WHILE MUDD HALL has taken more than its share of barbs and insults nearly 15 years after its demise, there remains an unconfirmed story that the building once won an award for the “innovative use of concrete.”

But the real innovative use of concrete was the action of former Dean Dorsey D. “Dan” Ellis, Jr., professor emeritus, who saw in the building’s razing in 1998, a phoenix rising. Ellis collected pieces of concrete from the demolition and his then-executive assistant Sharon Strathman, now senior human resources and payroll administrator for the law school, helped Ellis turn the rubble into memorabilia.

They placed hundreds of mainly fist-sized pieces in a big box they kept in the Dean’s Suite. Ellis signed many of them with a magic marker. The ones with flatter surfaces, if lined with felt, made excellent paperweights.

“Dan gave them away to alumni, colleagues, students, other deans,” says Strathman, whose autographed Mudd Hall piece is in her home. “Alumni had received attractive, professionally made paperweights composed of Missouri red granite some months earlier for the opening of Anheuser-Busch Hall, and they were followed by the inglorious Mudd Hall pieces. The contrast was kind of fitting!”

Overall, the chunks of concrete were highly popular among members of the extended law school community who eagerly joined in the humor of preserving their little piece of Mudd.