


HOLY FAMILY COLLEGE'S MISSION STATEMENT

Vates Presentation

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 Several years ago, at the request of Sister Neomisias, Foundress of Holy Family College*, Peter Frey wrote an excellent history of the College. Therefore, my purpose in this talk is not to give a history, but rather recollections from the past up until the early 1980s, which present a common theme. Just as coach Danny Williams has pointed out, tradition, as in baseball, is needed to give balance to innovations, such as Jackie Robinson breaking into the major leagues.

Here at Holy Family College, we have a past with traditions as well as an innovative and hopeful future. I would now like to speak about some remembrances of that past and see how they may tie in with the future that lies ahead.

In the summer of 1965, about one year after I sent my curriculum vitae to Sister Florence, first Academic Dean of Holy Family College, I received a call to come in for an interview for a part-time opening in French. Sister Immaculata, who taught those French courses in question, would be in France. Sister Aloysius, second President of Holy Family College, also interviewed me—and I had the job. Sister Aloysius, in her gentle, unassuming way, led the college very well through its growing pains.

It was in the fall of 1965 that I first met, among others, Tom Lombardi, Pete Frey, Joe Burak, Wanda Weikowski, mother of Joan Zieja in Nursing, and the late Dr. Sadnicki, and made lasting friendships. I shared an office with Pete on the 4th floor of Holy Family Hall. The offices were small, narrow cubicles located where the Biology Lab is now and which one entered from a hall that ran parallel to the 4th floor corridor. At the end of the hall was a classroom in which our Glee Club practiced. It was strictly a women's college then, and we had a large and excellent Glee Club under the direction of Mr. Fiss.

*Although Holy Family was a college when this presentation was given, the Pennsylvania Department of Education awarded Holy Family "University" status in December 2002

At the start of each school year on a Sunday afternoon, we had what was known as the Freshman Tea. The faculty would line up in a room on the 1st floor of Holy Family Hall across from the now Medical Imaging rooms. The new students and their parents would come along, introducing themselves and shaking hands with each faculty member while tea and other refreshments were being served.

Where Medical Imaging is currently located there were many gas ranges in those early days for Home Economics classes. Sister Florence, Academic Dean for 16 years, would often be in her office with the door open. One day she called to me, saying, “Why don’t you stop in once in a while?” No appointment necessary!

After teaching French at Holy Family College part time for two years, I taught at Saint Basil’s Academy for four years. Then, in the spring of 1971, I received a call from Sister Placide, then Chairperson of the English Department who held that position from the 1950s. Sister Aloysius also telephoned me. There was going to be a full-time opening in English in World Literature and Tom Lombardi had also suggested me for the position. Sister Placide said that with a foreign literature background, it would fit in with World Literature. So, again, I was hired because Sisters Aloysius, Florence, and Placide knew me—What? No search committee? So, I was hired full-time for a salary of \$7,700.00 and I signed the contract on the sun porch of the convent, the original mansion of the one-time estate located roughly where Lourdes Hall now stands. It was later torn down and what had been a women’s dorm became the new convent and still houses the Sisters. One of the remnants of the old estate would be the stone benches at the end of the driveway which empties onto Stevenson Lane.

Sister Placide, who was very knowledgeable in the field of English and who had also taught the girls Gregorian Chant, a required course, would call upon Tom Lombardi and me to drive her places. Tom got the big assignments, such as taking Sister to the bus terminal downtown so she could visit her mother who lived in Ocean City. Because Sister Placide had the idea that I was a speeder, I was called upon for short trips only, such as taking her to visit a cousin in Mayfair—a safer bet.

One day in the 1970 s, when I was in my late 30’s or so, while teaching summer school, I was marking papers in the library, and several students kept coming up to me: “Hi! Mr. McCormick!” they would say. We had many young sisters taking courses in the summer; one of them who had been working on material in the library came

over to me and said, “Mr. McCormick, I hope that when I reach your age, I am as open and alert as you.” Shades of the old Philadelphia A’s and their 87-year-old manager, Connie Mack.

Among my students over the years were quite a number of sisters associated with Holy Family College, namely, Sister Marcella Louise, a protégé of Sister Grace in mathematics, who was one of the pioneer sisters, Sister Brendan, Sister Michaelann, and Sister Xavier, along with Sister Marcella in Education. During most of the 70s, I had every student in the college, day or night, for World Literature. I have had around 8,000 students in classes while at Holy Family College, and among them were Georgia, Seraphina, and Kathy of Alpha House. Pat Engle, Nelly Greco, Andrea Share, Donna Rafter, Donna Costello, Bernice Purcell, Rita Casey, Leslie Rossetti, Linda DiGennaro, Joyce Welliver (at Saint Basil’s and Holy Family), Paula Holzworth, Marie Brennan, Marilyn McCormac, Megan Dougherty, Christine O’Neill, Georgena Senior, Maria Rybicki, Kathy Warchol, Jason Campbell, and by September, Valerie Gavaghan—all part of the family of Holy Family College. It is a joy to look back at such wonderful people in my classes whom I have just mentioned, but admittedly, there is also an element of the bittersweet. In recent years, I was an auditor in Bernice Purcell’s computer class, but, unfortunately, not the type of student she was in my class—but I tried!

Speaking of computers, it was Dr. Kelly, Margaret’s husband, who obtained the first computers for the college. Before that, Joe Cibula had taught the first computer course, but with one drawback—there was no computer.

Sister Neomisia, Foundress of Holy Family College, and I had a nice relationship. When she was at Catholic University in Washington, she knew my uncle, Patrick McCormick, who was at Catholic U. for 40 years, ended as its President, and was also an Auxiliary Bishop of Washington. So, we had some common ground to discuss and I have kept several Christmas cards and lovely notes that she sent to me. She was outstanding academically and a warm, friendly, Christ-like person.

When the dormitory existed, the faculty who taught at night had a bonus. We were offered free dinners with the dorm students in the Green Room of Nazareth Academy. Mr. John Harbison and I readily took advantage of this, and it was fun to converse with the dorm students.

When I was part-time in the 1960s, I often met a student on the 66 trackless trolley who journeyed all the way from South Philadelphia—

Vickie Inverso. Later on, she would marry one of her professors, Tom Lombardi, and I would be the best man at the wedding. The reception was held in what was then the student lounge and is currently the Admissions Office on the 1st floor of Holy Family Hall. I recall one summer afternoon while I was sitting on a bench under a weeping willow tree near the old convent, marking bluebooks, Sister Consolata, who taught Spanish at Holy Family College, spotted me from a window and came out to me with a dish of ice cream to bolster me through the grading.

In 1972, Art Grugan arrived as a Philosophy instructor— fresh from being a Fulbright scholar in Germany—and he joined Regina Hobaugh, a graduate of Holy Family College, another philosophy scholar. Dora Pruna, who had fled Castro's Cuba, also taught Spanish at Holy Family College for years and is responsible for the gazebo on the campus. Sister Frances Veitz, who later developed our Co-op Program and Sister Immaculata taught French along with Pete Frey, and eventually Sister Immaculata became our second Dean.

The multi-talented Marion Von Rosenstiel taught English, chiefly writing. Many a freshman was told by Marion to "think onion," "to write about an onion." She was very creative. Her husband, Werner, originally from Germany and a lawyer for the U.S. Army at the Nuremberg war criminal trials, also taught part-time at the college. They both had great stories to tell—none of them fiction.

I recall when Kathy Osenlund's twins were young. Kathy received an emergency call to come home because one of the girls had swallowed a penny. The whole English Department was concerned, but all ended well and the twins are currently moving ahead in their careers. Kathy is currently editing Werner Von Rosenstiel's memoirs.

A great story that stands out from the past deals with a day when George Haynes was giving one of his famous anatomy exams. Art Grugan had a philosophy class that same day before the exam. He walked into a classroom with hardly a student but with tape recorders set up on each desk for Art's lecture, so students could have extra time to study anatomy.

Quite a number of sisters helped to develop the sciences at Holy Family College whose hard work has fructified into the outstanding science programs of today. Sister Rose Ann not only taught science, but she, with the help of another sister, identified most of the trees on the campus years ago and put signs on them accordingly. Sisters Bernice, Lucidia, Loretta,

and now Sister Maureen and Celia Prairie brought true scholarship to their fields. Celia has also put up with my puns for over 20 years. The beloved Sister De Lourdes established the innovative reading center located until recently on the 3rd floor of Holy Family Hall which was later staffed by Tom Garberina.

The presence of the sisters has been evident in the Business or Treasurer's Office with Sisters Praxede, Lucia, Leonard, and Sister Paul. It was often said that Sister Praxede was so conscientious that she could be seen going to the office from the convent before it was light, walking with a flashlight.

Along with skilled teaching in her field, Sister Rita Kathryn conducted a series of lectures by various faculty corresponding to the series by Kenneth Clarke on television.

Bette Tokar, also a Holy Family College graduate, was a French major who became the protégé of Dr. Sadnicki in the field of Economics—a Renaissance woman, that's Bette!

Father Cegielka had been the Chair of the Religion Department after Sister Louisa and a survivor of the Nazi concentration camp of Dachow. He was a great scholar and a devout priest. He always has a smile and a pleasant greeting. Dr. Sadnicki was also from Poland, was captured in the Polish Army by the Germans in 1940 and spent around five years as a German prisoner. He later studied in Rome and eventually headed the Economics Department at Holy Family College. He was at the college 34 years.

I also remember being recruited to mop the convent floor. It was constantly being flooded. So, I put my textbook down and rolled up my sleeves. Bill Holzworth and I mopped side by side.

In the early 70s, Wayne Killian was the first male President of the Student Council. He is now Father Killian and his niece later coached the women's basketball team.

When Sister Mary Louise was Registrar and Sister Euphronia taught in a room next to mine before becoming Registrar, we always exchanged pleasant greetings and had many laughs. At student functions that were formal, the girls would always wear their caps and gowns and white gloves. A lovely sight, it was!

Our graduation used to take place in Nazareth Academy's gym, as did all the basketball games, before the College Center was built. At the

games, the fans had to stand on the sidelines applauding such players as Sandy Michael.

The faculty and staff end of the year picnic was a grand event. I still remember seeing Sister Lillian, third President of Holy Family College, cooking steaks for everyone while I was put in charge of croquet. Sister Lillian was a renowned biologist who guided Holy Family College's ship of state through changing and challenging times.

The tech staff was always top notch, as they are now. Mrs. Cordek, always conscientious, was the first I met—always caring. Mrs. Millie Malone was on the switchboard for years. The students called her “Millie” while I said “Mrs. Malone” as I was first introduced in 1965 when she worked in the library which is where Room 311 is now in Holy Family Hall. Loretta Mucci, who followed Mabel Pachucki, showed me there was a new world beyond the purple dittos. The gentle Mrs. Eleanor Wiegand was very competent and very caring. Due to time constraints, it is not possible to single out all of the tech staff or faculty from the days gone by, but they were all great people.

When I first became a full-time instructor, Sister Patrice was teaching history and she was also President of the Faculty Senate. Part way through the academic year, she became Dean of Students, replacing Sister Florianne who became chair of the Psychology Department. She was succeeded by Sister Xavier, just as Sister Jude followed Sister Martina in the Art Department. Somehow, I was elected to replace Sister Patrice as Faculty Senate President. I guess not many knew that I was a “speeder.”

Sister Jane was the pioneer librarian who laid the foundation for the excellent holdings and staff we have in the library today. Eventually, Floss, or “Mom” as the students called her, was in charge of the cafeteria, located in the basement of Holy Family Hall, which we called the canteen. Students then would frequently ask faculty to join them for lunch. Kathy Moyer, Joy Lawrence, Sister Mary Louise and I often ate together.

In the 1970s, when the idea of a Freshman Orientation Committee was new, the charge to the committee members, among whom were Kay Ann Laughlin, Pat McGrath, and Regina Schroder of the new Nursing Department, Sid Shotz of Education and I, the charge, as I say, was to make ham and cheese sandwiches. Then, when the incoming freshmen had lunch, we handed them their sandwiches, the soda of their liking, and an Eskimo Pie. My, how the Freshman Orientation Committee has changed!

A beloved figure on campus was Mr. Bill Kellagher, a Guadal Canal veteran of World War II, who took classes for around 11 years. He audited Art Grugan's Philosophy 101 60 times. He said that Father Greg Hickey told him he would be the only person to receive a PhD in Philosophy 101. I had Mr. Kellagher 30 times, and Regina Hobaugh was his advisor at the end. After he died, his fellow students donated benches and a monument that may be seen on Kellagher Walk.

Eventually, the College purchased the William Green estate—the home of the former mayor of Philadelphia. That purchase took in the area from the student parking lot to the vicinity of the soccer field. The Hollegeouse, with Elaine Schneitman in charge, and the Alumni Office was also there. The last remnant of the Green Estate is the Shepherd's Fold, the building on the left as one comes up the driveway to the student parking lot. Father Dennis Mattern, Oblate Priest and much-loved Campus Minister, used to have a "Haunted House" in it each year with the help of students. People from the area would come with children at Halloween and the donations went for Campus Ministry. Father Mattern, at Mass one day in the Chapel, noticed a T-shirt on student Tim Kelly that said "Kensington." He stopped the Mass and called down to Tim: "I knew there was something good about you." Father Mattern started a women's soccer team and they practiced on the lawn facing Frankford Avenue. He was given an office in the basement of Holy Family Hall, but with no window. So, students painted a window on the wall with a lovely, sunny scene. After his untimely death at age 39, within a few weeks of the passing of our third President, Sister Lillian, Jim O'Neill, of Criminal Justice, continued the women's soccer team as their coach.

Sister Francesca became the fourth President of Holy Family College and has worked tirelessly to promote the college. Among the accomplishments during her tenure include the building of the College Center and the acquisition of the Newtown Campus, along with the general modernizing of the college's facilities to lead us into the 21st Century.

One may ask what can be gleaned from these various recollections I have mentioned. Am I saying that the past was perfect? No, but I think one message is genuine concern for others, along with a sense of simplicity. There was a true family atmosphere and the family members were made up of every aspect of the college community. There was especially communication. People talked to each other and tried to get to know one another.

Finally, when I was in the Army, I recall the patch of the third Cavalry, which was in Korea. They had not used horses since 1942. Yet, on the upper part of the gold patch, divided by a black diagonal, a horse's head was depicted. No longer on horseback, the Third Cavalry never forgot their roots.

My prayer is, that as the years go on, the Holy Family College community members will never forget their roots, as well, blending traditions of the past with new and exciting innovations of the future, continuing to bear fruit one-hundredfold, with the blessings of the Holy Family of Nazareth.