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▼ click on correspondent or topic to go to that item ▼

Correspondents

[Br. Tim Brady '64](#)
[Dick Brannigan '50](#)

[Leo Byron '57](#)
[Sally Connolly](#)

[Br Hank Hammer '75](#)
[Br John Klein '66](#)

[Gus Nolan '48](#)
[Jack Redmond '51](#)

[Rob Schmid '68](#)
[Gene Zirkel '53](#)

Topics

[Hurricane Katrina and Marist US](#)

[Lay Marists and the Gift of Charism](#)

[History of the GMC Picnic](#)

[Eugene Connolly '45 r.i.p.](#)

[Br Denis Hever '64 r.i.p.](#)

[Br Louis Richard '51 r.i.p.](#)

From **GUS NOLAN ('48)**: As a volunteer in the archives of the Marist College Library, I have had the opportunity to interview dozens of people who were at the college from its earliest years. It is most surprising to find how many accounts are the same, and yet, different. With this in mind, I thought it might be fitting to offer an historical perspective of another Marist venture, the GMC picnic.

On Saturday, September 10th, I arrived at Mt. St. Michael about 2:00 pm, a little later than usual. It was a beautiful day in New York City, and the wonderful turnout for the picnic was impressive. The custom of bringing a dish to be shared by others worked very well.

The bees also arrived, as they usually do, but there were few reports of being stung. How did this tradition develop? Here is my recollection!

I have a 1973 calendar that indicates a Sunday, September 16th Mass offered at noon in the Esopus chapel followed by a picnic in the afternoon on the main lawn. Since I cannot verify anything further back than that, I would suggest this date as the start of this tradition. Because this event seemed a grand success, the Poughkeepsie GMC group thought it would be good to continue. I believe every year since that date, there has been some kind of a fall event, sometimes with a spiritual focus; for example, Mass at the Brothers' residence in Cold Spring.

A Saturday afternoon picnic appeared to develop sometime in the late 1970's. The site varied: Esopus, Marist College, Marist Nicholas House in Cold Spring, Fahnestock State Park, FDR State Park (Mohansic Lake), and finally, for the past many years, the "garth" at Mount St. Michael (or the gym or Brothers' dining room when weather was not cooperative).

The date for the picnic was set in the early years when many had young families, and the opening of school had to be considered. So, it was decided the second Saturday after Labor Day would be appropriate. This year it was changed again since the original rationale had faded, and the opening of the school year was no longer a serious factor. Information about the date has more recently been disseminated through *Marists All*.

The picnic seemed to just happen over the last decade principally because of the warm and generous welcome extended by the Marist Brothers at Mt. St. Michael, to whom we are most grateful. The picnic has served as a great opportunity to touch base with old friends. Anyone wishing to add another event at another time and place is welcome to do so!

By the way, here is a listing of those attending this year's picnic: Br. Jim Adams, Br. Joe Belanger, Br. Brice Byczynski, Br. Charles Marcellin, Mo Bibeau, Br. Nick Caffrey, Br. James Devine, Br. Luke Driscoll, Rich Foy, Jim Friel, Br. James Gaffney, Br. Scotty Hughes, Br. John (from Scotland), Br. Des Kelly, Mike Kelly and wife, Br. Gus Landry, Marty and Ann Lang, Gil Levesque and wife, Ludwig, Joe McMahon, Charles and Claire McNiff, Gus Nolan, Adrian and Betty Perreault, Vince and Jane Poisella, Frank and Johanna Reilly, Br. Cornelius Russell, Br. Jim Ryan, John Scileppi, Don Schmidt, Barney and Anne Sheridan, John Sugrue and wife, Ed and Valerie Towsley, Br. Valerian, John and Sue Wilcox. (*Apologies for not knowing names of all the wives. Editor*)

From **Br. HANK HAMMER ('75)**: (*Br. Hank, assistant provincial of the Province of the United States, sent the following item to the Rome-based Marist web site: www.champagnat.org dated September 29th, 2005.*)

Hurricane Katrina and Marist USA: Br. Steve Synan had just moved from Kenner, Louisiana to one of the Marist communities in Chicago one week before Hurricane Katrina hit. He returned to Louisiana two days after the storm to collect some things he had left at a friend's house. Because Steven's friend lives about twenty miles north of New Orleans, his home and Steve's belongings were safe. The same was not true for Steve's flooded former neighborhood in Kenner. Steve said that what wasn't destroyed would be uninhabitable. In an email to me, Steve said, "I just cannot find the right words to tell you how horrible this is. I cannot believe what I am seeing."

Like much of America, Marist USA is responding to the Katrina crisis in a variety of ways. The school year is just beginning in the States, but already hurricane relief has provided a focus and energy for Marist Educators and Marist Youth. All our US Marist schools have already begun efforts to raise substantial funds and to collect supplies to aid the hurricane victims. As I write this, Christopher Columbus High School (Miami, Florida), St. Brendan High School (Miami, Florida), Our Lady of Lourdes High School (Poughkeepsie, New York), and Marist High School (Chicago, Illinois) have already enrolled hurricane victims free of charge. Msgr. Pace High School (Miami, Florida), Guadalupe Regional Middle School (Brownsville, Texas), and Marist High School (Bayonne, New Jersey) will all be accepting hurricane victims in the days ahead. All our other US Marist schools have expressed an eager willingness to help in any way they can.

As Marist USA and the international Marist world reach out to Katrina's victims, we know that the encouragement of Marcellin to "make Jesus Christ known and loved" will be lived out and acted upon once again as it was after 9/11 and after the December 2004 tsunami. We have no other choice, for anything less would not be Marist. (hankhammer@hotmail.com)

(Recognizing the spirit of giving, we thank Jerry Byrne ('60), Br. John Malich ('55), Joe Gallagher ('61), Joe Hores ('49), and Dick Branigan ('50) for their monetary assistance in continuing Marists All. Editor)

From **DICK BRANIGAN ('50)**: When I read *Marists All*, I feel continuity in my head and in my heart an assurance that our early common experiences are not all lost on our individual paths. Something was sewn into our pockets. We find it is still there through the years when we have had to reach for some tonic to carry us over a bad place, a sorrow, or a temptation. This newsletter reminds us that good men need other good men to remind them that the spiritual slice of our pie charts needs sustenance and recognition. There is a thread of brotherhood connecting me to the other contributors of this newsletter: a phantom community, some might say. I say it is real!

While we tell about our lives and loves and career moves in this open forum and are blessed with willing ears to listen, allow me to ask a favor. Anyone, young or old, must have thoughts, even if

confoundedly metaphysical, about this subject, even if only recommending a source, a book. The question is this: when we die, all our earthly awareness mechanisms are left behind. I wonder if someone could enlighten me on whether or not the soul has an awareness mechanism of its own. I would appreciate anyone who can shed light on the patently unknowable and share it with me. I am looking for a fruitful dialog on this matter. (1814 Fairview Street, Oshkosh, WI 54901; branigan@uwosh.edu)

From **JACK REDMOND('51)**: Thanks to Dick Branigan for his prodding me to write a little something for *Marists All*. I have been retired for two years. I had worked for the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Brooklyn as a training specialist for the staff there for twelve years. I enjoyed the work and loved the people. It was different working with adults after twenty-some years of teaching teenagers. I putter around the house, cook the evening meal for my lovely wife Barbara, and do some volunteer work for my parish. Barbara will be retiring next year.

A month ago I had the pleasure and honor of celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of my graduation from Marist College. Who could imagine that it has been that long? The fond and happy memories of my years at Marist in the company of all the wonderful men who had come together to serve God and His people and live in community remains with me. We live now somewhat differently; but nevertheless, the Marist spirit still lives on. Marist College has changed dramatically since those days. It is a credit to all those who have come after us and to the academic world. We began the construction and reconstruction of the campus in our early years with limited or no skills, and now it is a magnificent institute of higher learning. Gerry Cox, Br. Gregory DelaNoy, Frank McNiff, Tom Murphy, "Buddy" Nolan, Br. Bobby Reddington were there with me for reunion celebrations of the class of '55. The college gave us a gala remembrance. Mike Kelly and John Carolyn from the class of '54 were also there. Ziggy Rancourt played the piano and we sang some of the oldies of yesteryear. Ad multos annos! (jackredmond33@hotmail.com)

In Memoriam

(The following excerpts have been taken from testimonials about two recently deceased beloved Marist Brothers. Even those of us who did not know them personally will notice within these words the attributes they both shared with others we have known. More complete reflections appear on the Marists All website. Click here for [Brother Louis Richard](#) or for [Brother Denis Hever](#) Editor)

From **BR. TIM BRADY ('64)**: Br. Louis Richard, helping quietly, never intruding, always careful not to hurt. Long before we used the words "least favored" as part of our daily vocabulary, Louis knew who they were. It was his beloved "7-A"! We had two classes at the time, and the "A" classes were the "least favored." While other teachers sought to avoid them, Louis asked for them, not only for his regular class, but also for his religion class and his homeroom. I saw what he

did for them; it was remarkable. He never yelled at them or did anything threatening. Looking back, I can see that he achieved this using the simplest plan possible; he loved them, and they loved him back. Even if they didn't think they could learn, he knew that they could and never let them think that they couldn't.... Br. Louis was totally faithful to his work, not because of the dust and dirt, but because he did it for us. There was nothing that anyone ever asked him to do that was too much for him. Louis brought the same quality of faithfulness to everything he did. His prayer life, his work at school, his work around the house, in all these he was like Mary, his model, who went about doing good quietly.... What St. Marcellin Champagnat wanted the Brothers to be known for was quite simple. "Have the world say of the Little Brothers of Mary, what they said of the first Christians: See how they love one another." The thing that stands out most in my mind, the one thing I will always remember about Louis, is that he exemplified this wish of Fr. Champagnat like few other Brothers I have known. (bradytj1946@hotmail.com)

From **BR. JOHN KLEIN ('66)**: Br. Denis Hever was a very good and loving man who remained faithful to his vocation, his family, his Marist Brothers, and his friends. Borrowing the words of Br. Sean Sammon, Denis was truly a "marvelous companion." Whether as teacher, Formation Director, Director of Religious Education, or Hospital Chaplain, Denis was loving, non-judgmental, and genuinely interested in the other person. Yesterday we found a copy of his Masters Degree thesis that he wrote in 1976. It was entitled, "Self-Acceptance: The Basis for Authentic Response to Life." This is really how Denis lived his life. He knew who he was, and he remained the same for everyone and accepted everyone just the way they were. As one brother remarked, "Denis was a user-friendly person."

Throughout his ministry Denis had a sensitive heart for those in need. Br. Danny Taylor, one of the Liberian Brothers, wrote expressing his sorrow at the loss of Denis. He described Denis as "...a humble servant, a brother and a friend to many, most especially the crippled and the needy. They are going to miss him, especially his deep understanding and listening skills...."

In the conclusion of his dissertation, Denis wrote about trust and self-acceptance as being essential to living a fulfilled life. "Lack of self-acceptance, he wrote, is permeated with a coldness, a fear, and a self-preoccupation. It is like a person who hugs himself tightly in the winter and comes to feel only his own chill. It is self-enveloping but not self-sustaining. Trust, on the other hand, is characterized by an openness that is sensed as joyful, warm, outward, calm, and unifying." In reality, I believe that Denis was describing himself: the joyful, warm, outward, calm and unifying Brother. (jwkleinfms@aol.com)

(Br. Louis Richard was buried in Esopus on Saturday, November 5th. Br. Denis Hever was buried in Esopus on Tuesday, November 8th. This may be an appropriate time and place to remind our readers about the cemetery at Esopus. The Province Newsletter reports that, through

the kindness of a benefactor, the Brothers were able to make improvements to the crucifixion monument at the cemetery. The monument was repaired and recoated with a durable finish that will last for years. In addition, the statue of Father Champagnat, having stood at the north end of the cemetery, is being repaired and will be relocated to a more prominent spot when it is returned.

*Secondly, we received a thought from **ROB SCHMID ('68)** (rjdb@comcast.net) that may evoke some serious response. He wrote: "While visiting Esopus, I noticed that there was not one single flower (live, paper or plastic) to be seen. Was it because it was July, or because it was a low priority? Or is this being done already? If not, maybe the Marist Laity could send flowers to the cemetery at various times throughout the year. Maybe it is the feminine influence in my life that brought this idea to mind. How many of us took up gardening after being introduced (shoved?) into earth beautification at the suggestion of our wives?" And finally, please note that Rich Foy has created a website backdrop concerning the Esopus property. You may access it through www.ecommerce.marist.edu/foy/esopus/. Editor)*

From **SALLY A. CONNOLLY**: Through his vocation as a teacher, which began with the Marist Brothers, my late husband, Eugene F. Connolly ('44) enriched the minds and hearts of students, colleagues, and strangers alike... During the end stages of his terminal illness, when I could no longer experience his companionship, his insight, and most especially, his glorious voice, I found some comfort in rediscovering that voice in his writings. For months I scoured desks, bureaus, boxes, computer files, anything that might hold the precious words and thoughts. Speeches, published articles, personal tributes, and journal entries – I compiled and arranged into what I hoped would be a lasting gift for our family and dear friends... Counselors tell us that "scrapbooking" helps us deal with grief. For me, this scrapbook of Gene's writings is one baby step toward acceptance and healing. For all of us, this book gives voice once again to the master teacher who reaches out and inspires us to live well and "Do good." (*An excerpt from the Preface of this newly published book appears on the next page. Anyone wishing to purchase a copy should contact Sally. Editor*)

My husband Gene had intended to write a personal memoir for his family. We loved his many stories about his childhood in Lawrence, Massachusetts; his Catholic school years with the nuns and Brothers; and his years as a Marist Brother. We marveled at the tributes he created for family members, friends, and colleagues, often on a moment's notice. And we were stunned by his ability to relate – not read – these tributes and later recreate them in writing, almost verbatim.

Gene rose from a simple boyhood in Lawrence, to spend his professional career as an educator. He began teaching (as Br. Kieran Matthew, FMS) in high schools run by the Marist Brothers in New York, West Virginia, and Illinois. He continued as a management trainer for Western Electric in North Andover, Massachusetts, and for thirty-seven

years taught at Northern Essex Community College in Haverhill, Massachusetts. "The good doctor," as he was sometimes referred to, became the "teachingest teacher" and most beloved professor at Northern Essex....

With an interest in all things spiritual, Gene's focus throughout his life remained steady. Scholarship and spirituality were realities for him. He professed his love for God and his recognition of the Divine purpose in all creation. He endeavored to live out the good life, to find meaning, and to contribute his talents. Like Muriel Rukheyser, Gene believed that the universe is made not of atoms, but of stories. This is Gene's story, the part we can recreate from his writings. (Title: A Boy from Lawrence: The Collected Writings of Eugene F. Connolly; Editor: Sally A. Connolly; ISBN: 0-9772653-0-7; 978-774-8158; sallyconnolly@att.net)

From **LEO BYRON:** I entered Marist Prep in 1955 from CCHS in Lawrence. After graduation I spent my postulant year at the novitiate in Tyngsboro. The short time I spent studying to be a Marist Brother had a profound effect on me for the rest of my life. I was always frustrated in not being able to keep in touch with my "fellow brothers." I also would have liked to be in touch with the dedicated men that were my teachers and mentors, the professed Brothers who were leading me.

I still reflect on those days at "the Prep." I remember Br. Joseph Damian, Master of Juniors, whose stare at dinner was called "the Burn" if you were not behaving just right. Br. Joseph Abel was a fine teacher who exuded class and quality with a tender benevolence toward some of us who were not gifted with the highest of intellects. Br. John Bosco occasionally looked at us with quiet exasperation but patiently showed the way, whether it was at work or in class. Br. Stephen Urban had a quality and spirituality that emanated from his smile and his eyes. He had a magnificent singing voice and directed some great plays, including Oklahoma and Stalag 17. He was always there for some soft words of guidance; Brother John Berchmans introduced us to gymnastics, tumbling, pommel horse and springboard. He could also skate the lights out and make circles around us.

The names of some of the juniors have also stayed with me: Marcel Gregoire, excellent piano player, and with Dickie Ballerino, really made great music, banging out duets; and Tom Maloney, jock extraordinaire, who was all business when it came time for football or basketball. On the two Thanksgivings at the Prep we were on the Army team. John Bantz, Frank Bachus and Alan Doerr were usually on the Navy team. I remember Tom Fahey sliding into second base and breaking his leg and the Brother who told him to "walk it off." Robert Gaudet, nicknamed "Rosie," played on the basketball team when we ran the score up to 100 points. I also remember John Wilcox and his record player; and Bill Collins, who took no grief from anyone when he played center on our basketball team. John Roule and Frank Handibode playing awesome ping pong against each other. Vinnie Hall,

the tall slim redhead. Bill Reffelt, tall, blonde basketball player. George Fontana, another excellent basketball player. On the other hand, my only claim to fame was never losing a 100 hard dash while at the Prep. Hailing from the Lawrence area, Bill Lambert and I were kidded about our "ahhs" instead of our "R's." We also had some of the juniors believing that the Merrimac River was bigger than the Hudson. Ronnie Pasquariello had the most infectious laugh and had an expression on his face with his mouth wide open when he was surprised or confused that absolutely cracked me up. Tom Golembiewski, carrying a full class load, was teaching himself Spanish on the side and was still pulling high marks. Ray Landry was a quiet sort, but he could throw a slider that completely baffled hitters, and he had a half-court shot that beat my team in a game. Afterward, I remember asking if it was a lucky shot, or could he do it again. He sank three more. John McArdle, George Bagnell, Mike Sugrue, George Conboy, Ronnie Pochintesta, Larry Whartenby, Owen Lafferty, Stud Claffey from Georgia, George Febles, George Pimental. I could go on and on with names.

Looking back, I think that the athletics were essential to providing a healthy distraction. Although other schools have that, what they didn't have and what made our experiences so very special was the common goal to be Marist Brothers and the deep spiritual bond that we all shared. The life changes at the Novitiate, deeper religious studies, being fitted for our first cassocks, canning fruits and vegetables for our winter meals and treats, and the conga line of snow plow shovels we used to clear the meadow of snow so we could get out and skate: these are the memories.

After leaving, I served in the US Army, received a BS in industrial engineering from Northeastern University, a Master's in business from Boston University. I worked at Polaroid, Harvard Medical School, and Brigham and Women's Hospital. Winter weekends I ski downhill, snowshoe, and do a little winter climbing. Summers are passed bicycling, hiking in mountains around the world. I am married to a lovely woman who has put up with me all these years.

My renewed contact came about when I saw Alan Doerr's name in a recent article in the Central Catholic newsletter. I contacted him and he put me on to *Marists All*. He has "made my day." (20 Valley Road, Boxford, MA 01921; leo20@comcast.net)

From **GENE ZIRKEL ('53)**: What follows is an adaptation of a wonderful report by Anne Dooley concerning the laity associated with the Marist Brothers in Australia and New Zealand. Many of her words resonated within me as applicable to the laity connected with any of the four vowed branches of the Marist family. With her gracious permission I have generalized her paper, making changes such as replacing references to "Champagnat" with "founders" and "Brothers" with "vowed Marists." I offer these thoughts, not as a finished product, but rather as a jumping off place, something to get us thinking. (genezirk@optonline.net)

Lay Marists and the "Gift of Charism"

The development of Marist Partnership is about giving birth to something new, and we are all invited into this process. This is not necessarily the easy road: it is painful and time-consuming, with a largely unknown outcome. Marist Partnership has been a phenomenon for years. Are we now ready to consider, more deeply, ways of belonging and naming and claiming our vocation as Lay Marists? I hesitate to use the word "vocation" as it has connotations of religious life and priesthood that do not resonate with the call of Lay people. However, it is important that the role of Lay people in the Church, as demonstrated in their ministry, as well as their personal need for formation and spirituality, is acknowledged as a call or vocation. Rather than this being a "narrowing down" or constrictive direction, it only affirms what has been occurring in people's lives and experiences over the years and, indeed, may be a liberating move. I mean liberating in that, if we are clear about our focus and direction personally, and in our ministry or work, then our energies can be channeled, rather than displaced in different directions.

Our Baptism calls us not only to be members of the Church, but also to minister in the Church. Our work is our ministry. If our life, work and study come out of deeply held spiritual values and care and love for those we journey alongside, then that is ministry! Over time we come to recognize our personal talents and gifts. Hopefully, we find places in the community where we can contribute and where our talents and gifts are of service to others and a means of growth for ourselves.

It is important to take this experience of gift a little further when we are reflecting on Marist Partnership, for some will identify within themselves a resonance with their own personal gift and the [Marist] charism. A charism is a gift from God to us as individuals, both Lay and Religious. It is something that lies deeply within us. It is through relationships, hearing the stories of the founder[s], and the people who follow, as well as ministering alongside others who incarnate the charism, that some of us come to see its gradual blossoming and flowering in our lives. A charism cannot be imposed, only awakened. It is not for us to take or grasp at, but for us to say "yes" to -- it may be likened to a spiritual "annunciation." We say our "yes" to God by allowing the charism we discover we are gifted with to grow within us. *(These thoughts concerning Lay Marists will continue in the next issue. Editor)*

return to ==>>>

[top of page ▲](#)

[home page](#)