

Father Sorin's Arrival

"When Father Sorin came to South Bend in 1840 with the hope of establishing a college, he had a letter of credit from the Bishop of Vincennes to the store of Alexis Coquillard. The lovely long blue satin gown, beige shawl and flower trimmed lace cap worn by Mrs. Walter M. Langford was typical of the gowns worn by Mrs. Coquillard and the women of that era.

Mrs. William Phelan was the mother of Father Gillespie and Sister Angela. She felt strongly about the poverty embraced by her children. The Phelans left their fortune of \$89,000 to the financially pressed university. A gown typical of the 1850's, which could have been worn by Mrs. Phelan, was modeled by Mrs. J. P. Freeman, whose hair was done in the puff style of that era. The gown was of tan corduroy and featured fur collar and cuffs.

The black and gray bengaline and braid ensemble worn by Mrs. Francesco Montana, represented the styles worn by Mrs. William T. Sherman, wife of the Civil War General, who enrolled their son Willy in the minim department of the university in 1862.

Edwin Booth Era

A theatrical company featuring Edwin Booth as leading man appeared on the campus in 1870. A dress typical of what Mrs. Booth could have worn while touring the campus was shown by Mrs. Leo V. Auth Jr. It was fashioned of plum colored silk and trimmed with marquizite buttons and featuring a bustle and train.

Mrs. Antonio J. Botet wore a red tea gown of wool gabardine and cut velvet, which showed the elegance of fashions in the 1880's and could have been worn by Mrs. Eliza Allen Starr, recipient of the first Laetare Medal Award to a woman.

In 1889, Maurice Francis Egan, poet and novelist of New York, accepted the chair of the literature department at N.D. according to Mrs. Leader. Their home, the "Lilacs" still stands just south of the Northern Indiana Children's Hospital. The Egans were the center of South Bend hospitality and he was said to own the only opera hat in the city. This was so impressive that Sam Adler,

local haberdasher, sent for a carload of such hats to fill the orders received after Mr. Egan's appearance. Mrs. James A. McCarthy modeled a two-piece dress in shades of blue which Mrs. Egan might have worn to tea.

Mrs. Leader continued with the information that it wasn't until 1905 that it was decided to allow N.D. and St. Mary's students to mix socially. The big breakthrough was a senior dance in the apparatus room of the gymnasium at St. Mary's College. A gown typical of this occasion was worn by Mrs. Bruce B. Schimming. The gown was of white net and embroidery accented by a wide rose velvet belt.

Early Football Attire

Raccoon coats and tight fitting cloche hats were all the rage at the early football games in the N.D. stadium. Mrs. John W. Houck, with football pennant, represented the flapper in the 1920's attending such a game in pleated skirt and blazer.

Huge shoulder pads were the vogue when the Ladies of Notre Dame was organized. Mrs. Baldinger's dress of black crepe featured this shoulder treatment plus the popular peplum and mid-calf length skirt.

Remember the slim bias-cut gowns of the early 1940's? The green lace formal shown by Mrs. Emil T. Hofman was typical of those seen at the first spring dance held by the organization.

A bride of 1967 and one of the newest members of the N.D. Ladies is Mrs. Thomas O'Dea, who appeared in her own wedding gown of lace. The unusual cape formed a train. As a Peace Corps trainee at the university, she met her husband who was a member of the faculty..."

Taken from The South Bend Tribune of April 12, 1967, written by Marjorie Antonelli.



Left: Mrs. Kenneth Sayre models a gown typical of the type worn by Eliza Allen Starr, the first woman to receive a Laetare Medal award at Notre Dame (1880's).
Right: Mrs. Lawrence Baldinger wears "the little black dress" which she might have worn to our first tea in 1934.

Le
Ma
ser



Left to right are Mrs. Thomas Werge wearing a gown of the 1840's; Mrs. Francesco Montana wearing a gown from the Civil War period and Mrs. Gerald Goe representing Mrs. William Phelan a University benefactor of the 1850's.

za Allen
(1880's).
might

For several years a special reception for newly eligible LND has been given by the Board of Directors. Before this early October event, each newcomer is called, greeted and offered a ride to the affair. In more recent years she has been given a packet containing information about N.D., the LND and the South Bend community. She is given the opportunity to introduce herself, telling a little about her background as to departmental affiliation, geographical origin, family makeup and any whimsical or other data she wishes to divulge. In turn, Board members are introduced after which refreshments are served. In the beginning, an especially spacious home — Jean Egan's, for example — was sometimes offered for the occasion. But since 1969, the Reverend Theodore M. Hesburgh, C.S.C., President of the University, has kindly permitted us to use the penthouse of the new Library as the attractive setting for this evening.

All of this concentrated solicitude for the newcomers stemmed from our long tradition of welcoming them to the LND. But what happened after this initial flurry of attention was over? The newcomer was on her own. Many a shy newcomer had arrived at a regular tea, once the rush of October was past, only to find the Ladies clustered in groups, engrossed in conversations with old friends, while she was left to stand awkwardly alone. Writing in our newsletter many years later, one LND recalled what a lonely experience it can be. In some such cases, a woman left, not to return for years, if at all.

To be sure, in individual cases, newcomers were made to feel included immediately, thanks to the on-going solicitude of some member, or to her own outgoing personality. But, after that first warm welcome, there was no overall LND policy of encouraging active participation by everyone who might have wanted it.

On the contrary, at a Board meeting held at President Ella Hinton's (Mrs. Henry) home on July 10, 1947, a specific recommendation was approved that "new members were not to be used on the committees for one year but they are to pay dues."⁹ Possibly the motivation for this policy was caution lest too much

⁹Minutes of Exec. Bd. Meeting, July 10, 1947

be demanded too soon of new arrivals, but its effect could only have kept newcomers at a distance when their need to feel wanted may have been greatest.

Apparently there were those who realized this. Uldine Hope (Mrs. Lee), President the next year, reminded Gerry Ellithorn (Mrs. Harold) and her hospitality committee"to circulate at all functions throughout the year to assist new members in becoming acquainted."¹⁰ It took only one more year for the Board to approve a motion stating that new members would "be invited to serve on a tea committee if they wish."¹¹ The LND, having the interests of newcomers in mind, evidently had decided that one of the best ways for them to make friends would be to get in there and work with the old-timers.

Did this lowering of the committee bars solve the whole problem, once and for all? Apparently not. Ten years later there were many Ladies who were deeply concerned that all too many newcomers still felt left out. These sincere women wanted the LND to find a better way to get every willing newcomer involved. Molly Bernard, then President (1958-59), arranged an informal meeting to discuss the matter. Bernadean Murphy (Mrs. Thomas), Betty Craig (Mrs. George), Jane Syburg (Mrs. Fred), Ruth Montana, Jean Egan and Lucy Strandhagen (Mrs. A.G.) were among those who were urging some action. They believed the answer lay in forming a special newcomers' group within the parent LND.

Not only were most newcomers in favor of the idea, but seem to have outstripped it: several of them, already thinking of themselves as a special LND group, were planning their own picnic, for instance. Some had come from other universities where successful newcomer clubs were flourishing. There was talk among our newcomers of forming a club of their own, with a president. No LND wanted this to happen, needless to say. But to have a newcomer group, that was another concept entirely, one the protagonists thought was long overdue.

Then began a discussion about the merits of the plan that went on for about two

¹⁰ Minutes of Exec. Bd. Meeting, Sept. 15, 1948

¹¹ ibid., Aug. 10, 1949

years. Some of the debate was understandably quite heated, for many LND were totally opposed to such a move. At last, it was put in the form of a motion at the November, 1960, meeting: Betty Craig moved that an informal Newcomers' Group be organized for the purpose of acquainting these new arrivals with the LND as a body, with its members and with each other. Result: more unyielding verbal exchanges! The motion ultimately was withdrawn in favor of one to form a committee to study the question further. President Babette Beckman (Mrs. Fred) appointed four newcomers to serve: Edwina Powell (Mrs. Ray), Eileen Jackson (Mrs. Mallet), Theresa Sweeney (Mrs. John) and Beverly Riccio (Mrs. Anthony). The Executive Committee also was part of the deliberating group: Babette, Jeanne Kramer (Mrs. Walter), First Vice President; Eleanor Burke (Mrs. William), Second Vice President; Ella Hinton, Recording Secretary; Eleanor Ter Har (Mrs. John), Corresponding Secretary; Polly DeCicco (Mrs. Michael), Treasurer and Elise Krause (Mrs. Edward), Parliamentarian.

The following month they brought in their recommendations: that the Newcomers meet at night, that they should have three evening coffees per year, that programs for the regular October and November teas be dispensed with to allow newcomers a chance to meet more Ladies and, finally, that there be no officers elected by the Newcomers. Margaret Egly (Mrs. Robert) moved the adoption of these recommendations; her motion was supported and duly adopted. Betty Craig and Bernadean Murphy promptly offered to entertain the Newcomers' Group in their homes in the Spring semester. The 1961 LND Directory had a new listing under Standing Committees: "Newcomer Hostess." Fittingly enough, it was Bernadean.

Six years later, the Newcomers' Group had become important enough to warrant a Chairman and a Program Chairman from within their group, as well as an Advisor who must have been with the parent group for at least five years.

Had the old LND been "lost?" There are those who, to this day, believe and regret this. The founding of the Newcomers' Group was to lead to further profound changes in the structure of the organization within three years. Others still hail the innovative policy enacted in 1960 as a momentous breakthrough into an exciting future for the LND.

Before long, the Newcomers' Group had developed its own tradition of enjoyable programs. A get-acquainted party of some type, often for couples, has launched several seasons. Holidays have come to mean idea and small gift exchange parties. There have been festive evenings, such as wine-tasting parties, Italian Night, a Smorgasbord and a Valentine Soiree, often with elaborate buffets. Speakers from within the LND have provided educational programs, such as that on interior decorating by Ilse Esch (Mrs. Harold), Life as a Newspaper Reporter, by Barbara Eagan (Mrs. William), a former Chicago American feature writer.

Dean Porter, Curator of the N.D. Art Gallery, spoke on 18th-century France at another memorable meeting. An event which was of special interest to new residents of this area was a historical tour which included stops at the famous 700-year-old Council Oak tree, under which LaSalle conferred with the Miami Indians in 1681; Tippecanoe Place, former home of the Studebakers; St. Patrick's Church, noted as an example of American Gothic architecture.

Three events are looked forward to annually. One, known as the Cookie Project, has become an all-out effort by the Newcomers to bake cookies, cakes or similar treats, and solicit them from other LND members for delivery to dormitories during examination periods. Diana Wells (Mrs. Gene), Chairman of the Group in 1970-71, introduced this noteworthy scheme, which obviously was destined for instant grateful and enthusiastic reception. A fun-and-games approach was used for another meeting that has been repeated annually; it is the White Elephant Exchange started by Betty Craig.

The Newcomers' year comes to a close with a Spring champagne brunch. It has sometimes been held in an unusually attractive home setting; for instance, President Lydia Lee's large garden in 1968. In 1971, the wide porch of Joanne Broden's (Mrs. Thomas) North Shore Drive home, overlooking the St. Joseph River, was the inviting location. Again, the occasion has been enjoyed at the Hays-Healy Center on campus and at the University Club.

Now, in the seventies, many of the younger (and older!) women who come into the LND are employed or studying toward further degrees; some consider

too full a schedule for the Newcomers' Group unwise. This thinking is greatly regretted by many of the early advocates of the venture. Nevertheless, the current trend does seem to be toward fewer but better-attended Newcomer meetings. The shift is also back to first-year-only members, thus making it easier for newcomers to enter and participate more fully in the mainstream of LND activities.

The arrival of one 1974 Newcomer provided an interesting footnote to LND history. She gave us our second family in which the senior Lady of Notre Dame is both a Charter and a Life Member. When her husband came to N.D. last fall, Margaret Langford (Mrs. James) joined her mother-in-law, Alice "Dit" Langford and her sister-in-law, Lois Langford Berry (Mrs. William) in the LND. In our other such family, Kate Dooley (Mrs. William) is the Charter and Life Member; her two daughters are Mary Dooley Houck (Mrs. John) and Brigid Dooley Datile (Mrs. Fernand).