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Has anyone famous ever stayed at the Kress Inn?

Katie Vanden Avond '15

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August 2014

Question:

Dear Abbot Pennings,

Has anyone famous ever stayed at the Kress Inn?

Katie Vanden Avond '15

Answer:

My dearest Katie,

Thank you so very much for submitting an inquiry regarding our own **Kress Inn**. This beautiful hotel is situated on the northwestern corner of our campus, and is a public inn that is both owned and operated by St. Norbert College. Built in 2001, this beacon to the traveler has 46 lovely suites with all of the amenities of home, including cable television, phones, appliances, internet access, continental breakfast and my favorite – freshly-baked cookies. The hotels of my day certainly could not compare to such a wonderful place as the Kress Inn. In fact, this hotel has received the acclaimed Choice Hotels Platinum Award each year since 2006 and was just named Hotel of the Year by the Ascend Collection.

With such a distinguished reputation, it is certainly no surprise that the Kress Inn has indeed served as a stopping place for numerous dignitaries and celebrities. In October 2001, former president of Poland and Nobel Peace Prize-winner Lech Walesa was a guest of St. Norbert College and the Kress. This former head of state received an honorary doctorate from our own dear college on that trip.

In May 2002, another dignitary, Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of



Ask The Abbot

As the founder of St. Norbert College, and having a prime seat in the center of campus throughout the years, I, Abbot Bernard Pennings, hold the answers to many of your burning questions about the college.

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York, graced the Kress Inn with her presence. Pat Olejniczak '88, manager of the Kress, has several stories about the British royal's visit. He says that the duchess was very personable and down-to-earth, thanking the hotel employees as they went about their business. She ordered a dinner prepared at the Abbey Restaurant, even tasting and reportedly loving one of Wisconsin's culinary specialties ... cheese curds! At 11 p.m., the duchess's personal assistant requested to have Her Highness' dress pressed and steamed for 6 a.m. the next day. Olejniczak enlisted the aid of his mother, Jean Barrett Olejniczak '56, who, at midnight, made sure there was not one wrinkle on the gown. It was promptly delivered to the duchess' hotel room the next morning in a "Royal Cleaners" bag retrieved from the hotel's dry cleaning order! Upon her departure, the Duchess left a photo with a note that said, "Kress Inn: Thank you for all of your hard work and kindness, Sarah, Duchess of York." I am certain that the hotel staff treats each guest as if he or she is royalty, and this time, this truly was their calling, dear me!

Throughout the years, the Kress Inn has hosted numerous entertainers and recording artists. Grammy award-winning singer and songwriter Martina McBride stayed at the Kress when she was in town to sing the national anthem at a Green Bay Packers game. The legendary country-folk rock group, the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, has also enjoyed the hospitality of the Kress Inn. In May 2014, these performers were in town for the Celebrate De Pere festivities. (I believe you may have read in our own college magazine the note that the band leader left behind, expressing how happy band members were with the hospitable service they received from student worker Katie Hayes '17.)

I cannot tell you how proud I am of the Kress Inn and its staff, many of whom are current St. Norbert College students and graduates. It is truly a jewel on our campus, and a place that hundreds of visitors will enjoy for many years to come.

Responses to "Ask the Abbot" questions are penned by St. Norbert College staff in the name of Abbot Bernard Pennings, O.Praem., who founded St. Norbert College in 1898.

St. Norbert College

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