

SIXTY YEARS & COUNTING *by Bill Byrne, formerly Bro. William Martin*

I recently took the virtual tour on the Archbishop Molloy High School website and began remembering the pull the school had on me in my early twenties. Sixty years ago, I was assigned there to begin my teaching career by the then Marist Provincial, Brother Linus William. You'll find me "photoshopped" under my given Marist name, Brother William Martin, in the yearbooks from 1958-64. Since then, while the school remains the same in many ways, much has changed.

The school now sports additions that would have been nice to have, but deemed extravagant back then. Hi-Tech was reserved then to the typing room with mechanical marvels that went by the names Underwood and Remington. We didn't need a separate theatre: we had a gym with a proscenium arch stage for dances, assemblies and entertainment. It would be long after I left that a theatre department began a regular schedule of dramatic productions. And the then basic chemistry, biology and physics labs were state-of-the-art, sixties style. The standalone DeChiaro Center, updated science labs, web-surfing venues, and a second gym now serve the needs of the modern Stanner student.

The faculty and staff now lists a scant few senior Marist Brothers and a preponderance of laymen and women. In 1957, it was just the reverse, as upwards of sixty Brothers filled the ranks. The entire fourth floor was the Brothers' living quarters. Only the Brother Treasurer was the exception, since his office and bedroom were on the first floor to the left of the elevator.

The school opened with the carry over seventh and eighth graders from Saint Ann's Academy in Manhattan who were housed in the first floor classrooms across the hall from the growing Hall of Fame wall. I knew and even taught and worked with several so honored. My first year, the

student body was fifteen hundred well-dressed boys, many of whom are teen-frozen in my fading memory.

Providing coverage for the high school curriculum by the Brother faculty, whose degrees were heavy in Math, History, and English, required a good deal of finesse. Since I was last alphabetically, I always believed I was saddled with the left-over classes that needed coverage. I taught three General Science classes and one each of Math 9 and Math 10, this with a degree in English. Two years later, I taught five French 1 classes before I finally began teaching the college major for which I felt more qualified. Class sizes then were in the low forties, so I instructed some two hundred students each day, not counting my fifteen minute Rosary class. We were classroom media poor, depending on the printed textbook. With just the chalk blackboard and our wits I'm fond of telling any listeners that "I don't know how I was able to do that." Apologies to my students who learned the subject along with me! That may say a little about my versatility as a teacher, still I wouldn't wish it on anyone.

Before the first students were welcomed to the school, we Brothers were getting acquainted with it and the neighborhood. The Jack Curran gym, before the school's historic basketball accomplishments were written there, beckoned to a few of us Brothers. We were allowed by Brother John Lawrence, the Brother Director, to baptize the beautiful, shiny facility. When we finished our pick-up games, we looked in horror at the black shoe polish marks that littered the new floor. Big Brother Ben, famed Marist Camp Director, had resurrected and polished his old black leather basketball shoes and left marks all over the court. I will never forget restoring the floor to its pristine shine by hands and knees scrubbing it.

Then, I was a year out of college and now one of sixty Brothers of all ages and persuasions. Some, like Brother Luke, had been my revered

teachers. Now they were my peers and that took some getting used to. Others may have, but I don't think I ever did.

I have fond memories of the St. Ann's and Molloy, the students, and my seven years teaching there. I traveled the length and breathe of the Queens public transportation system with my JV baseball players in tow. We even won a NYC baseball championship trophy, which has long since been replaced by more prestigious ones in the first floor trophy case. I checked several years ago.

All these years later, I hope I left some impression on the young men I coached and taught. Two of the school's famed honorees were also great personal friends. I treasured the time I spent in what I refer to as my adventures with Brother Leo Richard. If you check the online archives of the Oakland Journal of Oakland University for 2017, you will get a flavor of what that means by reading "A Smile or Two for Ted." I admired and miss Brother Terence, who befriended me. I had a reputation for being a practical joker and some of my Brother friends were ready and willing targets. One morning, riding the elevator with Brother Francis Xavier, he fixed me with a wry smile and called me in French an "agent provocateur." I hope he and others know I meant no harm.

Ad multos anos, Molloy.