

Library Research Room Dedication
In Memory of Adrian N. Perreault
21 July 2007
Cannavino Library at Marist College
Remarks by J. Richard LaPietra

Adrian Perreault came to Poughkeepsie in the summer of 1958 to undertake the head librarianship at Marist College, a responsibility that would last for 26 years, and which followed upon a not inconsiderable stint as teacher and librarian at the grammar and high school level at various schools conducted by the Marist Brothers. I have personal knowledge of one of those appointments because my younger brother, Frank, was the designated runner to bring the library's copy of the Times from the 241st White Plains Road station to the then Bro. Adrian Norbert at Mount Saint Michael Academy.

Adrian was preceded at Marist College by Brothers Arthur Xavier, Paul Philibert and Cyril Robert, and inherited the college's first library, the Greystone Building. It was one of the most impressive buildings on the campus at the time, with circulation desk and reading room on the main floor, stacks upstairs, and a small classroom and reference section down below. He also inherited a library possessed of some quaint practices. The devil's corner, a collection of books sequestered from general circulation and locked in the tower for their potential of giving scandal, could be accessed only with special permission. The collection would be considered tame nowadays. To give but one other instance: when Andrew Molloy's class, majoring in chemistry in the late forties, was poised to take a required course in physical chemistry, a branch of chemistry which endeavors to explain chemical reactions in the light of the electrical and magnetic properties of atoms and molecules, no Brother could be found with the requisite expertise to teach the course. Unbowed by such a trivial problem Bro Paul Ambrose engaged the services of Dr. Raymond McFarland, a physician to and friend of the Brothers, to teach the course. Between them they decided that a course in physiology would do the trick. Each week the students would consult texts in the library on the assigned system, circulatory, skeletal, etc., and the subsequent class would consist of reporting and discussing what they had learned. One week the student Brothers came to class completely unprepared. Apparently the relevant chapter on the reproductive system had been razor-bladed from every one of the available library books.

In retrospect it is easy to see that Adrian was faced with an enormous challenge when he arrived in 1958. Clearly practices perhaps suitable to a monastic culture had to give way to the requirements of academe with its demands for full academic

freedom for research. Moreover the collection was in great need of strengthening. Beyond this bare minimum it was necessary to grow a collection to keep pace with a rapidly expanding student body and a bewildering array of major specialties as the college opened to the public. During his 26 years the library expanded to meet a fifteen-fold explosion in the size of the student body, and grew to accommodate the addition of new majors in management studies, psychology, political science, computer science, fashion, environmental science, communications, and graduate programs. It was necessary to recruit a professional and support staff to serve this growing population of users. It was immediately obvious that Greystone could not accommodate a growing library, and this necessitated the removal of the entire library collection in 1961 to new quarters in Donnelly Hall where computer operations are now located. He also had to guide the library through its first accreditation. Further down the road the library outgrew its home necessitating a second move, this time to the former quarters of the student brothers which stood just west of the chapel, all this with minimal interruption of library services.

Today the library has found its permanent home in this magnificent structure. I think that it is fitting that this place lies but a few yards from the birth place of the Marist College library. As we dedicate this reference room, which in many respects is the heart of any library, to the memory and accomplishments of Adrian Perreault I ask you to wander in your mind's eye to the plaza outside. See Adrian as the younger man he was in 1958, in the background Greystone to his right, the Cannavino Library to his left. Remember if you can the beautiful Fisher-McCarthy windows of the Donnelly Library and let them symbolize the key transitional role played by this man who once stood between Greystone and what it would become. In 1958 his feet were firmly planted in the culture represented by the Greystone Library. Imagine, if you can the enormous expansion of outlook demanded of Adrian to shepherd the library through its transition to this. In 1958 he could scarcely have imagined what the future held for him.

Source and references: notes from J. Richard Lapietra

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