

# Esopus as a Novitiate

19?? to 19??

looking for an author (or authors) to contribute first-hand knowledge ...  
from **Martin Curtin** (rec'd 12 Feb 2003)

When our family visited my grandfather my first memories of the Marist Brothers, aside from my Uncle Bernard (known as Brother Herman Edwin until they permitted him to change his name to the one he was born with, Bernard Curtin), were of those who would be working at Esopus over the summer. I recall a brother teaching me to golf, as he practiced hitting his seven iron on the mansion lawn during some free times. He was working in the kitchen for the summer.

Several brothers would stop down and visit my folks when they visited. A Brother Kieran I believe was the boss when I was a kid. Brother Lucian, Brother Felician and perhaps a Brother Mary Anthony (I believe he was stationed in Haverstraw but perhaps spent the summer in Esopus) were names I remember along with Brother John Patrick. Brother John would give us our crewcuts in his barber chair off the dining room at the Juniorate/Novitiate. Brother John would go down with us to the river where we would go swimming at the boathouse. I remember my sister getting injured trying to dive through an inner tube that Brother John was holding as my Dad encouraged my sister to dive. Luckily it was just a neck muscle that was injured as she hit the side of the tube on her dive. I don't think she has dived since. We used to love the waves as they were kicked up by the passing ships. Brother John would also set up times that we could go swimming in the pool so that we wouldn't interfere with those stationed there.

When I entered the Novitiate in 1964 Brother Peter Hillary was the Master of Novices and he was supported with Brothers Augustine Nolan, William Lavigne and Robert James. Brother Christopher was the head of the Esopus property and Brother John Berchmans was the head carpenter/groundskeeper. A Brother Edmund drove the car to pick up the priests at Mt. St. Alphonsus as well as helping drive my grandfather up the hill as he got older to attend Mass. Brother Edmund also drove the tractor to cut the grass. Each year at our Saint Patrick's Day party I get to do the Irish jig that Brother Christopher taught us when we were postulants. Esopus was also the provincial house, Brother Leo Sylvius was provincial at the time. Jimmy was the cook and made the iron chef look calm compared to Jimmy. We soon learned to do it Jimmy's way as we did not want to incur his wrath. Brother Peter was assigned to Rome after our first year and Brother Sigmund Eugene was named our Master of Novices. Brother John Berchmans was named head of the property some time later.

As postulants my favorite memories were of tobogganing down the hill at the mansion, raking leaves for what seemed forever and placing leaves in canvas bags to store at the pump house to keep it from freezing(?). I also recall a project where we would be painting the ceiling at the mansion up on three levels of scaffolding. The softball and football leagues prepared us so that when we went to the college we always had the best intramural teams.

I have many fond memories of Esopus, I still love going back every now and then. I believe I was last there a couple of years ago when one of my

children was investigating attending Marist College. I also attended a mass for deceased Marist Brothers there one November.

*References:* email from Marty Curtin

*most recent revision:* 12 February 2003

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[home page](#)