GATHERED FRAGMENTS
Publication of
The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania

CATHOLIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND DUQUESNE TO CO-SPONSOR LECTURE By DR. PHILIP GLEASON.

Dr. Gleason will be speaking at 8:00 p.m. in the Duquesne Room, (third floor) the Duquense University Student Union Monday March 23, 1998. The title of Dr. Gleason's talk is: Through Many Toils: The History of Catholic Higher Education in the United States. (For more information call History Dept. at Duquesne: (412) 396-6470.)

Dr. Gleason is Professor of History at the University of Notre Dame. He is the author of numerous books on American Catholicism and past president of the American Catholic Historical Association and Catholic Commission on Intellectual and Cultural Affairs. He is considered the leading interpreter of American Catholicism.

After completing his doctorate Gleason joined the history faculty at Notre Dame in 1959. He is the author of several books and over 50 highly regarded articles. He has also directed an impressive number of doctoral dissertations. Through his publications and lectures, Gleason has gained a genuine measure of respect in the historical profession, contributing significantly to the areas of intellectual history, ethnicity and American Catholic Studies.

In April of 1997 he was honored at a symposium entitled Understandings of America: Ethnicity, Intellectual History and American Catholicism, at Notre Dame. Recently he published the highly regarded book, Contending With Modernity, the first history of American Catholic higher education to examine both intellectual and institutional dimensions of the subject.

Fr. Bryce to give Lambing Lecture:

The Pittsburgh Catholic reported in its January 30, 1998 edition that Fr. Edward M. Bryce was one of three pro-life advocates who received a papal blessing in a ceremony at the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington, D.C. Fr. Bryce presided at the first National Prayer Vigil for Life in 1982. At that time he was director of Respect Life Activities for the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. Fr. Bryce will give the annual Lambing Lecture for the Catholic Historical Society 2:30 p.m. Sunday April 19, 1998 in Synod Hall (Oakland.) Fr. Bryce will speak on: "The Church responding to Roe v. Wade through Twenty-Five Years."

The History of Duquesne University

By Dr. Joseph F. Rishel

Duquense University owes its beginnings to the anti-Catholicism of Germany's "Iron Chancellor," Otto Von Bismarck. His attacks on the Church include the expulsion of the Holy Ghost Fathers from that country in 1872. Under the leadership of the Rev. Joseph Strub, C.S.Sp., six Holy Ghost priests came to America and went to Ohio. Learning of the need for German-speaking priests in the Pittsburgh Diocese, they moved again. Bishop Michael Domenec asked Strub to begin a Catholic College as none existed in a diocese consisting of some 660,000 Catholics.
Pittsburgh Catholic College opened its doors October 1, 1878, with seven faculty and forty students. A $6.00 monthly tuition was charged for the study of classical, scientific, commercial and religious subjects. The school operated in rented quarters in a building on Wylie Avenue near the site of what became Chatham Center. When 124 students enrolled the following year, the fledgling school’s administrators applied for a charter (enabling it to confer degrees) and began to search for a permanent home. They found a small defunct private hospital on Bluff Street. Because its owners refused to sell to Catholics, the school was forced to use a third party.

When the hospital was moved across the street, the Holy Ghost fathers borrowed money from their own order and the Knights of Columbus to build a large five story building on the site. The bricks for "Old Main" were made on the Bluff by Holy Ghost bothers who also owned the brick ovens. For years they made and sold bricks as a source of income for the school. When the building was completed in 1885 it was the highest point in the city and for decades nearly all of the school’s operations occurred in this single building. It also resulted in a staggering debt that left the school little money to purchase the nearby city lots that it needed if it were to expand.

Pittsburgh Catholic College suffered from a series of short presidencies and ethnic tension between the Irish and German priests. Not until 1886 was a long-lasting administration installed, that of the Irish-born Fr. William T. Murphy, C.S.Sp., but he too alienated the area’s German Catholics. Nevertheless, his accomplishments were numerous. The curriculum was modernized, the chapel was built, and by the end of his administration in 1899 the student body was increased to 300.

It was under the presidency of Fr. Martin A. "Daddy" Hehir that the young college was transformed into a university. Following an arduous process that came within an ace of failure, in 1911 the State of Pennsylvania granted the school university status. The school, renamed Duquesne University of the Holy Ghost, thus became the first Catholic university in Pennsylvania. Following this, it applied for a portion of the same state aid that the legislature had traditionally voted for other private institutions, some of them church-related. After a lengthy battle, the state supreme court ruled against state aid to all sectarian institutions. The practice of aid to church-related colleges had never met a court challenge until Duquesne applied for it.

Duquesne sought financial aid from other sources. In 1920 it launched the "Million Dollar Fund," to raise money for the erection of two new buildings, Canevin Hall and the gymnasium. They were completed in 1923, thus becoming the first major buildings erected by Duquesne since the opening of Old Main some 38 years earlier. In many respects, the 1920's ushered in the "modern" Duquesne, for it was in that decade that the school alma mater was written, the class ring adopted, and a student newspaper, the Duquesne Duke was begun. By 1927 women were admitted to all of the schools of the university.

The truly significant expansion during the Hehir years was the addition of new schools: Law (1911), Business (1913), Pharmacy (1925), Music (1926), Education (1927.) More students were in the Business School than all other schools combined. The School of Education faced great problems because the state required student teaching in a public school and, among the city schools, only Fifth Avenue High School would accept students from Pittsburgh's Catholic University. By the end of his presidency in 1931, Hehir had boosted enrollment to more than 3,000 students, a ten fold increase. Despite the expansion and Hehir's generosity to needy students, the school was on a firm financial footing.
When Fr. Jeremiah J. Callahan, C.S.Sp. became president in 1931 the Great Depression was beginning to deepen. In response, Duquesne opened a School for the Unemployed offering free courses for adults who were out of work. A school of Nursing was begun in 1937 and in 1939 a library was built. The faculty was strengthened as new members were recruited from outside of the area for the first time.

The Depression years witnessed national recognition for Duquesne. In 1937 Dr. A. Lester Pierce founded the Tamburitzans. They became famous for celebrating the culture of eastern Europe through music and dance. Sports also brought national prominence as Coach Elmer Layden led the Duquesne football team to two Orange Bowls (1934 and 1937). The team had three undefeated seasons under "Buff" Donelli.

World War II brought a different set of strains to the Bluff. During the presidency of Fr. Raymond V. Kirk, C.S.Sp. (1940 to 1946), enrollment plunged to nearly 1,200 and Duquesne gave serious thought to closing for the rest of the war. Then the Army Air Corps selected Duquesne as a training site. The rent kept the university from closing. After the war veterans, taking advantage of the G.I. Bill, deluged the campus. The president, Fr. Francis P. Smith, (1946-1950) welcomed them by securing old army barracks and by purchasing a building on Forbes Ave., renaming it Mendel Hall. Facilities such as the cafeteria and library became impossibly crowded. Smith, however, refused to undertake the vigorous expansion that was so desperately needed. Despite his inactive administration, the more energetic faculty established a campus radio stations, WDUQ in 1949.

Campus expansion was left to a vigorous new 36 year-old Fr. Vernon F. Gallagher, C.S.Sp., president form 1950 to 1959. He developed the "Master Plan" which envisioned the Duquesne campus extending all the way to Mercy Hospital with some eight new buildings projected. Under Gallagher, Trinity hall was build which enabled the Holy Ghost Fathers to live a community life that had not previously been possible. The university staked its "claim" on the Bluff by building the first dormitory, Assumption Hall, at its far eastern end. Recognizing the need for assistance beyond the local Catholic community, Father Gallagher joined the Duquesne Club, the first priest to do so, and asked a Protestant, Willard Rockwell, to head a campaign to raise funds for building a law and business building. Rockwell agreed, donating more than a quarter of a million dollars of his own money toward the $2.5 million project. A grateful Duquesne named the building in Rockwell's honor. Purchasing the land for Rockwell Hall had been difficult, and it was at the building dedication that Pittsburgh Mayor, David L. Lawrence, pledged that the Bluff would receive high priority from the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA). Never again would Duquesne be forced to purchase individual city lots from area residents at the prices they demanded. Instead the URA purchased the land through its powers of condemnation and sold it to Duquesne for $1.05 a square foot.

Gallagher devoted much of his energy toward expansion and much had to be sacrificed to obtain it. Chief among these was football which he ended a year after becoming president. The students were forced to console themselves with a carnival which was held during what had been football season. Basketball reached heights of glory and in 1955 the Dukes won the NIT.

Actual property acquisition under the URA did not begin until after Fr. Henry J. McAnulty became president in 1959. And to the delight of everyone at Duquesne, the URA voted to make the University the "developer" of almost all the land between Bluff Street and Forbes Avenue. Eleven acres
had been added to the campus plan. Not everyone on the Bluff was delighted, however. Neighborhood residents reacted angrily. They were joined by an anti-Catholic group, Protestants and Other Americans United for the Separation of Church and State (POAU). The POAU published a vicious pamphlet depicting Duquesne as avaricious land-grabbers and held an anti-Duquesne rally at the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial in 1963. All this was to no avail; the URA land acquisition that had begun the year before continued. Duquesne was destined to grow to about 40 acres.

In the first decade of McAnulty's administration Duquesne added about a building a year. It built a major addition to the library; acquired the Pittsburgh Testing Laboratory and named it University Hall (later Des Places); built Saint Martin's Hall, the first boys' dorm; built a third dorm, Saint Ann's; with help of the Mellon Foundation, built a science building, naming it Mellon Hall; converted two parking garages into a music building and a home for the College of Arts and Sciences and the Nursing School; and built a student union. It was a remarkable achievement, one that would never be duplicated.

Duquesne's expansion answered an area-wide need for more classroom seats in a Catholic institution of higher education. Under McAnulty the student body grew from 5,340 in 1959 to 8,477 by 1972. The building program and the accompanying expansion of academic programs resulted in higher student tuition. The high tuition was sustainable so long as other area colleges were even higher, but this changed abruptly when the city's largest university became state-related, causing its tuition to fall by two-thirds.

By 1969 Duquesne was faced with the alternative of raising tuition still further or closing its doors, or so Father Mac, as he was affectionately called, told the assembled students. They saw another answer to the dilemma, a "Third Alternative," and the students embarked on a strenuous drive to raise a million dollars. It attracted national attention because such college support occurred during the height of Vietnam era protest. Although the fund raising effort fell short of its goal, it did result in more contributions to Duquesne from area businesses and foundations and the financial squeeze gradually subsided. The days of cheap tuition were gone, however, and the University concentrated on trying to attract out-of-state students who were willing to pay higher tuition. To do this meant that more dormitory space was needed so the University built Duquesne Towers. Completed in 1971, "Towers," as the students called it, held 1,238 beds, more than all other dorms combined.

The enlarged campus required many expensive adjustments. One such adjustment was the establishment of a campus police force in 1968. Coming as it did during the Vietnam War, such an identifiable element of authority invited confrontation, which occurred over the police being equipped with mace. The ensuing demonstration was but one of various disorders that occurred even on the otherwise placid Duquesne campus. McAnulty was busy with building and fund raising, perhaps too busy. The light hand exercised by the administration resulted in a number of disputes in the Schools of Law and Nursing, and in the Departments of Philosophy and Journalism. In varying degrees these disputes became public spectacles played out in the pages of the newspapers.

As Duquesne reached its hundredth anniversary, there was much cause for jubilation. Princess Grace of Monaco came for the celebration and the ribbon was cut on a new library building having a capacity for 700,000 books. It was to be the last great achievement of a remarkable administration. In 1980 Fr. Mac stepped down; his successor was Fr. Donald S. Nesti, C.S.Sp.

In his seven-year presidency, Fr. Nesti made a number of noteworthy achievements. The old library was enlarged and converted into a new home for the Law School and at last the University began
construction of a much needed basketball arena-recreational complex, named in honor of a major donor the A. J. Palumbo Center. Nesti was the first president in Duquesne history to attempt to address the parking problem that had cursed students and faculty for half a century. A parking garage was built along Forbes Avenue.

Despite these accomplishments, trouble soon developed between Nesti and the faculty. The trouble centered largely around Nesti’s administrative style. When he sought to end or diminish the faculty’s voice in the governance of the University, protest inevitably occurred. Both morale and salaries were low. Finally, in an unprecedented move, the faculty gave a vote of no confidence in the president. Nesti fared little better with the students. When the Duquesne Duke published an obscene April Fool’s Day issue in 1984 which taunted the administration, Nesti reacted angrily and with severity. The paper was shut down. This drew extreme criticism from the city newspapers. Tensions continued and even fund raising was suspended. Finally the administration collided with the Tamburitzans over who controlled the group. This too involved still more bad press when Nesti fired the leading officials of the troupe. All this external discord came at nearly the same time as the ‘resignations’ of other officials high in the University’s administration. With the students wearing anti-Nesti T Shirts and the Student Government Association affirming a "lack of confidence," it was simply too much for Nesti to bear. He resigned in 1987. His academic vice president, Dr. Rolando Bonachea served as acting president for a year.

In 1988 the Board of Directors selected Duquesne’s first lay president, a law professor, Dr. John E. Murray, Jr. The new president moved immediately to gain the school’s re-accreditation and to rebuild community confidence in Duquesne University. Faculty salaries were raised dramatically and research money was made available. Lagging programs were phased out and new ones were begun. More than 60 new programs were begun, many in hi-tech fields. A School of Health Sciences was founded, Duquesne’s first new school in half a century. The library was automated and so were many other university functions.

The Duquesne community and the general public responded well to the Murray work-together style. Murray’s approach to virtually any problem was a common sense one. When the parking garage proved insufficient, he added to it. When demand exceeded its capacity, he added to it again. The community good will enabled Murray to embark on a fund-raising effort unprecedented in the school’s history. A campaign to raise one hundred million dollars resulted in a vastly increased endowment and several new buildings, mostly notable the Bayer Learning Center. The University also purchased the Fisher Scientific building on Forbes Avenue. Yet another dormitory was built to accommodate the increased demand of a student body now nearing 10,000.

Realizing that many high school students were visiting college campuses before they made a final decision, Murray sought to beautify the campus. A new academic walk replaced the old asphalt street, fountains and gateways to the Bluff added to its appeal. To the joy of the students, an athletic field was built, and in 1993 football was played on the Bluff for the first time since 1929.

Duquesne had achieved much in the Murray years but few accomplishments were more gratifying than the increased ratings in the U.S. News and World Report college issue. Duquesne had moved into the second quartile in its standing, an outstanding accomplishment by an able president and a devoted faculty. Through many trials and adversity Duquesne had not only survived, it had prospered. [The Spirit that Gives Life: The History of Duquesne University, 1878 - 1996, by Joseph F. Rishel, Ph.D., Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, Pa. 15282-0101.]
Gathered Fragments

The following members of the Catholic Historical Society were elected to the Board of Directors at the meeting held Friday Feb. 27, 1998 at Synod Hall, Oakland.


Notice for 1998 dues and new membership registration

Name/Contact: ____________________________________________________________

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☐ SUSTAINING MEMBER $25.00  ☐ INSTITUTIONAL MEMBER $15.00
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☐ New Member  ☐ Renewal  ☐ Change of Address  1998

MAY HE REST IN PEACE: Harold R. Gorman a long time member of the Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania died January 14, 1998. Mr. Gorman was a faithful volunteer at the Diocese of Pittsburgh Archives and Records Center.

Book Notice

St. Anthony’s Chapel in Most Holy Name of Jesus Parish tells the story of the Troy Hill chapel and its founder, Fr. Suitbert Mollinger. This book is available in soft bound ($15.00) and in hardbound ($25.00) at the chapel shop or from the publisher, J. Pohl Associates [412] 279-5000.

The Catholic Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania
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