

Chapter 6 Expansion 1964-1968

The years 1964-1968 were years marked by expansion and change. They were years in which another door was opened, another threshold crossed, another step taken in the development of Salve Regina College. They were years that brought with them, too, a sense of urgency that decried vacillation or indecision in relation to the issues at hand.

It was the expression of the same kind of urgency that impelled Catherine McAuley to counsel her daughters in the exercise of their responsibilities to reach out, to expand, even "to experiment." She herself had no patience with those of her foundations that hesitated to enlarge the scope of their ministries by establishing branch houses. "It is quite a shame to be such creep-mouses in such a course,"⁵⁰ she writes of one such foundation! She seemed, too, to have an intuition concerning the timeless boundaries of the work she began. "The objects of the institute are vast and deep," she writes in one of her letters. In the same context she uses the imagery of "a fire kindling fast" to describe the compelling necessity of the spread of what she called "God's work." Likewise, she tells her Sisters that they must be like rivers entering into the sea, an image of the unknown boundless horizons of the future.

It is within these parameters that we propose to examine the history of Salve Regina College during the years 1964-1968 as they evolved under the presidency of Sister Mary Emily Shanley, RSM.

On July 18, 1964, Sister was appointed President of Salve Regina College by the Provincial Council, then functioning as the Board of Trustees of the College. In 1961 she first came to the College as the Superior of the religious community and as treasurer. Receiving a Master of Arts degree in English from Boston College, and having pursued advanced study in languages at St. Xavier College in Chicago and at Laval University in Canada, she also served as a faculty member at the College. During these interim years between 1961 and 1964, she worked closely with Mother Hilda, the President, and Sister Mary Rosalia, the Dean. Thus she became familiar with the various levels of college life.

When she assumed the responsibilities of her office in September, 1964, the incoming class of freshmen numbered two hundred and fifty students, bringing the enrollment to a record number of seven hundred and fifty, from thirteen states and seven foreign countries. The faculty numbered seventy-one, including forty-one Sisters, two Dominican priests, seventeen laywomen, and eleven laymen. The Admissions Office now became separated from that of the Registrar and functioned independently. Such was the *modus operandi* of the College at the moment; soon, however, it was to be caught up in the capricious, ever-shifting tides of human history.

⁵⁰ Neumann, p. 272

By this time, *Salve Regina* had entered the mainstream of college institutions and was thus, by reason of her stature, vulnerable to the forces of change that began to move slowly, but inevitably, throughout the country, affecting all aspects of national life. It was, therefore, a critical era in the history of higher education.

If we were to single out one incident as significant in bringing the national consciousness to a realization of its own instability, it would be that of the assassination of that young, magnetic President, John F. Kennedy. He had become a symbol of hope and optimism for the nation and a much-needed hero for its youth. With his premature death, a kind of darkness enshrouded the land.

In the trying period after President Kennedy's death, President Johnson helped to calm the national hysteria by pursuing a program of domestic reform aimed at what he called "The Great Society." He succeeded in passing through Congress a mass of welfare legislation in medical care for the aged, urban development, civil rights, anti-poverty programs as well as programs for education. But the effects of these reforms were vitiated by United States involvement in Indochina. The result was strident student opposition to the war and the draft system. This was compounded by the Civil Rights movement, which had long become a searing national issue. The fierceness of both these issues which tore the country apart reached their climax in the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy within two months of each other, the one on April 4, 1968, and the other on June 5 of the same year. In addition, the Church itself, which in years past might have been a source of security, was in a state of crisis and questioning as a result of the reforms of Vatican II.⁵¹

Such was the backdrop of the stage as we enter upon the years 1964-1968 of our history. Yet the College moved with the times and its own growing needs.

Due to the increase in enrollment, one of its major concerns was the building of an academic center not only to accommodate the students but to advance the development of the curriculum. The ground was broken for what is now *O'Hare Academic Center* on September 20, 1966. Named in honor of Sister Mary James O'Hare, the first Dean, its doors were ready to be opened in January 1968. The building itself cost \$2,000,000 obtained from both federal grants and loans and the resources of the College.

In addition to nineteen classrooms and faculty offices, well-equipped facilities for science, math, and language majors were made available. The science wing itself with its ten laboratories for the use of the particular branches of the discipline, its fully equipped instrument room, reading room, and research areas made it one of the most fully equipped of its kind in the country.

This enrichment of the curriculum was complemented also in other areas of study. A course in creative writing supplemented that of journalism. Linguistics, a study of the history and structure of the English language, and an offering in Oriental literature enriched the traditional courses in English and American literature. Openness to the tenor of the times was reflected in courses like Area Studies in the Non-Western World, Afro-American Poetry, Study of Non-Christian Religions, Ecclesiology, and the Ecumenical Movement.

⁵¹ Douglas Nelson and Thomas Parker, *Day by Day in the Sixties*. 2 vols. (Facts on File, 1983), *passim*.

In the field of education, perhaps the most significant development was a series of courses in relation to the education of exceptional children and the mentally retarded. Thus, the area of concentration was extended to include Special Education in addition to those already established.

Furthermore, the development of our teacher training program owed much to the continued cooperation and valuable guidance given our students by the teachers of the Newport School system. At a time when our own teacher education program was only a minor, these teachers nevertheless broadened the clinical experience of our students in the classroom. Their program now included the first semester Junior Practicum and one semester of student teaching in either the last semester of the junior year or the first semester of the senior year.

With the inclusion of psychology in the curriculum, students were able to choose this subject as their minor. A junior-year-abroad was opened to French and Spanish majors, the former studying at the Catholic University of Angers in Anjou, France, the latter at the University of Madrid.

Major curriculum development activities in the Division of Nursing were continued, mainly through the implementation of the Community Health and Psychiatric-Mental Health grants. Extensive course revisions were accomplished in these two areas in particular. New additional clinical agencies, namely Bradley and Butler hospitals, were utilized for learning experiences in Psychiatric-Mental Health Nursing. A further incentive for attracting students to enrollment in the Division of Nursing was the receiving, from the federal government, a Nursing Student Loan of nine thousand dollars. Nursing students, along with faculty members, also took advantage of civil defense courses in Medical Self-Help and Shelter Management conducted in the fallout shelter of the State House. Thus they were provided with experience that would help them serve the community in periods of disaster.

Apart from concern for development of the curriculum for students within the College, much attention was devoted by the nursing faculty to the quality of nursing education in general.

It was felt there was a great need to assist nurses already in the field to update their management and teaching skills and the quality of patient care. This concern came to be addressed by the acquisition of a grant of \$7,100 received by the College from the Public Health Service, Division of Nursing of U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Thus the College, chiefly through the efforts of Sister Mary Augustine San Souci, RSM, was able to provide a course by which nurses would be able to meet the demands of new developments in acute patient care and community health nursing practice.

In conjunction with this program the College hosted the "Institute for Hospital Nurses in Leadership Positions," attended by fifty nurses from eight states. Also at this time, the College was ready to increase the number of registered nurses admitted to the Division of Nursing in order to achieve the B.S. degree with a major in Nursing.

Moreover, the nursing faculty was keeping abreast of ongoing developments in the nursing profession and provided workshops to share this information with others in the profession as well as with the general public. Typical of one such endeavor was the workshop on the implementation of the A.N.A. *Position Paper on Nursing Education*. This was conducted as an all-day conference at Ochre Court in conjunction with the Rhode Island State Nurses' Association. During the late 1960's this type of workshop was considered to be most innovative and progressive.

In another area of the curriculum, upon the recommendation of the department itself, the Board of Trustees decided to discontinue the Home Economics department because of stringent standards adopted by accreditation agencies. The program was gradually phased out.

In addition to the courses offered to those who had matriculated in the regular academic program, these years gave evidence of a remarkable growth in both the adult education program, which met weekly during the school year, and that of the six-week Summer School Program. Much credit is due to Sister Mary Rosalia, Dean of the College and Director of both programs, in updating and relating each of them to the needs of the civic community. Credit courses covering a wide range of related topics were offered to teachers for the renewal of teaching certificates. Some courses were geared either to fulfill the needs of high school graduates or to encourage others to complete their college credits. Areas of enrichment attracted professional men and women.

Most noteworthy at this time was the intensive program launched for training teachers of the mentally retarded. This program covered a period of two years, offered in both the adult education program and that of the summer school. As such, it aimed to make a beginning to meet the overwhelming problem of reaching the twenty thousand retarded children residing in the State of Rhode Island alone.

Courses such as Modern Mathematics for Teachers, Area Studies of the non-Western World, Application of Automatic Data Processing, and even a Space Science Workshop met the current interests of both school and community. In 1967 an evening course in the administration of justice was offered to policemen in the Newport area as an extension of the law enforcement program at Bryant College.

However, beyond these avenues of training in the professions just considered, Sister Mary Emily, conscious of the broader spectrum of interest peculiar to a liberal arts college, instituted the Office of Cultural Affairs to provide intellectual and artistic programs for the community at large. During its existence, the College sponsored well-subscribed foreign film festivals and an equally well-subscribed series of lectures and other offerings. Among the personalities and performing groups were such poets as W. D. Snodgrass, John Ciardi, and Brother Anoninus, O. P.; the Baroness Von Trapp of *The Sound of Music* fame; John Noonan, moralist and lecturer from Notre Dame, the Parisien Mime, Zwi Konar; Lawrence Spivak, news correspondent, together with internationally known pianists and violinists.

The College's dramatic offerings were on the Cultural Affairs Calendar. In 1963, as a new faculty member, Miss Joan David assumed the position of director. Until we became coeducational and could draw on our own male students, male roles were played by theatre students from Roger Williams College and Providence College, officers and sailors from the Naval Base, and talent from local community theatres, such as the Newport Players' Guild and the Barrington Players. Until 1980, when the Theatre department came into being, all members of the college community, including faculty, could participate in the annual "big production" as well as in the smaller dramatic offerings. No credit was offered either for acting or for working on the aspects of production. Most major productions, often attracting full houses, were staged at Rogers High School auditorium; others were staged in a variety of places, notably the Great Hall of Ochre Court, a makeshift stage in the Twombly-Burden Room, and in the old gymnasium in Mercy Hall, which had been for a time converted into a Little Theatre.

Among the many plays staged during this period were the following:

- *Tidings Brought to Mary* by Paul Claudel, for which Dr. C. Alexander Peloquin served as music director and liturgical artist Tomi di Paolo as set designer
- *The Sound of Music, The King and I, West Side Story, Fiddler on the Roof*, all of which had as music director Dr. Joseph Conti, then concertmaster of the Rhode Island Philharmonic and the director of the Young Peoples Symphony Orchestra
- *Camelot* and *Godspell* under the musical direction of Dr. Thomas Day
- John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* and Royal Tyler's *The Contrast*, produced in collaboration with Christmas in Newport

Also during this time, as the direct result of a workshop in play direction, the *Newport Black Ensemble Theatre* was incorporated and staged its premiere performance in Mercy's Little Theatre.

During the summer of 1966, the SRC Summer Drama Workshop produced *Cradle Song* starring Ethel Barrymore Colt, artist in residence.

Besides the day-to-day demands of the curriculum and participation in the extracurricular, the students were also exposed to an intelligent evaluation of the crises in both the Church and the nation.

The important aspects of Vatican II were reviewed and discussed by noted lecturers. The practical approach to the meaning of the decree on Ecumenism, as elaborated by the Council, found a variety of expressions. The Dialogue Group, made up of students from Salve Regina College and Barrington College, was a valuable forum for exchange of views and mutual appreciation of each other's manner of worship and Christian living. An Episcopalian Minister, Reverend Robert Winter, who attended the Council, gave his reaction to Vatican II. A Jewish Rabbi, Rabbi Jerome G. Gurland, offered a series of discussions to students and faculty on topics related to the Jewish point of view.

His Eminence Archbishop Iakovos, Primate of the Greek Orthodox Church in North and South America, addressed an audience made up of many faiths on "The Greek Orthodox Church in Today's Ecumenical Movement."

A Layman's Study Day, open to all faiths, reviewed the implications of this movement as presented by a panel of speakers. It was followed by a Mass for Christian unity. The students themselves also organized a club for a study of the changes in the liturgy.

On the other hand, the significance of the situation in Vietnam was kept alive by an analysis of the issues involved. Waring Hopkins, professor of International Affairs at the Naval War College, considered "The War in Vietnam as seen by the Administration and its Critics." The other side of the question was reviewed on United Nations Day by Dr. William McLaughlin, history professor at Brown. This was followed by an outdoor candlelight procession and an ecumenical prayer vigil for peace in front of Ochre Court.

In addition, the copies of the student publication *Ebb Tide*, dating from 1964 to 1968, give an excellent overview of the students' views on these once current problems. Headlines like Freedom and Civil Rights; Passive

Resistance; More Views on Vietnam; Racism Run Rampart; The Drugged Generation; and Loyalty and Demonstrations highlighted their active questioning of the world in which they were living.

These issues also seemed to supply a kind of rationale for the underlying unrest on the campus as evidenced in the letters of protest which appeared in *Ebb Tide*, particularly in the years 1967-1968. The paper supplied a legitimate medium for the expression of what we might call the *Vox Populi*. Apart from a few letters with slogans like "Are We Pawns," "Now is the Time," "The Almighty Veto," the majority represented a true interest in the College and concern for its growth, saying for example:

"Any changes we ask are not threats to the reputation of the school, rather they are ways of expressing true concern for the progress of Salve academically and socially."

"We feel that Salve is in grave danger of acquiring a reputation as a provincial conservative college in an age of liberalism . . . otherwise the girls would not waste their time trying to change present conditions from academic freedom right down to dress and curfews."

Various means were used to keep the lines of communication open. In 1965 a student faculty forum was sponsored by *Ebb Tide* on the topic of Freedom of Expression. It dealt with the definition of freedom in the classroom as well as the roles of students and teachers.

As a result, it was suggested that certain students could be appointed to attend faculty meetings to discuss attitudes toward courses and classroom methods with the instructors. Questionnaires concerning the teaching of specific courses could be distributed among students and analyzed by the faculty.

A second such forum was held in 1966 and dealt with the question of curfews and dress. In 1967 another forum, under the name Student-Faculty Senate, met to discuss both academic and social issues and to be a kind of liaison with the administration.

By May 1967, the whole question of academic freedom was addressed on a larger scale by means of a poll, conducted by *Ebb Tide*, to discover the climate of thought on the part of students, faculty, and administration. The major questions dealt with the possibility of unlimited cuts; the approving of theology courses taken on a pass or fail basis; reducing the number of courses to be taken outside the major or minor fields of concentration.

In reviewing this material it may be concluded that such issues were legitimately aired and a serious attempt made to communicate on all levels. Their resolution, however, could not be immediately accomplished.

In spite of all these on-campus concerns, the students, as in the past, were engaged in many aspects of community service. Volunteers from both the Student Nursing Organization and the Sodality cooperated in visiting the elderly in the Baptist Home on Shepard Avenue. Others participated in the after-school activities for neighborhood children at the Community Center. In conjunction with the La Farge Interracial Council and the Guidance Department of Thompson Junior High School, many offered their time to provide help for students in mathematics, French, Spanish, and remedial reading in an informal, friendly setting. Additionally, the sociology majors became involved in practical aspects of social welfare of the community.

In November 1967 a movement called *Action Core* under the direction of an advisory board made up of a group of lay and religious faculty members, aimed to provide a forum for all clubs on campus by which their own peculiar blueprints for service as Christian women could be unified and realized more effectively.

In a broader sense, through Sister Mary Christopher O'Rourke, head of the sociology department, the College itself has played an important role in the anti-poverty programs of Newport County. As one of the first originators and the first president of the executive board of New Visions for Newport County, she was, at that time, the only Sister to direct a community-wide anti-poverty program. Through her interest in the Head Start Program for Newport County, Salve Regina became the delegate agency for its operation under the direction of Sister Mary Christopher as its liaison with the staff and the College. The College then inaugurated both a summer and winter Head Start program.

As still another expression of community service, in 1965 the International Relations Club sponsored for three successive years a model assembly of the United Nations for about two hundred delegates, observers, and faculty advisors from twenty high schools in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. In these day-long sessions, the participants had the opportunity to come to grips with some of the problems of the world and become acquainted with the particular procedures for dealing with them.

The College was fortunate, also, to become the beneficiary of three additional scholarships as a means of extending itself to worthy students:

- The Roberta Willard Goelet Scholarship of \$50,000 from Robert Goelet in memory of his wife
- The Helen Miriam McCormack Scholarship Fund of \$60,000 given as a bequest in the will of Commander Benjamin B. McCormack of the United States Navy and longtime resident of Newport
- The John F. Kennedy Memorial Scholarship for a foreign student, founded by the Student Government Association of Salve Regina College.

Meanwhile, steps were also taken to meet the needs of the students beyond the classroom. The Counseling Center was provided to offer professional psychological service, the Placement Office to deal with all aspects of career planning, the Health Clinic to supplement the work of the nurses in the residence halls.

The campus facilities were also expanded to include two additional dormitories. In August 1964 the Althorp Estate, on the corner of Ruggles and Lawrence Avenues, was purchased and came to be known as Founders Hall. Likewise, in the Fall semester of 1966, Ochre Lodge, the gift of Mrs. Robert Young, located at the corner of Ochre Point and Ruggles Avenues, was ready for occupancy.

The sports program, too, as an important adjunct to the intellectual life of the College, by this time offered a wide range of activities, among which were basketball, swimming, tennis, bowling, volleyball, and horseback riding.

In addition, the administration gave much attention to supplementing the academic background of the faculty by means of grants enabling them to broaden the perspectives of their own disciplines, especially in the summer. At the same time others, especially the younger Sisters, were given leave to pursue advanced study for doctorates at various colleges and universities.

Much was being accomplished, yet suddenly, it seemed, in the month of February 1966, the College paused to reflect on its own history in the deaths of Mother Mary Hilda Miley on February 12 and that of Mr. Robert Goelet, six days earlier.

Many were the tributes given to honor Mother Hilda from people in all stations of life, but none expressed more fully all she meant to Salve Regina than the following written by Sister Mary Jean Tobin for the special edition of *Ebb Tide*, March 1966.

"For one whose godly deeds have not failed . . ." Eccles. 44,10.

These few simple words can never measure the height and the breadth and the depth of the spirit of mercy shining out upon our lives in the person of Mother Mary Hilda. Her concern for the College was uppermost in all her deliberations. She expected of us as faculty members the same dedication and interest in not only the overall progress of the College but most of all did she wish that we spend ourselves for our students. Integrity of character and integrity of scholarship existed as a unity in Mother's mind. These were the measure of our endeavors. In our meetings with her we experienced a courtesy, a graciousness, and a dignity of manner which are unforgettable.

Salve Regina College was her dream come true, realized in 1947 after many years of planning and of prayer. It was she who found in this ancient salutation to Our Lady, a salutation sounding down through the ages in the liturgy, a salutation the great saints and doctors of the Church have cherished. Yes, it was she who found this a fitting title for this dwelling place where we share the responsibility of training young women in the arts and sciences. Indeed, this name has caught within its many connotations the spirit of a place and of those who have actually laid down their lives for the continuation of a Christian heritage and a Christian humanism.

Surely, Mother Hilda was a woman "endowed with wisdom" whose "godly deeds have not failed," one whose name will live from generation to generation.

The death of Mr. Robert Goelet was also a time for remembering one who, by his generosity, provided Salve Regina with its first home, beautiful Ochre Court, as well as Mercy Hall. He always continued to display an intense interest in the welfare of the College as signified by his occasional visits and his presence at our early commencements. He promoted the educational mission of the College by his bequest for the education of teachers for the retarded and by providing a \$50,000 scholarship fund in memory of his wife. In his death Salve Regina lost not only a generous benefactor, but a friend.

Since growth always brings changes, it is not surprising that these years brought with them substantial variations in the administrative government of the College.

Up until 1964, the religious community of the Sisters of Mercy, in effect the Provincial Council as the Board of Trustees, controlled the administration and governance of the College assisted by an advisory board, a situation which was then typical of such institutions of the time. However, at this point, the members of the Board felt themselves to be ineffective. Many of their functions had been assumed by the Office of Public Relations. Grants made by the federal government and other agencies seemed to have nullified their work on the Committee for Scholarships and Endowments. In May 1964, the resignation of the Administrator General of the Sisters of Mercy, Mother M. Regina Cunningham, as President, ex officio, of the Salve Regina Corporation, triggered the

necessity for a change in the by-laws. She asked that the by-laws be amended and her name be deleted from the Board of Directors since, in effect, she would not be present at the meetings of the corporation.⁵²

Much credit is due to Sister Mary Rosalia Flaherty for initiating and promoting a modification in the by-laws in view of the situation within the College and the demands of the times.

Two factors outside the College sparked the formation of a committee to study the by-laws of the Salve Regina Corporation. The first concerned the movement to have lay persons on the governing boards for Catholic colleges, thus lessening religious control. The other, closer to home, was the situation inherent in the Maryland court case, namely, that the constitutionality of state grants to denominational colleges had been challenged. Both Miley Hall and O'Hare Academic Center had received government loans for their construction.⁵³

The first revision of the by-laws was effected in 1968 with the following results:

The corporation of Salve Regina College was to be composed of five members, none of whom were ex officio. In 1968 this membership included the Bishop, Most Reverend Russell J. McVinney, and four Sisters of Mercy. The corporation retained the title of ownership to the College, but all power and authority of the corporation was invested in the Board of Trustees.⁵⁴

The Board of Trustees consisted of not less than nine predominantly lay persons who controlled the budget, the appointment of administrative officers as well as the conferring of degrees. No provision was made in the by-laws for any legal or structural relationship between the College and the Sisters of Mercy. Such was the situation between 1968 and 1973. The College, however, was still one of the institutions sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy.⁵⁵

The concluding years of Sister Mary Emily's presidency brought with it also changes in the personnel of the College administration.

In May 1967, Sister Mary Rosalia Flaherty, Dean of Studies, was appointed Provincial Director of the newly established Study-Evaluation-Development Program of the Sisters of Mercy of the Province of Providence. Sister brought with her to her new role a rich practical experience as an educator and administrator. This history would be very remiss if it did not recognize her contributions to the growth of the College both in terms of its accreditation as an accepted liberal arts institution and its educational programs as well as its relationship to the needs of the community at large.

⁵² M. Therese Antone, RSM, *The Governance of Catholic Colleges Sponsored by Religious Communities*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Education, Harvard University, 1980), p. 90

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 94

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 102

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 104

Sister Mary Alban Kerwick succeeded Sister Mary Rosalia as Dean of Studies. With a B.A. from Providence College and an M.A. from Catholic University along with her experience in education and administration, Sister came well prepared to meet the demands of her new position.

It is significant that with the appointment in June 1967 of Mr John S. Renza, associate professor of accounting and mathematics at Bryant College, as executive assistant to the President, a layman for the first time served on the administration of the College.

Almost one year later, in May 1968, the Board of Trustees announced with regret the resignation of Sister Mary Emily as President of the College.

What has been narrated in this chapter is a testimonial to her foresight and resourcefulness in cultivating the growth of the College in an age of so much change culturally and socially. The following excerpt from the May 1968 issue of *Ebb Tide*, the College newspaper, best encapsulates the measure of her influence:

She has personally directed, inspired, and encouraged involvement instead of apathy, activity rather than complacency, knowledge rather than ignorance. In essence, it is through her promoting efforts that during the past four years Salve has attained the strong position it holds today. Students will indeed miss their respected President.

Within these years another milestone had been reached in our history. Salve Regina, merely twenty-one years old, was "like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream" (Jer. 17:18).