long established proven ways. He was a member of the Harare diocesan marriage tribunal where he combined scrupulous fairness with compassion (Edmund Wilson).

It was 'purgatory for him to endure the long lethargy of mind and body after his stroke' (Meiring). He was delighted when anyone drove him back to the college, just to sit and watch games, when he was staying at Canisius House as a place of retirement.

The Zimbabwe Province Newsletter noted among his effects a quotation from C. C. Martindale which meant much to him as a teacher:

... One approaches souls to be educated with infinite respect, affection, slow study, self-distrust and prayer. For to educate is the greatest work a man or woman can undertake. It causes souls to live with more life, with greater vital power of assimilating truth, getting in touch with reality, enjoying a wider view of the world. Sometimes God uses you as an instrument. The great thing is not to interfere with his touch.