

Peter Foy and Richard Foy

Marist College

Poughkeepsie, NY

Transcribed by Kyra Walker

For the Marist College Archives and Special Collections

Peter Foy and Richard Foy

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Marist College—Social Aspects

Summary:

Brothers Peter and Richard Foy reflect on their time at Payne Mansion in Esopus, NY. They speak on the time period, the values and lessons they learned, and the changes that have taken place.

Gus Nolan (00:02):

Today is June the 23rd. We're having an interview with Peter and Richard Foy in the Cannavino Library at Marist College. The reason for this interview is to try to gather material data for the Marist archives based on the early years of the Marist Brothers owning Payne mansion in Esopus. So good morning Peter. Good morning Richard.

Richard Foy (00:35):

Good morning Gus.

GN (00:36):

Each of you has spent some time of your high school years in Esopus. I'm trying to collect for the Marist archives some data relating to the times and the life of students living in Esopus when the Marist Brothers first took possession of the property. I would like each of you to comment on this point: many years after the experience, how do you look back in a kind of a nostalgic way of your years in Esopus? Peter, you first--how does it compare with life in the Marines? At MIT? In the industry?

Peter Foy (01:21):

That's a pretty broad question.

GN (01:24):

Well, take a shot at it.

PF (01:29):

I would be more comfortable talking about events or happenings that happened...that I remembered from Esopus. But relating them to the Marine Corps is kind of...a bit of a dig, you know?

GN (01:57):

Well, I'm trying to get at the esprit de corps that was among the youngsters in Esopus and then, did you find the same kind of concern for one another in the Marines or at MIT or in industry?

PF (02:14):

Well, I would say at MIT there is no concern for each other. That's totally gone. But in the Marine Corps, there certainly an esprit de corps--that you band together and help one another.

GN (02:34):

Give up something like time or money or possessions? Would you give of helping someone in a material way other than just good luck, buddy?

PF (02:46):

No, I think it was more of I'll help you out if you need it type of thing. We never left a member who was injured to rot or to not be able to rescue if possible.

GN (03:09):

Physical support and giving back to medical needs or whatever. And how about in industry? Would that be like MIT? Working for various corporations you working for?

PF (03:22):

Well, I don't think so. In the industry I worked with Hughes Aircraft Company for 14 years, and 22 years with the NCR Corporation in their computer division. But I think you were more or less on your own there. But what you did, you were directed to some extent, but often the positions that I was in, I would lead what I was going to do.

GN (03:58):

Did you preserve the knowledge you had for your own advancement or would that be shared with others that we're also a team working to make NCR better?

PF (04:11):

Well, I don't remember working as a team [laughter]. It was an individual...you were on their own and...make-or-break according to the standards that they set.

GN (04:28):

Okay. Reflecting back on Esopus--as youngsters coming together, a genuine concern or also-?

PF (04:38):

Well, we came from a home that had broken up and it was a haven for us. It regimented our day, seven days a week and had a pattern to it. It was an agreeable pattern. And we found all of the personages that were involved to be interested in our wellbeing--from Brother Anthony to Brother Linus, all the way top to bottom it was...they were all for us.

GN (05:29):

Okay. Richard, how about you? In terms of junior in Esopus and then moving on to the various communities? Anything in particular?

RF (05:41):

Well, but one of the differences in our first year there was the differences between the new-comers and the old-timers. And the old-timers had spent at least a year in the junior age in Poughkeepsie, and I think their life was more regimented over there. Part of this is because Brother Linus William was the first, shall we say, non-speaking...non-French speaking person in charge of a training house. Just...it's very common. It was a French order. They relied heavily on French emigres to run the province here. Then they relied very heavily on people from Canada who spoke French. Brother Linus was determined to break some patents. I don't know what the patents were, but he was. And my understanding is that he insisted on getting younger teachers. He got Brother Kieran, who later became the head of scholastics and the provincial. And they got Brother James, they were two young fellows...brother Richard Albert. And he said ,we have a new place, we're gonna run it differently.' And quite often the old-timers would say, 'well, back in Poughkeepsie' and he would pound that. He would say, 'I don't want to hear what they did in Poughkeepsie. This is Esopus. This is how we're going to do it.' So it was like...and even moving into the novitiate, the novitiate was more structured and a scholastic was probably more structured. But there was an essential structure in there. Peter mentioned we came from

a broken home. My mother had died the year before and I coasted through my eighth grade, much to the consternation of the nuns, you know. But what you got there was a sense of disciplining yourself, of time management.

GN (08:10):

What you got there in Esopus? After the eighth grade you went to Esopus? And you were responsible for yourself?

RF (08:16):

Yes. There were interesting incentives. You had two hours of study each night. One was written work, one was study. I guess what they called it, non-written work--reading and so on. But if you got good grades, you could take books out of the library and read them before you went to bed at night. If you got under 85 average, you couldn't take the books out. So you learned somehow to manage your time, even within that study period you had a...if you had five subjects, you had 10 minutes for each subject in your mental study and you only got two subjects each night. So there was good time management and that carried on much through the training.

GN (09:22):

Moving ahead though, did you find that foundation to be of service when you got to St. Anne's for instance, and in the other communities you were in?

RF (09:32):

Yes, I'd say. Well, I wouldn't blame it or...say I would not attribute it completely to Esopus, but the Esopus and particularly the college training really was helpful because when you get to a place like St. Anne's, not only did you have to teach, but there were all sorts of little activities and side jobs that you were expected to do.

GN (10:05):

Can you mention one? Like, bingo?

RF (10:09):

Bingo was one. Well, my first year I was teaching...I was like a utility player. I wound up teaching two senior histories, two intermediate algebras, and a mechanical drawing. So I said, what about mechanical drawing? They said, well, [inaudible]-Brother Alphonse taught that. That's also...I said, where is he? He's in the Philippines. So eventually I wound up going to Long Island City High School through my cousin Josephine, she introduced me to a fellow who was in the mechanical drawing department and he gave me a total lesson in mechanical drawing. Things like that-

GN (11:01):

Has Sarge arrived on the scent yet?

RF (11:01):

Pardon me?

GN (11:01):

Sarge? Has Sarge arrived on the academy yet?

RF (11:07):

No. He took over after me, mechanical drawing. But there were...yes, I think you learned, one of my other little side jobs was becoming a photographer. Brother Lawrence was the photographer and he...about December he got me into taking pictures, which I'd never done before. First picture I took was of a guy running on the indoor track at Madison Square Garden and Larry told me where to set up, where to take the picture, how to do these things. And so you did that. Then Larry also taught me some electricity, and I had wind up doing all the wiring for the place. But that's really not the mansion. However, what came...what you knew was if it was gonna happen in Esopus it was us that was going to make it happen. We weren't gonna wait for troops to come in and do things. You had...you were responsible for the whole thing.

GN (12:29):

How many of us are there? How big was the contingent?

RF (12:32):

My first year, we were 37. I would say about a count of 37.

PF (12:37):

In three grades.

New Speaker (12:38):

In three different grades?

PF (12:39):

Yeah.

GN (12:39):

Okay. Peter back to you, let's talk about this. How is the day organized? What was the hourly schedule? Was it the same every day? Did you get up at eight o' clock?

PF (12:52):

Well, you had your weekdays and you had your weekend days, but the weekdays--Monday to Friday--were very well set up. You got out of bed at a very early hour.

GN (13:05):

Was it dark?

PF (13:05):

It was like 6am. And you headed for 6:30 Mass in the mansion and we had to walk from what we call the English Village to the mansion.

GN (13:20):

How long a distance would that be?

PF (13:20):

Half mile?

RF (13:20):

About a half a mile, yeah. .

GN (13:29):

Okay. And that would take about 15 minutes? Seven, eight minutes to get down there?

PF (13:33):

Well it seems a lot longer when the temperature went below zero [chuckles].

GN (13:39):

All right. And after Mass, how did the day go then?

PF (13:44):

Well, we went to breakfast. We also had choir practice and then your school day started. We had chores after breakfast.

GN (14:00):

Give me a description. What are some chores?

PF (14:00):

Oh, cleaning the dormitories, sweeping out the ashes, washing the dishes.

GN (14:10):

Oh, you had to do the dishes at Esopus?

PF (14:10):

There was nobody there but us [laughter].

New Speaker (14:16):

[Laughter] That back to what Richie said, 'if something had to be done, we gotta do it.'

PF (14:16):

We did it, yeah. On Saturday the pattern changed, but one of the things was clean the mansion. And the mansion was kept clean partially by us changing shoes as we came into the mansion.

GN (14:39):

What does that mean, changing shoes?

PF (14:39):

Well, you had outdoor shoes and indoor-

GN (14:39):

Was there a room for this?

PF (14:47):

Yes, there was a room. You had a spot where you put your shoes and-

GN (14:53):

And took off the outdoor shoes and put on the mansion shoes.

PF (14:54):

The mansion shoes would not mark the tile or the-

RF (15:00):

They couldn't have rubber soles.

GN (15:04):

Oh, at least putting on black leather soles-

PF (15:06):

It was almost like wearing slippers.

RF (15:09):

I think they used to call them Romeos. I don't know why.

PF (15:15):

And of course you reversed the process when you went out. But on Sunday the visitors were allowed to come in and tour parts of the mansion, and they had their shoes on.

GN (15:30):

They didn't have to change shoes?

PF (15:31):

And you had your shoes on if they were your guests.

GN (15:36):

Oh, I see.

PF (15:37):

So that was the only time that you...and you walked very gently [laughter].

GN (15:45):

Talk about the jobs again? Cleaning the mansion, washing machines, scrubbing on your knees?

PF (15:53):

I don't remember how laundry was taken care of. I don't know whether we sent that home?

RF (16:00):

No, that was sent to Poughkeepsie. You had to have your name on everything.

PF (16:06):

The reason I don't remember is, we didn't do it there [laughter].

GN (16:09):

Oh, I see. The one thing you didn't do there was laundry, you sent that out.

PF (16:09):

But if there was snow to be shoveled--walkways or whatever--you can't plow the front steps. You have to get out of the shovel and work on it and those kind of things. I got some of the heaviest jobs. I was among the largest of the 37 people there. And there were four or five of us that tended to get these jobs. For example, I put the coal in a great big hopper-

GN (16:51):

Hold it, did you say coal?

PF (16:53):

Coal, C.O.A.L. Coal.

GN (16:55):

There was no oil delivery? Or gas?

PF (16:56):

There was no oil or gas delivered. There was a furnace with a giant hopper and then feed into the fire bed, which was say four foot long. And you just kept...all day long this coal was fed in. So we had to fill this hopper before we started class or we're going to run out of heat for the day. Now, you didn't have to do that as much in the fall and the spring, especially in the summer. But it was a winter job.

GN (17:37):

I see. How about water? Was water available?

PF (17:41):

Water came out of the tap.

GN (17:46):

And how did he get there?

PF (17:52):

I think there was a pump house from the river.

RF (17:59):

There was a water tower behind the English Village, which fed the entire complex.

GN (18:11):

You mentioned about the coal. I remember a story once about if coal is confined into a certain area, it could explode or-?

PF (18:20):

It's called spontaneous combustion, and we had that occur. We had a carload of coal delivered to us in the freight yard-

RF (18:34):

A railroad car

PF (18:35):

A railroad car. So it's a good size car. And Molly, the truck-

GN (18:43):

Molly was the name of the truck?

PF (18:45):

That Brother Anthony drove back and forth. And we loaded the coal from the train car into Molly and then Molly came up and dumped it out in the yard. And then we had to shovel it down the chutes. And then we turned out...after we got it down there, one of the brothers, possibly-

GN (19:13):

Edmund?

PF (19:13):

No. The fellow that was the cook?

RF (19:17):

Brother Chanel.

PF (19:17):

Brother Richard? Anyway...Richard Alban?

RF (19:25):

He was a teacher, he was the bio teacher.

GN (19:26):

Alban Chanel?

RF (19:26):

Richard.

GN (19:26):

Richard Chanel?

RF (19:26):

Richard Alban and Lambert Chanel.

PF (19:28):

Okay. I had the names mixed, but they detected the fact that the coal in our storage rooms was going up in temperature one degree per day or some such number and would at some point or burst into fire. So we had to lift this coal up out of the basement and spread it out in the backyard. And that was a tremendous job.

GN (20:05):

I wonder if there's a picture of that someplace that we could use as a-

PF (20:09):

I never got to see the yard. I was down in the bottom. I was-

GN (20:12):

Well you were tall.

PF (20:12):

I would put about a half a barrel of coal and then wheelbarrow it down through the hoist and then hoist it up, because that was all I could hoist. I couldn't hoist more than a half of the...and then the other fellows would take it from that and then spread it out in the yard. It was a tremendous amount of coal.

GN (20:43):

You looked for the spring for more reasons than one I guess when it comes to the heat. Let's change the focus a little, Richie, how about the classroom education? Was it an easy run there and how can you verify whatever you would say? In other words, the education level in Esopus in those years was like an ordinary high school? Better than an ordinary high school? Less than an ordinary high school?

RF (21:12):

I would say because of the small size and the quality of the teachers that it was better. We had...Kieran was our English teacher. He eventually wound up teaching in college. Brother Linus had done his mathematics down at Catholic university. He taught with a flair. There was a drama to it. Brother Joseph

Cuadros was a Frenchman who taught French, but he also taught geometry and religion and Latin. And I think we got as good as anybody that the only thing I felt bad in retrospect is that the concentration was mostly on written French and not so much oral French. And that went through particularly after he hit the novitiate, half of the group spoke French. So we did a lot of reading, but not as much speaking. But Brother Leo was my physics teacher and he was, he never even prepared us for the regents. He just said, 'oh here's a test.' You know, a lot of places they prep you on formal regents, not Brother Leo. He just walked in cold and we all passed. So they were good. I'd say the quality was good. The concern was good.

GN (23:02):

The outcomes of judgment. In other words, how would you access the outcomes? Those guys who were with you and those years, do you think they made out well or did they flounder along the way for lack of a good education?

RF (23:20):

I doubt they...if they floundered it wasn't for lack of a good education. Basically, the brothers saw this group as the future of the order. So they weren't about to shortchange you in education. They wanted you to get the best education you could. So I don't see that, I'm trying to think of any of the fellas that we had. They all did well, the ones I know.

PF (23:55):

I had a year at St. Regis in Manhattan prior to this, I did my freshman year there. And Marist was way ahead of the care...but also I had two hours on the train every day to go to Regis. But your access was strictly the 45-55 minutes of the class and that was it. The teachers disappeared. We had the teachers among us. Not totally, but they were often around. Some of them were there. You never were without supervision.

RF (24:46):

All of us...I mentioned two hours study and written work and the regular study, that was all in common and there was always a teacher or perhaps two teachers who was sitting with you that could help you.

PF (25:00):

Yeah. And this is a ritual that you don't get when you come home, you go out to play and you don't come into play until you had supper, and the homework hasn't been touched yet. At Marist, the homework was done. We were well prepared.

GN (25:23):

Were you deprived of an opportunity to play?

PF (25:26):

Oh no. There was a time and a place for everything. It was all very well worked out. I remember playing baseball every day. But I think back on it and it must have been in the summer time when we were not really in school. We got to go out and play.

GN (25:47):

But by reflecting...if I understand you, in the previous situation going to Regis, you spent two hours on the train. Here you have two hours that are free and can be used to play as it were, or study. There's more time available in that time to think.

PF (26:07):

And the gear was there. If the weather was bad, you didn't have to stay outside. You could come in and there was not a rec room, but close to that and Brother John would have a puzzle on, a chess situation, white mates and two and this kind of thing. It was always available. So you had challenges available. You didn't have to do that. You could read or you could...but often we were in silence I think. Which you didn't have at home.

GN (26:47):

Right. There was no radio constantly playing and no TV on.

RF (26:51):

No iPod [laughter].

PF (26:53):

Well, there was no TV, forget it. I didn't see a TV until I went to MIT, which was 1947. So that was four or five years later. And then it was only one TV at MIT [laughter].

RF (27:14):

One difference is the following of the French system, where you got a congés or a half day off on a Thursday, and then you went to school on Saturday in the morning. So that section was put there and it gave you like two recreation breaks of Thursday and Sunday.

New Speaker (27:40):

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GN (27:41):

If I recall too--because I happened to go there much later than you guys--but if we were to be off on Wednesday afternoon and it was raining, then we went to class and we were off on Thursday afternoon.

PF (27:52):

Yeah, it was flex schedule.

GN (27:58):

And no one was hindered one bit.

PF (28:01):

You see in any other world, the teachers would be scheduled on those other days and you wouldn't have that access. They would not have that, here your staff and the students were all gelled together.

GN (28:18):

All right. We've done the hourly thing and we've talked about the classroom experience thing. Anything else in a weekly schedule? Like from Sunday to Saturday, there was...Saturday, was there a work period? What'd you do Saturday afternoon? Was it all recreation? Was there any recreation? You went to school in the morning and in the afternoon, how were you entertained?

PF (28:51):

Well, part of it was, possibly, I don't remember the length, but maybe two hour work period. I used to split logs and there were a lot of fallen trees on the property, and these were used as fuel and heating the English Village. And I was not the only one doing that. There were two or three of us that did that.

GN (29:18):

Something more about fallen trees on the property. When you moved there in your first year--the first year of Esopus--what was the general condition? Was the mansion in shambles in any way? Was there mold? Had it been actually used for those years or did you have to start from the beginning scrubbing it down?

RF (29:41):

The mansion had not been used for about three or four years, so it had collected dust, but it wasn't...it hadn't been vandalized by any...that I recall.

PF (29:55):

It far enough off the road.

RF (29:57):

Yeah. The roads were...they had saplings growing out of the-

GN (30:05):

Well, they weren't paved yet. They were just gravel roads.

RF (30:07):

They were gravel roads. But even the saplings were growing out of the gutters, which was stone gutters.

PF (30:16):

We didn't know we had gutters the first year [laughter].

GN (30:21):

And how...what was the process for finding them? You had to dig away what was on top of them?

PF (30:28):

Yeah. Because they had filled with dirt and sand, but they were beautiful stone gutters.

New Speaker (30:34):

You scrapped had enough and you found them.

RF (30:37):

Yeah, they were down there. Actually there was a sewage system too. There were drains that went down and out. So it was very beautifully designed, but it had been in disuse.

GN (30:53):

A larger perspective, let's talk about the years. About it in terms of years.

PF (31:01):

Well you were talking about Saturday activities. I remember one occasion when I came out of the mansion and I looked at these four dead pine trees and I said, "well there are great candidates for the wood pile. And I headed for one of them with my ax and tools, and they were large trees. Fortunately Brother Linus was looking out the window and he stopped me and told me that they're deciduous, and that they lose all the needles in the winter time and then they come back in the spring. And I had never heard of such a thing.

RF (31:45):

That's a tamarack tree.

PF (31:48):

I was ready to take one of them down [laughter]. And they were prized trees out in the front of the mansion.

RF (31:58):

The tamarack was very popular in that area. It was used for tanning and a lot of them got killed off. But the architects--who also did the landscaping--used all domestic types of trees, no foreign trees. So they probably planted those tamaracks.

PF (32:22):

Yeah. Oh yeah. They were purposely planted, no question about that.

GN (32:26):

Now, this would've been the work of the original owner?

PF (32:30):

Oh yes. But back in the 1910 era, so they had 30 or 40 years of growth.

GN (32:44):

And the planting of them around the mansion and down towards the river, is that where they went?

RF (32:53):

There weren't too many of them.

PF (32:53):

There were just four of them and they were out in front where you would drive up to the front of the mansion and walk in...going up steps outside. You talking about the part of the mansion that faces the river?

GN (33:13):

Yes.

PF (33:13):

No, that was clear. You had a great lawn that went to the river in steps...giant steps went down.

GN (33:27):

There's a picture of that in one of the more recent booklets that has come out of magazines. The college magazine I think shows a picture of that great lawn.

RF (33:39):

The great lawn was important for us during winter.

New Speaker (33:46):

Because of sleigh-riding?

PF (33:46):

Sleigh-riding. [Laughter].

GN (33:46):

Oh yeah. Yeah.

RF (33:46):

That was big.

GN (33:49):

You didn't go home on weekends, I imagine. You were there all year from whenever you came in September-

PF (33:55):

11 months of the year.

GN (33:55):

Right. How was the year divided in terms of...let's say secular holidays? Were there any particular days? You have Labor Day, you have Columbus day, you have Veterans' Day, you have Thanksgiving. Was there any kind of focus on...to give you an idea that the year was big? Not every day was like every other day?

RF (34:24):

Yes.

GN (34:26):

In what way?

RF (34:28):

Well the first month of school. A holiday was September 23rd, which is the feast of Saint Linus. And I think Pete and I remember Brother Joseph Cuadros was a great hiker, and we were sent off on hikes across Route 9 into the woods. And then when we got back, there was a clearing on the other side of 9, and they had a picnic lunch for us. So that was the break. Thanksgiving was cel...all the other regular holidays was celebrated, including a lot of the...All Saint's Day for example. The Catholic holidays were celebrated. So you had something right through each month.

PF (35:20):

But you see the staff of teachers were available not just to teach in the classroom. They were there 24/7 and they sponsored the thing like this picnic that Richard mentioned. So they've helped prepare that and get it ready for us. And it was all sort of in the family. You weren't meeting strangers all the time. You were with the same group all the time. Fortunately, I had to like them all.

GN (35:56):

The group would be 37, so students and about six or seven on faculty and staff? So we're under 50 really. Would you know everyone?

RF (36:10):

First year? Yes. Yeah, you'd know them all.

GN (36:15):

Okay. Now, for these particular celebrations, Linus is Feast Day--you all had a picnic. How about Thanksgiving? Was there any kind of football activities or sectional groups or how is...any kind of creative ideas there?

PF (36:38):

Other than visits to Poughkeepsie, I don't think we interfaced with very much other units. I recall once visiting the Redemptorist House in Esopus where the priest came from to say our morning mass once in two years. We left school for a couple of days because it was during the war, and we picked apples. That was an event. School was just shut down for the two days. The whole school went and we climbed trees...climbed ladders I should say. But you were always together.

GN (37:35):

Was there any use of the river? Did you swim in the river? Was that a part of the summer activities?

PF (37:40):

Only in the summer.

GN (37:44):

Well, did you try to cross it in the winter?

PF (37:48):

It's a tidal river and it's very difficult to skate on ice that is going this way and that.

GN (37:55):

Yeah, but you can walk on ice and sometimes it would be a cold winter.

RF (38:01):

We didn't get down there that much except at the end of the sleigh ride run.. If you could make it all the way to the boathouse, that was the best run possible.

GN (38:14):

Going back, one of the things we...you've just mentioned it a few minutes ago--World War II was still on when you first arrived in Esopus and-

PF (38:27):

It was still on when I left [laughter].

GN (38:30):

It was still on when you left, okay. Supplies were hard to get, were there automobiles?

PF (38:38):

The only thing I remember was Molly breaking an axle and she was bringing a load up from the river, and she died in the middle of the road and was left there for months. And Brother Anthony had to take it apart and order the axle and it took months before the park came, and then he was able to reassemble it.

GN (39:03):

Yeah. Well even the kitchen though, you didn't have the modern gas stoves that they have now or electric stoves-

RF (39:12):

We had coal stoves.

GN (39:12):

You had coal stoves. Were they there or were they-?

RF (39:14):

No, they were installed. The coal stoves existed in the super's house where we first had our meals for about a month and a half.

GN (39:23):

And the super's house would be another...over in the English Village? Where would that be?

PF (39:27):

Outside of that. It overlooks the baseball fields.

RF (39:33):

Yeah. That was the original Pratt mansion. But the Protestant groups had built a kitchen and they had added an annex, which was the dining room--which we used. But eventually the new kitchens--probably the enlarged kitchens in the mansion were ready, and then feeding got moved over there.

PF (40:06):

We canned over there.

GN (40:10):

What do you mean 'we canned'?

PF (40:10):

We canned apple sauce and we preserved a great number of fish that came out of the--what we call the Esopus River, but wasn't the river of that name. But-

GN (40:29):

Was the garden used to produce food that was used there? Were tomatoes grown and were there-?

PF (40:36):

I don't recall. Could have been.

RF (40:42):

They planted potatoes in the field where the pool is now, Brother Anthony was in charge of that. But I...there must have been stuff in Brother Shanley's garden, which was the garden close to the mansion. But I don't recall it either.

PF (41:01):

But that would be brought into the kitchen and we wouldn't know that it had come from the farm.

RF (41:07):

The apples would be preserved. Tomatoes would be preserved.

GN (41:15):

Peter, I don't think you've had a chance to go to the mansion, but Richie you have, have you not? And...since-?

RF (41:23):

Not since.

GN (41:25):

Well, let me put it this way. If you were to go into the mansion now, what areas would have been changed most dramatically? I'm thinking of the classroom area because that was a servant's quarter. Were there rooms there when you first arrived? Or...do you recall that?

RF (41:48):

The servant's quarters were on the Western section. The architects didn't originally design that. That was tacked on because Payne wanted some rooms. So there was a floor of bedrooms, no bathrooms. They had to go upstairs to the bathrooms. And that was all knocked down and that became our classrooms. There were three-

GN (42:15):

Who did the knocking down of it?

RF (42:15):

I think the scholastics from Poughkeepsie came in.

GN (42:21):

It was a Marist-run operation.

RF (42:21):

It was a Marist operation, yeah. And it might've been, there was quite a core of working brothers in Poughkeepsie and they came over, broke that down, turned it into a classroom. So originally what was happening was you took your classes there, you did your praying there, you ate there. The only thing you did outside there was-

PF (42:51):

We sang there, we went to school there.

RF (42:51):

Was sleeping. And-

GN (42:51):

Recreation was outside?

RF (42:57):

Recreation. That's right.

GN (42:59):

You mentioned the library. Is it...was there a library as such? Was there books on the shelves?

RF (43:03):

Yes. Brother Linus wanted quite a bit of...he wanted a library and some of...beginning library had been brought over from Poughkeepsie, but also I think that they asked a lot of the brothers houses to send

books that might be useful. There was no full time librarian, Brother Kieran was in charge. And then they had-

GN (43:38):

A very good student who was able to take part in running the library?

RF (43:41):

Well the year ahead of me was Jimmy Monaghan, myself, and the first year there was a junior--a third year student. I don't know if it was either Frank White or Hopson. And our job was to monitor the library, to type up all the cards for the card catalog, to maintain it. Basically tacked as junior librarians. It was a good experience.

GN (44:11):

Was the chapel when you were there Peter? Were there benches in the chapel or pewters or kneelers, or just chairs and you knelt on the floor for Mass? Do you recall?

PF (44:25):

There were kneelers and chairs. Nothing was stable. You could move your kneeler and kneel down on the floor if you wanted.

GN (44:41):

Were there enough chairs? Were there...everyone had their own chairs-?

PF (44:45):

Oh yeah, we all had a place. There weren't that many of us [laughter].

GN (44:49):

Well, there were 37 and maybe five of the faculty. You're getting up under 50, put that into a good room, you do need a number of chairs. Beyond that, where did you do your singing? You mentioned singing a few times.

PF (45:03):

There was a corner room behind the altar. That hooked up to the refractory.

GN (45:18):

Right off the dining room, yes.

PF (45:18):

So that corner of the house on the first floor. We sang in there, but without an organ. The organ was in the chapel.

GN (45:34):

Okay. What...did you say you had daily music?

PF (45:39):

Every morning. A half hour.

GN (45:42):

A half hour. Of choral?

PF (45:45):

Yeah. You're gonna sing bass and you're gonna sing tenor, and so on. Four parts-

GN (45:51):

Were you also a gifted singer? Is that-

PF (45:53):

We got quite a few compliments from the priests who came to Mass about our singing.

RF (46:02):

That room we called it the oratory and we...some of the prayers we convened there and we...let's say morning prayers or the rosary, things like that we didn't have in the chapel. And Brother Master would sometimes give us speeches there. Not speech-

GN (46:31):

Conferences?

RF (46:31):

Lectures. Conferences, yeah. That had...apparently that was the breakfast room or the morning room during the Payne era.

GN (46:43):

I see. Did the faculty eat with you or did they have their own dining room? Or their own area when you were students there?

PF (46:52):

Both.

GN (46:52):

Both. Ate in with the students?

PF (46:58):

At one time and then they had their own room.

RF (47:02):

They ate with us when we ate over in the Pratt mansion, what's now Holy Rosary. And our tables went this way, and then there was one table crosswise that was the faculty table. When we moved to the

mansion, the faculty ate in a room between the big dining room and the scullery. However, there was always a faculty member--usually Brother Master and another faculty member--well usually there was a little table for two.

PF (47:45):

And you had a podium where you read from.

GN (47:48):

Oh. They read during the meals, is that what you said?

PF (47:54):

You had three readers for each meal, so you ate in silence. And I would get up and be the first reader. I would read the life of the saint of the day and then I would step down and the next fellow would come up and he-

GN (48:17):

Was this designed to prepare you for public speaking and reading in public?

PF (48:23):

Yeah. So it was training we definitely did not have in any of my other schools. Each of us had to get up and read. And sometimes if the brother enjoyed the way you were reading, he let you just keep reading it [laughter].

GN (48:47):

And if you read during the meal, did you have time later to eat?

PF (48:49):

Yeah, you could sandwich it in.

GN (48:55):

Well, I'm lost to kind of...you've kind of made a...we've done the week, the day, we've done the house. Is there anything we didn't touch on that you would like to say about the Esopus experience? You know, about living in Esopus and what it meant to you? Anything comes to mind? Happy memory, Peter?

PF (49:25):

Oh, I think it was very happy memories. There was always something to do and you were always taken care of, you were never really let out. You could be out on your own on purpose, but not for very long. Like if I was chopping wood, nobody else was out there chopping wood with me, but somebody wasn't too far away.

GN (49:57):

You're not going to do that all day, you're only going to do it-?

PF (49:59):

No, that was sort of like a little recreation period after class and you didn't do it in the freezing weather, so it wasn't an all year thing.

RF (50:16):

There was...in retrospect, we used to...we had a two room--two bedroom house. So Peter and I are in the bedroom and when our grandmother came to live with us, she lived in that room too. So you'd go from a small house to a huge house and I...and now I compare it to little orphan Annie living in daddy Warbucks mansion. But also there was a sense of adventure. The place was run down and we were bringing the place back to a very usable condition. So you had this feeling...and that carried with me forever. And I always liked the Esopus more than I liked Poughkeepsie. I guess it must have been emotional, but also it's a beautiful property.

GN (51:20):

It was and it still is. And as you know, we're doing this because it has come back to the college now as a leadership center. In the interim, it has been beautified a little bit more, has been polished and shined and updated in terms of furniture.

RF (51:40):

It's probably brought back to the Payne days.

GN (51:45):

And if not even better.

PF (51:47):

I think we haven't mentioned one item. Brother Linus used to get entertainment up. And we would perform and our guests would come on a Sunday and we would perform for the guests. And I can still sing those songs, but I performed in the end show and that kind of thing. Everybody was part of that. But it was...I don't remember how it was worked into, when these things were practiced.

GN (52:28):

It's something like a minstrel show?

PF (52:31):

It was a minstrel showing. Exactly. We had four and then-

GN (52:37):

That's something that's not in keeping with the climate of these days.

PF (52:40):

No. Well, it was an entertainment and you got up on the stage and you performed, or a group of you performed. I think one fellow played the fiddle.

RF (52:59):

I don't recall the fiddle.

PF (53:00):

Well, I may not...that may not be true.

RF (53:04):

Well, we had piano-

PF (53:07):

That could be from my grade school days.

GN (53:09):

Well, there wasn't much difference. I mean, you're only talking about two or three years going from grade school to this time.

PF (53:15):

You haven't had the pleasure of hearing me sing those songs [laughter].

GN (53:22):

Well, thank you very much.