

St. Francis Hospital

Our relationship with the good Sisters of St. Francis and their nearby hospital has been priceless. We arrived on the Marist campus in 1905, whereas the Sisters of St. Francis came here to start the hospital around the early 1920s, and in the early days they used to come for Mass at our chapel at the St. Ann's Hermitage building. They did this until they built their own chapel at the hospital. In those days, we used to go to Hyde Park to get our chaplain at the Jesuits' St. Andrews Novitiate; we would pick up two of the Fathers, and one of them was brought to say Mass at the Sisters' chapel. We had this shared service for years until the Sisters were able to get a resident chaplain.

The relationship was priceless, for the Sisters were able to guide us to find the doctors needed at our own St. Ann's Hermitage infirmary, where we had the elderly and retired Brothers along with our sick. So a few of the doctors working at St. Francis Hospital also used to come to our Marist infirmary, where they would take care of minor operations and service. Besides this, whenever we had a sick Brother at the hospital I had the privilege of being able to visit him at any time. Some of the hospital doctors also became our regular doctors, and I still recall Dr. Charles Cambridge who helped us so much that we wanted to affiliate him to the Marist Brothers. He accepted on condition that we affiliate his brother, James, also a doctor who worked at St. Francis. It was also at this time that we enjoyed the privilege of free service for our old Marist Brothers when Dr. Eimee, an excellent chiropractor, used to come to treat our elderly Brothers, especially on Saturdays or on his free time.

We enjoyed tremendous service at St. Francis Hospital and were of help to the Sisters and the hospital. Each year, one of the doctors of St. Francis used to come to take the blood type of each one of the Brothers. At that time we had more than 100, and our donations were a great help to St. Francis. We also were sure to invite the Sisters to our community entertainment.

I had arrived in Washington during the time of World War II. At that time Brothers were exempt from military service but we were obliged to take first aid courses. We also did night service to make sure that unnecessary lights at night were turned off so as not to warn the enemy. Because of this mandatory training, I was qualified to train first aid teachers. As that service requirement was still in effect when I came to St. Francis, I was able to teach first aid to the nurses and brought some of our qualified Marist Brothers. I recall that I did remind the Brothers that when it came to artificial respiration, we were to teach "not to touch!"

I also recall that since all of our Brothers were checked for their blood type each year, we were a standby blood bank for the hospital. We were on call and when a special type of blood was needed and the Sisters were shorthanded, we used to send Brothers. I recall an emergency call from the Sisters when a woman was hemorrhaging. We sent up twelve Brothers to give her particular type. And each year we would have a session for the newcomers to type their blood. For awhile also the Sisters were offered the use of any of our teachers to help them out if needed, or they could have some of their student nurses come to the college for some courses. This was years ago, of course, but it had been a great help to us, and we were pleased to work closely with the Sisters. The Sister who was then the head of the nursing school was Sr. Ann Elizabeth, who later became the head of the hospital staff and has always remained a very close friend of mine and of all the Brothers. St Francis Hospital proved to be a priceless, unexpected blessing indeed.