

(August 2, 1911 - December 19, 1990)

by Larry Fisher-Hertz (This obituary appeared in the Poughkeepsie Journal).



Brother Nilus, Vincent J Donnelly, a Marist Brother and teacher who oversaw the construction of more than half a dozen buildings on the Marist College campus, died Wednesday at the Marist Brothers Retirement Center in Miami, Florida. he was 79.

"Brother Nilus was literally and figuratively one of the key builders of Marist College", said Marist President Dr. Dennis J. Murray on Thursday. "It is fitting that Donnelly Hall, which bears his name,

will serve as a lasting tribute to his memory."

Brother Donnelly was born on August 2, 1911 in Bridgeport, Conn. and took his vows as a Marist Brother July 26, 1928.

He received a bachelor's and a master's degree in physics from Fordham University and received an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Marist in 1983.

In September 1952 he was named treasurer and construction manager at Marist, and he served the college for 37 years.

He oversaw construction of the chapel, the monastery (now the library), a dormitory (now the faculty building), a student lounge (now Adrian Building), Donnelly Hall and others.

Brother Paul Ambrose, Marist president from its founding in 1943 until 1958, called him "the backbone of the college."

Ambrose said he had known Donnelly when both were living in New England and asked that he be brought to Marist when plans for the new college were being made.

Ambrose said Donnelly was not only knowledgeable about the construction trade, he was also innovative.

In 1962, Vatican II suggested that new chapels have their altars in the middle, Brother Donnelly said. "Heck, we had that in our chapel, and we built it in 1953!"

Poughkeepsie attorney John J. Gartland Jr, a member of the Marist Board of Trustees, who has been affiliated with the college since 1956, called Donnelly "a charming and talented man."

Friends may call today from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. and 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Chapel at Marist College.

A Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated Saturday at 10:00 a.m. in the chapel. Burial will follow at the Marist Brothers Cemetery in Esopus.

Funeral arrangements are under the direction of the William G. Miller and Son Funeral Home, 59 Montgomery Street, Poughkeepsie.

The Marist Brothers
252 School Street
Watertown, MA 02172

20 December 1990

Dear Brothers:

Nilus Donnelly died last night about 7:30 P.M. He had difficulty breathing before supper; by the time a hospice worker arrived to assist, he was dead.

Born in Bridgeport, Connecticut on August 1st, 1911, Nilus was the fourth of five children. His father, a butcher, died when Nilus was about three; his mother was dead of tuberculosis a short time later.

Nilus spent some of his childhood in a Catholic orphanage; he remembered, even into later life, the strictness of the Sisters in charge. His aunt, a nun at another institution, made arrangements eventually for Nilus and his brother to be taken by relatives in New Britain, Connecticut.

A few years ago, Nilus gave me a copy of his autobiography; it runs thirty-seven pages and is filled with the details of a life that can only be described as "an adventure." Included in it is the fact that one summer as a small boy he caught a chipmunk which he kept in a cage until winter as well as hair-raising details about building the gym at Central and several building at Marist College.

Nilus will always be best remembered for "the project." That endless year-round effort which shaped so many of the brothers of both Provinces and added legend and lore to the annals. What many did not know, was that he was often enough learning as he built!

Among the Scholastics several items were Nilus' trademark: a Citroen, vacations in Haiti, the penthouse on Champagnat. What I also remember is a thoughtful and soft-spoken man who was a great help on a number of occasions. In his last years, when I had the privilege of visiting him in Poughkeepsie and Miami, I enjoyed the conversations we had, the opportunities to reminisce, his ability to be surprised; I, for one, shall miss him.

Nilus will be waked in Poughkeepsie on Friday, December 21, 1990 at the Marist College Chapel. A Mass of the Resurrection will be celebrated on Saturday, the 22nd, at Marist College; burial will be in the Brothers' cemetery in Esopus.

Let's give thanks for the years we had Nilus among us. The changes he saw in our Province during his lifetime are nothing short of amazing; his contributions incalculable. Bless him even as he rests with our God.

Sincerely,

Brother Sean D. Sammon FMS Provincial

REMEMBRANCES:

Delivered by Brother Richard Rancourt
Our Lady Seat of Wisdom Chapel
Marist College, Poughkeepsie, New York
Saturday, December 22, 1990

Just where does one begin when one is to speak about Nilus? Nilus was quiet, unassuming, private, extraordinary, very democratic and multi-talented; a unique individual; a self-made man in many fields; a man of good humor; a man before his time; a legend in his time; a devotee of classical music and of the fine arts; a teacher of physics; a treasurer, a director of construction; a provincial consulter; director of the first computer center at Marist College; recipient of an honorary doctorate of Humane Letters from Marist College; a gifted builder of the Central Catholic High School classroom-gymnasium complex in Lawrence, Massachusetts; of this chapel, and of Fontaine, Adrian, and Donnelly Halls on this campus; a Marist Brother who was by character humble, simple, and modest, who did good quietly and who was above all remarkably different.

I first met Nilus when I was thirteen-years old and Nilus was a teacher at Central Catholic High School in Lawrence, Massachusetts. I remember him as the Brother who was a licensed ham radio operator and the Brother who had built his own Murphy-bed to allow him more space in his bedroom. I also remember the women in the school's Mothers' Club remarking how Bing Crosby bore a striking resemblance to Brother Nilus.

Back then and over the twenty years that I lived in community with Nilus, I often wondered what made Nilus different. I found some clues in reading his "Memories of 75 Years", a manuscript that Nilus wrote several years ago and that we often spent many an evening discussing. In it I learned that by the age of five or so Nilus' parents had died and his aunt, Sister Evangelista, was instrumental in placing him and his three brothers and one sister in Catholic orphanages. After a few years he went to live with relatives in New Britain Connecticut. He spent happy years there until the family learned that Nilus had become friendly with Barbara Hood, a young girl of his own age ... probably 10 or 11 ...

In his own words Nilus wrote:

"The family took drastic measures. It was decided that I should be placed in a strict boarding school. My aunt, Sister Evangelista, was informed. In due time, Brother Frederick Charles, the recruiter for the Marist Brothers, appeared at the home, was served tea and cookies and agreed to take me for training to be a Marist Brother at St. Ann's hermitage in Poughkeepsie, New York. Even then that name intrigued me.

" ... when I first arrived (to the Juniorate where young boys studied to be Brothers) I had written several times to Barbara. I never received an answer, so, completely disenchanted by the fickleness of girls, I forgot her. Later I was to find out that Brother Master opened all incoming and outgoing mail and discarded what he did not like, so perhaps Barbara came to the same conclusion I did."

"Two of my older brothers, who lived elsewhere, were disposed of in the same way. Bill became a Marist Brother (for a few years) and Tom went to another order of Brothers. Seems as though the recruiters of Brothers found orphans to be a rich mine."

As I read these paragraphs I thanked the Brother Master who censored Nilus' mail and perhaps saved him for us. I was surprised by the very strange and very different way that God used to call Nilus to be a Brother. I imagined that Nilus might be giving us some hint as to where we might search for vocations in these very difficult days of recruitment !! Anyway, with youthful romance behind him and his hands set firmly to the plow, Nilus found his seventh and eighth grades in the Juniorate full of fun and excitement. Oddly enough, he assessed his novitiate years to be enjoyable ones. What struck him was the regularity of the daily schedule. Each event of the day had its exact time and place. It was during these years (1926 - 128) that he helped Brother Paul Acyndinus construct a six-foot-high concrete wall along route 9 from the south to the north entrances of the property. Nilus was assigned to work for an hour a day making hand-cast concrete blocks in iron molds, four each day. And it is ironic that some forty years later in 1966, he was the one to demolish this wall and to expose the campus to the public and to the future.

If as a youngster Nilus was captivated by an erector set he received as a Christmas present and which he claimed aroused his building instincts, what he learned from the Brothers in these early Poughkeepsie years richly enhanced his creative and imaginative powers as well as his talents for building things. He admired the efforts of Brothers Abelus and Altin who build a dam to control the flow of water to a water wheel that ran a generator which supplied 1000 watts of electricity to the Juniorate building. Nilus spoke affectionately of Brother Legotianus (after whom Leo Hall at Marist College is named) who invited Nilus of college age to help him build the remote control system that would run a six-foot wooden boat in the lake (now filled in and the site of the Lowell Thomas Communications Center). In those days, Nilus reminded us that electronics, as such, was then just a word. What Nilus learned then and in his years at St. Ann's and Central Catholic he patiently and generously passed on to other Brothers and to anyone who worked with him on the projects. Nilus had that special charm of making a person feel comfortable when learning from him.

As a youngster Nilus confessed that he was a voracious reader and read everything that came into the house. It was a habit that Nilus cultivated throughout life. he learned principally by reading and doing, a fact attested to by his niece Maureen from Iowa City. She phoned and related the story that on one trip when Nilus was returning from New York to Massachusetts, he stopped over to visit his brother in Connecticut. he told his brother that he was going to build a gymnasium. As rivalries go among siblings, his brother huffed, "Vincent, what in the world do you know about putting up buildings?" Nilus gently and nonchalantly replied, "I read a book." He then promptly went upstairs, got the book, and showed it to his brother. What many Marist Brothers who worked for Nilus never realized was that he was learning while they were doing what he learned. One can only speculate what the Brothers might have done or thought had they known that he was learning while they were doing. Still his buildings remain standing today in witness to his ingenuity and self-confidence. It was a self-confidence grounded in a realistic optimism in being able to get things done. The realization of his dream for a new classroom-gymnasium building in Lawrence, Massachusetts was possible only if he could raise \$200,000. Back in 1947 this was no small feat. So he tells us:

"In my innocence, I thought it would be easy to raise \$200,000; get 200 people to each give \$1000. So for months, I spoke at hundreds of meetings to any group that would listen. Most of the promised donations were pledges over a year's time. It was the most harrowing time of my life, but finally we had the \$200,000 promised."

Of all his accomplishments perhaps the piece de resistance has to be Donnelly Hall. It was undoubtedly his pride and joy. He never tired of telling stories about its construction. No one would ever maintain that all the Brothers enjoyed working on this project during the sometimes hot, sweltering, and humid Poughkeepsie summer days, yet everyone did enjoy working for Nilus. He was gentle, generous, kind, considerate, understanding, respectful, and probably never more at home than when he pitched in with pick and shovel or drove a bulldozer to level the grounds for some new projects. Although he respected that bulldozer, how he used to chuckle when he related incidents about some of the near misses he had with serious injury while operating it. He delighted in those summers; thoroughly enjoyed his work and the men he worked with. At his golden jubilee celebration as a Marist Brother, these men returned to pay him tribute. He was deluged with showers of compliments. But perhaps Mike Talty summed it up most accurately, albeit with some slight exaggeration, when he said that during the days of the project when Nilus spoke, God spoke. Need one say more?

Yet Nilus wasn't all construction. As we said he was different. He had his Citroen that he persuaded his superiors was the most economical buy and best suited for his work. He said he used it chiefly for project business and to fetch the Jesuit priest from St. Andrew's to say our daily morning Mass or to officiate at Sunday Vespers or to hear our weekly confessions. In January, when construction was slow, he made his annual trip to Haiti; to go deep-sea fishing or scuba diving. When he returned, how some of us loved to go in the evening to his penthouse and listen to his tales of adventures in Haiti. Some of his stories were first-rate thrillers. For some unknown reason we accepted the fact that Nilus could do those things while we remained behind, taught our classes, corrected our papers, and said our prayers for one another, and for Nilus. No one but Nilus could get away with something like that. And through it all, we loved him dearly. In many ways he was fun to be with. He made life interesting. We know that for the rest of the year he had responsible work ahead of him.

The thirty-seven years or so he spent working at Marist College were among his finest years. He knew the property as he knew the palm of his hand. He worked hard transforming monastic grounds into an attractive college campus. Even after his retirement, his interest in the projects at Marist never waned. But most importantly he realized that his days in the sun were over and that the time had come for others to take over the design and construction of new buildings and the renovations of old ones.

We regret that he was unable to return to Marist to see the many outstanding changes that have taken place in the short span of the two-and-a-half years that he spent in retirement in Florida. Before he left for Florida he did wonder how they would ever improve the athletic field below the Gartland Commons. Had he been able to return and just once more take in from his penthouse atop Champagnat Hall the panoramic view of the northern part of the campus, he would have been very pleased with that view: a marvelous athletic field, the Gartland Commons, the Town Houses, the Dyson Center, the Lowell Thomas Communications Center, and the fabulous landscaping. In his final year at Marist, Nilus led a quiet, solitary life

working at his electronics: learning more about the computer; writing his memories; and reading extensively. He was always into something. When he could no longer carry food on a tray from the second to the first floor of his apartment, he thought a dumbwaiter would do the trick. To have one installed would have been too expensive. So for a reasonable cost he bought himself a garage-door motor, put up two very long steel beams in his apartment, and to the beams and motor he wired a shelf that ran by remote control up and down the inner sides of the beams. As we watched with some suspense, he would put his food tray on the shelf and then press the remote control button to send the food up or downstairs. How we laughed and marveled that in the one-flight journey never a drop of liquid was ever spilt! But all this was typical Nilus. Right to the end his lifestyle was basically simple.

Although he had done much for the college, in these final years he often told me how much he appreciated the generous assistance that people in the college gave him to make his life pleasant and comfortable.

For all his accomplishments he remained solidly rooted in the traditions of the Marist Brothers. Nilus had his mission. God had committed some work to him that He had not committed to another. Nilus accomplished it magnificently; and we are very proud of his many creative accomplishments. And if by chance Nilus may never have known for certain that mission in this life, as Cardinal Newman said, he shall be told it in the next.

We will miss him.

Nilus' Ingenuity and Friends
as I remember them in 2003
by Richard Foy

I first got to know Brother Nilus derivatively during my first teaching assignment at St. Ann's Academy in New York City, 1950-1957. I had heard about his work building a gymnasium-classroom building in Lawrence, but only learned some interesting details later.

The Academy was located in a ramshackle group of small buildings, only two of which were built as school buildings. The gym was in what had been a church before St. Jean Baptiste was built at 76th and Lexington. Next to it was the Knights of Columbus building, taken over from the K of C and converted to classrooms. Then came two former brownstones, 185 and 187 East 76th Street; one used as partial classrooms, partial residence for the Brothers; the other residence for Hungarian refugees who constituted the maintenance crew for the Academy.

My intermediary to Nilus was Brother Lawrence Hanshumaker, a Wheeling native, who was a genius at short wave radio, electricity, electronics and photography. (Does this sound like a junior Nilus?) . He was looking to phase out of some of his ancillary duties, and I was chosen to take over the photography. The lab was located in the Lex building, and I discovered that it had been built by Brother Nilus when he taught at St. Ann's in the 1930s. Nilus had also installed a complicated public address system which originated at the principal's office and extended to every room in the complex. By 1950, Larry had enhanced the system to allow microphones to be placed near every classroom. This was because volunteers had begun a Wednesday bingo to benefit the Philippine Missions and the gym was not large enough to house all the participants. So the caller sat in the gym, but

attendants had to call down "Bingo" and then read off the numbers for verification from every classroom. Larry and I maintained the system, but Nilus had designed it.

While at Saint Ann's, Nilus attended a lecture in the mid-1930s by a professor from MIT, who described an interesting electric phenomenon called a strobe light. Up until 1952, we took pictures using flash bulbs. Nilus was intrigued; using the information from the lecture, he built his own strobe light. The batteries were huge, and he toted them around on a dolly. He took pictures of the basketball games. When the novelty wore off, he sold the entire apparatus to NYU labs, gaining more than enough cash to pay off the initial investment.

When Nilus was raising cash for the Lawrence construction project, he heard about surplus war equipment sales. So he hired a secretary in Lawrence, rented a warehouse there, and traveled around the country to surplus war auctions bidding on materials which he deemed useful for constructing and furnishing the gym. He communicated with his secretary using the short wave radio.

The short wave radio led to another facet of Nilus's aura -- Haiti. Nilus had made contact with a New England native who was living down there, and they corresponded by short wave for a few years. Eventually Nilus' contact invited him to come down for a visit. He could stay with his friend to reduce living costs, and he could fish and then sell the fish to pay the other expenses of his trip. That began his series of annual trips. Towards the end of this era, Nilus tired of renting a sailboat for recreation and fishing, and had one built. He found a native to live on the boat, and rented it out to other visitors when Nilus was not there.

Before he returned to Marist College in 1952, Nilus traveled to France for a sabbatical called the second Novitiate located at St. Genis-Laval. Brothers usually traveled by boat (airplanes were a novelty then) and did a little travel en route and on the return journey. After leaving the Novitiate at St Genis-Laval, Nilus wound up in Paris with no money. He arranged to show the slides of the places he visited on his way to St. Genis-Laval each evening at a small restaurant. His pay was his meals!

Although most Brothers remember Nilus for those construction projects during the summers and when they were students at Marist, an entire new career opened up for Nilus after Donnelly was completed. Since we used government and bank loans for dormitory construction, acting as one's own contractor was not an option. So Nilus began a career of supervising construction. The first building under this new regime was the Sheahan Dormitory, which was destined to be build as one of three on a site now occupied by the baseball field. When construction began, the soil tests showed that the site was unsuitable. Nilus came to me and suggested the current site, since there was bedrock close to the surface. That's how Sheahan got relocated in one day!

Sheahan was designed by an architect named Donald Lane. When it came time to design Leo Hall, Nilus suggested we take another architect, a young man named Paul Canin, whom Nilus felt would be more responsive to our suggestions. Nilus discovered that Paul had signed a contract with a local engineer which guaranteed the engineer a high percentage of Paul's earnings for the rest of his life. Nilus found this patently unfair, and insisted that the contract be broken if the engineer was to be considered for any other work on the Marist campus. The contract was dissolved, and Paul Canin became one of Nilus's admirers and devotees.

While Sheahan was being built, we had raised about \$60,000 for construction of a boathouse. Paul designed it, but as construction proceeded, the builder, Henry Miller, warned Nilus that it was structurally unsound. Paul had designed it but had not used any engineering firm. Nilus and Miller designed some stiffening braces, and the boathouse continues in use today. We also checked out construction of a bulkhead, as the city was renovating its own bulkhead. When the price came in at what we considered an outrageous sum, Nilus found his own solution. There was blasting going on along Parker Avenue on the site of the Andros Diner. Nilus had one inch holes drilled into some of the larger pieces of rock, inserted expansion pins and loaded them onto trucks for delivery to the boathouse site. His usual crane was not strong enough to lift the rocks, but he and Brother Gus Landry had purchased a smaller but more robust crane from Navy surplus in Brooklyn. They used this to place the large rocks, and this bulkhead remains, although I understand that after 40 years, it will be superceded by another to be build by the Corps of Engineers. Incidentally, one of the officers at the Navy surplus jokingly suggested that they had destroyers available. Gus immediately offered to purchase one (he was an old Navy man) with the idea of turning it into a floating dormitory! It never came to pass, but illustrates that for every ingenious idea for which Nilus is credited, there must have been nine or ten which he considered and then discarded.

To construct the Marist Chapel in 1952-1954, Nilus used the architect he had used for the Lawrence gym. The result is a gem, and Nilus used him again for the original Fontaine Hall -- student brothers dining hall and study room. As the plans were delivered, usually later than expected, Nilus began to suspect the size of the beams were too small. He later found out that the architect was dying of a brain tumor, but his wife did not want anyone to know this. So Nilus got on a train to New York City, and looked up structural engineers in the telephone directory. The first one was A. A. Abdalian, an Armenian gent whom we later called Arbak. Nilus went in to see him, and Arbak was astonished to see a man of the cloth (yes, Nilus did have a clergy suit!) and feel the calluses on Nilus' hands. Arbak redesigned the Fontaine Building, and joined the long list of Nilus admirers and devotees.

When the time came to design the Leo Hall dormitory, Nilus insisted that Paul Canin use Abdalian as the engineer. Arbak was a specialist in what is called flat plate construction, which pours thicker floors but leaves no room for ductwork; everything must be placed in the concrete before pouring. This is consistently used for apartment buildings in New York City. So Leo was designed at six floors but very compact in height so as not to impinge on the natural beauty of the site.

Next came Champagnat. Again, Nilus used Paul Canin for design, but Arbak for engineering. Pouring repetitive floors is an art, and the contractor finally got it right about floor six. One day Arbak was standing next to me as we watched the workmen, and he blurted out: "tell them to keep going up to twenty floors!" I replied that we had no need for that many right now, although the site design called for a twin tower to be built at a later date. "Oh, leave the floors empty for now, but you will save millions in construction later on. With the foundations I designed, you could go up forty floors!" I did not have the guts to authorize such a bold move, but again it shows the innovative types surrounding Nilus.

When time came to pour foundations for the Champagnat Student Union, I was in Switzerland on sabbatical. I got a call from Nilus describing a problem. What Brother Francis Xavier had assured me was solid rock turned out to be permeable shale, and the contractor salivated at the prospect of digging out four floors of

shale as an extra in the contract. This would have run over a million dollars. Nilus located one of two machines in the USA in Cleveland, and for \$75,000 brought it to the site. The machine drilled holes through the rock and went down sometimes eighty feet until it hit bedrock. Cement was then dropped in the hole as the machine gradually withdrew, so the campus center is really on cement stilts eighty feet in the ground!

A word about the penthouse. The contractor for Champagnat was from New Jersey, and was used to a more jaded world of construction. The original plan called just for a tiny box as an outlet for stairs, similar to that on the other half of the tower. The contractor spoke with Canin, who sketched out the modification which became the penthouse. It was furnished almost completely by the contractors at no cost, once they realized who would be living in it. Although Nilus might have been the 'enemy' to these contractors, they appreciated his willingness to work through problems with them and adjust when the original plans caused hardship.

With the completion of Champagnat, one era of construction ended. I could see that he was a man with a leftover life to kill, but I know that he loved challenges. I wanted to establish a computer center on campus. Although Nilus knew nothing about computers, I asked him to supervise the center which would house an IBM 1401. The first summer he brought in about six Brothers to help with the programming, including my former mentor Larry Hanshumaker. He did hire one experience programmer, Gene Gummeny. To train others, we gave a programming aptitude test to several of the secretaries. Joanne Cicale scored the highest and expressed interest, and for several years she was a programmer and computer operator for us. Nilus developed his own team in the Adrian Building, and worked closely with the business office and the registrar's office, both of which were located in the same building. It gave him a new lease on life, as he admitted to me that his innards were now too fragile to stay for longer than ten minutes on the bulldozer.

His friends. Nilus seemed to attract friends and admirers from all walks of life. We have already spoken of Paul Canin and Arbak Abdalian. Another friend was Louis Greenspan, who with his two brothers, was a salesman for Miron Construction. Lou and Nilus became good friends, and I often had dinner with Lou and Nilus at Lou's house. Later Lou became associated with the McCann Foundation, and worked on myriad projects at Marist, including the north athletic field cited by Brother Richard Rancourt in the previous article.

As a sideline, Nilus took up painting and attending evening classes at the local high school. There he met Evelyn Rimai Fisher, and they struck up a lasting friendship. When I returned to Marist in early 1959, Nilus approached me about using some of the funds from the Donnelly building project to hire Evelyn as a design consultant. He assured me that she would more than match her salary in savings, as she would become the purchasing agent for the furnishings. He was correct. Evelyn was a mathematics major, graduating from Hunter College in 1929 (the year I was born), but she worked in town as a dental assistant. One simple thing she did for Donnelly was to change the shades of paint in the hallway every hundred feet, so that someone walking the hallway would feel as if he/she were progressing. It did not cost more, but gave a nice feel to a large building. In Sheehan, she insisted that different rooms be painted different colors, so that when the doors of the bedrooms were open, there was a rainbow effect in the corridor. Again, no extra cost, just a little extra effort.

Evelyn and her husband, Larry, were childless. She was a tough negotiator, but had a very soft spot inside. After working with her in her role as design consultant, I wanted to hire her to teach art at Marist. She had no formal training, but had won several juried competitions (two of her winners adorn my living room). The faculty could not see her fitting into the straightjacket of Instructor, Assistant Professor, etc, so we dreamed up the title Artist in Residence. Tacitly many of the faculty did not approve of her abstract style of art, but were unwilling to admit this.

When the chapel was completed and work begun on the original Fontaine, one problem remained: how to complete the clerestory windows, each about three feet high and twenty feet long. On the exterior there was a grillwork of poured concrete done by the volunteer Brothers, but the windows still looked bare. As Nilus worked on furnishing the kitchen, he became acquainted with Mr. Traulsen, a manufacturer of refrigeration equipment. He mentioned the problem to Traulsen, and thought the shape would be better filled with quotations from the Bible about Mary. Traulsen's wife was a former model, Rose Rita Hunt, and she quickly volunteered to pose for the windows. So they dressed her in a veil, and took a raft of pictures. The end result was a photo of Rita and a quotation for each window. It was done by Kodak in the style which Kodak used for the famous enlargements in Grand Central Station. Tongues clucked at the almost blasphemous idea of using a beautiful model - a married woman - to represent the Blessed Virgin! Nilus calmly ignored the fuss, and eventually most observers grew to like the windows. (One amusing sidebar. There was a large wall at the front of the student brothers' study hall. Nilus got the idea of placing the photos of many Brothers who had worked on the project in that space, using a background light as done at Grand Central. He chose the biblical scene of the Ascension of Jesus. So eleven Brothers and Rita got dressed up and trotted to Arax studio for pictures to be made into slides. Unfortunately, several Brother-Apostles forgot to remove their wristwatches, and this anachronism necessitated a second shoot session on another day.)

But time and the sunshine caused the transparencies to fade. Rather than try to replicate the originals, Nilus and Evelyn Fisher designed abstract elements which were constructed by pasting various layers of colored glass together, with Evelyn riding herd over the Brothers who were doing the pasting. These patterns remained for many years. Using the same technique, Evelyn designed windows for the two story windows of Donnelly Hall in the space originally used for the library. She used a special type of glue, which she was assured would work nicely. We found out that the glue affected white Brothers leaving them with ugly and itchy rashes. It did not seem to affect the Philippine Brothers, so quietly Brother Richard Edwin used Philippine Brothers to complete the project. The colored pictures cast a pretty hue inside the library during the day, and at night the exterior view of the windows became an icon of Marist for many of the evening division students.

Evelyn attracted another artist to work at Marist, mostly as a volunteer. She was Eva Plaut. Her husband, Ted Plaut, was a Holocaust camp survivor who worked at IBM and was completing his bachelors degree at Marist. Just before WW II, Eva's parents had spirited her out of Germany to England. She took art courses at some prestigious schools in London. Over time she evolved from representational art towards the abstract. She helped out in the art department, and lectured on the history of art as well as directed individual student projects.

Although many faculty looked down on the art department as not being 'academic', Evelyn and Eva developed a surprising number of professional artists, including

Don Haughey, Marley Jones, and John Werenko, who returned to Marist to head the art department after obtaining a PhD.

Among other friends of Nilus, I count Nathan Reifler, the owner and president of Electra Lighting, and after his death, his brother Ben and their wives. Izzie Slutzky, one of the three Slutzky brothers who developed Hunter Mountain, build Leo Hall, and admired Nilus greatly. And of course Traulsen and his wife Rita. Within the Brothers, Nilus friends and admirers are too numerous to list, but I would be remiss not to cite Brother Emil Michael, "p'tit Mike", the crew boss for so many years.