Chapter 5 Growth 1951-1964

The seed had been sown. Its germination and nurturing demanded much from those privileged to bring it to fruition. What we possess now is the fruit of those hidden years. The spirit that moved them was a sharing in the same spirit of optimism and sacrifice that moved Catherine McAuley to live for an ideal greater than herself. This is still part of our heritage and our most precious endowment.

The Sisters assigned to the College had to have a flexibility to assume many roles always in view of the good of the whole, realizing with Catherine McAuley "the works of Mercy are the very business of our lives."

In the togetherness of dorm life she was mother, counselor, sometimes disciplinarian as well as confidante. She rejoiced with those who rejoiced and wept with those who wept. As class advisor, she was a kind of facilitator for the smooth running of class projects, often peacemaker and propagator of that mysterious quality known as class spirit. Betimes she frequently found herself at the desk in Ochre Court as an ambassador of good will as she welcomed those who came to see the College or brought a prospective student. All of these responsibilities made for a cohesiveness of the college community as a whole and an engendering of the Mercy spirit.

The governance and administration of the College from 1947 to 1964 was, in accordance with the current practice in Catholic institutions of higher learning, the responsibility of the Provincial Council of the Sisters of Mercy acting as the Board of Trustees assisted by an Advisory Board.

Among the major concerns of the administrators at this time were the expansion of the physical facilities of the College, an increase in the number of qualified teachers, both religious and lay, and the continued enrichment of the curriculum and library holdings. Not least was the concern for the accreditation of the College by the proper agencies along with the perennial problem of funding to meet growing needs.

These challenges were met by Mother Mary Hilda Miley, appointed as the second President of Salve Regina College, serving as such from 1948 to 1964. How often during those critical formative years did she come to realize the wisdom of Mother McAuley's counsel to her Sisters as they set out on their first foundations. "We should," she said, "undertake our duties with great courage." For Mother Hilda, as a pioneer in a new work over one hundred years later, these words were both illuminative and empowering.

She was sustained by the support and insight of Sister Mary James O'Hare, Sister Mary Emeria Tobin, and Sister Mary Rosalia Flaherty, respectively. Sister Mary James O'Hare served as Dean of Students from 1947 until her death in 1953. She was succeeded by Sister M. Emeria Tobin, then head of the Education Department, whose short but fruitful term of office was terminated by her untimely death in 1956. Sister Antoinine Fitzgerald, a member of the Provincial Council, assumed the role of Acting Dean until the appointment of Sister M. Rosalia Flaherty in August 1957. As a Ph.D. candidate majoring in Administration in Higher Education at the Catholic University in Washington, together with her rich experience as a teacher, she was eminently qualified to succeed them as Dean of Studies. Building on the foundations of her predecessors so solidly established as such, she

contributed to the growth of the College under two Presidents, Mother Mary Hilda Miley and her successor, Sister Mary Emily Shanley.

In establishing an order of priorities to be treated in the history of a college, it cannot be disputed that the lifeblood of a school are the curricula and faculty. As we review the curriculum, we find that by the second graduation in 1952 the College granted both B.A. and B.S. degrees. Of the twenty-eight students receiving the B.A. degree, ten also received certificates from the State for eligibility in teaching on the elementary level, and eight received the B.S. degree in nursing. The programs in both education and nursing continued to expand.

As early as 1951-1952 the Division of Nursing under the direction of Sister Mary Augustine San Souci was already utilizing St. Joseph Hospital and Our Lady of Fatima Hospital for the instruction of students in the clinical areas. The Providence District Nursing Association also provided experience in the field of community health while Butler Hospital offered psychiatric nursing. By 1960 such practice was afforded the students by means of a cooperative agreement between the Division of Nursing and the Rhode Island State Hospital for Mental Diseases.

Further experience was made available to the students both in the field of community health nursing by the Visiting Nursing Service of Newport and in the clinical area by the United States Naval Hospital in Newport. In 1963 the Division of Nursing received a Federal Grant of $9,850 for the integration of psychiatric and mental health concepts throughout the curriculum.

By 1957 new courses were introduced to the Education department to prepare students for teaching on the secondary level. Furthermore, ten thousand dollars from the U.K. Kellogg Foundation supplemented the professional library already established for student teachers. Nine hundred dollars was also received from the Carnegie Foundation for the purchase of slides dealing with the history of art, architecture, and culture in the United States, to be used by students in practice teaching.

As a prelude to the program for the education of the retarded, a workshop for teachers was given in the summer school of 1964. Mr. Robert Goelet implemented the advancement of such a program by the donation of ten thousand dollars.

In 1959 a program for the training of medical technicians broadened the offerings of the Science Department. A year later a new wing was added to Mercy Hall to house the new chemistry laboratories and offices as well as increasing the facilities of the physics department.

Attesting to the quality of education during these early years, a number of our students received scholarships and fellowships for graduate work at Fordham University, Marquette University, Boston College, and the University of Toulouse in France. Many graduating with B.A. degrees in Food and Nutrition received internships for administrative training in hospitals in Connecticut, Michigan, Cincinnati, and California. Likewise, many graduates in nursing were awarded federal grants to pursue graduate studies in the various areas of nursing practice and nursing education.

The possibility of membership in Kappa Gamma Pi, the national honor society of Catholic Women's Colleges, and in Sigma Phi Sigma, the Mercy honor society, also stimulated and challenged the students to a high level of academic achievement. All these efforts to strengthen the curriculum were highly commendable and very

important. Yet the enrichment of programs providing an apostolic dimension and purpose to the students' professional formation were no less vital in terms of the Mercy tradition of service.

The Mission Club of the early fifties was now expanded to include the Lay Apostolate. Several students, under the direction of Sister M. Martha Quinn, became lay volunteers serving for a year or a summer in missions within our own country, especially in Texas and North Carolina. This apostolate was later extended to our Mercy Mission in Belize, British Honduras. In addition, other students, having completed the required course, received certificates from the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine preparing them for service in their own parishes.

In addition, Salve Regina College, along with eight other Mercy colleges of the Union, became identified with a unique program initiated by Sister Mary Josetta Butler of St. Xavier College in Chicago, for the education of young Indian Sisters in this country.

Under her direction, the Sisters of Mercy "adopted" the entire archdiocese of Kerala in southwest India. Because of the Communist control of the educational system there, the Catholic schools, hospitals, and orphanages faced a shortage of trained personnel. Surprisingly, the Communists agreed to allow the Sisters to leave the archdiocese for educational purposes. According to the plan, each Mercy college was to take two Indian Sisters apiece each year, paying all transportation, education, and living expenses. Two of these Indian Sisters, Sisters Jerome and Jane Frances, Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, were enrolled at Salve Regina in 1960.

In the summer of 1961, the College had the unusual experience of directing a two-week orientation for thirty-two Sisters from India and Burma. They arrived by plane in Boston, were met by Sister Mary Rosalia, Dean, and were brought by bus to Newport. In spite of Rudyard Kipling's phrase "Never the twain shall meet," East and West shared their cultural differences and diverse customs. In fact, the Indians and Burmese became so Americanized in their brief experience here that some asked to have ice cream for breakfast!

After their introduction to American life and customs, the Sisters were assigned to different Mercy colleges around the country for four years to be trained in any subject necessary to fulfill the needs of their particular communities. From this group Sister Mary Arsenia and Sister Anna Maria remained with us.

The following comment from an article in the *Newport Daily News* of August 11, 1961, expresses well the apostolic and global outreach of this endeavor in the field of education:

> *Salve Regina College has contributed much to the well-being of Newport since it was founded fourteen years ago. Newport is proud of the part the College is now playing in helping the underprivileged nations of the world to help themselves.*

While the continued effort to evaluate and strengthen the curriculum is always essential, it cannot be doubted that the viability of a college institution depends to a great degree on recruitment and good public relations. Various means were used at this time to attract qualified students to the College. At High School Day the presence of an alumna who shared her experiences gave another dimension to the program. By 1958 transportation to the College was provided by a bus service picking up day students from Providence, East Providence, Warren, and Fall River. In a series of telecasts, a panel of students either gave an informative presentation of the College as a whole or discussed some topic of academic interest, thus widening the area of

public relations. The Father-Daughter weekend, first introduced in 1958, was still another means of bringing together in a kind of kinship those who already had an interest in the College.

No less important is the fact that, during the years 1954-1956, the College had established five high school scholarships. In this regard also, as early as 1951 two bills for graduate and postgraduate scholarships for Salve Regina College were introduced into the General Assembly by Senator Florence Murray from Newport. Such scholarships had already been granted to Brown University and Providence College.

By 1962, as a result of all these noteworthy efforts, the College enrollment had grown to 532 students representing twelve states and five foreign countries.

The College also extended itself to the outside community in a lecture series on Communism during October, November, and December of 1959 and ending in January 1960. Various aspects of communism were treated by each speaker. Noteworthy among them were Douglas Hyde, a former communist and editor of the *Daily Worker*, and Baroness Elisabeth Von Guttenberg of Germany, a courageous opponent of both Nazism and Communism, who lost both her husband and two sons in their struggle against Hitler.

Thus, by degrees, a public image of the College was being formed and many avenues opened to make Salve Regina a viable option among many as "the college of my choice."

Mother Hilda, as President, was as much concerned with the intellectual growth of the faculty as she was of the students. She felt that a Liberal Arts College should be a community of scholars.

While much interaction grew out of the formal presentations given by faculty members at their meetings, it was felt that it was important for the faculty "to talk research" by means of seminars. This medium, it was hoped, would provide an enjoyable method of learning and form a kind of intellectual fellowship as well.

As we read the minutes of the faculty meetings at this time, we find that several meetings were given over to panel discussions on topics demanding much research. The political and social conditions of Latin America were examined along with a correlation of the Lay Apostolate within that world. The encyclical of Pope John XXIII was analyzed in relation to the *Rerum Novarum* of Pope Leo XIII. Its social teachings were specifically dealt with and their contemporary applications explored.

In the study of *Pacem in Terris*, a later encyclical of Pope John XXIII, panelists were chosen outside the faculty. In a series extending from October 1963 to April 1964, the encyclical was studied, from the viewpoint of a philosopher, a lawyer, an economist, and a psychologist. Two statesmen, namely Senator John O. Pastore and Senator Claiborne Pell, both from Rhode Island, also analyzed its impact nationally and internationally, respectively.

A further source of intellectual advancement for the Mercy community of the College was its identification with the other eight Mercy colleges through the Mercy Higher Education Colloquium. Through this bonding a unified approach to the expression of the Mercy tradition in higher education was assured and its creativity channeled.

The spiritual life of the students as well as the courses in philosophy and theology were under the direction of the College chaplains. Both Father John Shea and Father Gerald Dillon had served us well. They will always be remembered as our ambassadors-at-large in making the College known and recognized as an integral part of

Aquidneck Island. They were assigned pastorates in the diocese, Father Dillon in 1955 becoming the pastor of St. John and Paul's, a new parish in Coventry, Father Shea in 1959 becoming pastor at St. Andrew's, Block Island. As a result the Dominicans from Providence College were then assigned to serve us as chaplains and/or members of the theology department.

Fathers Irving Georges, OP, Paul Curran, OP, and Christopher Johnson, OP, not only reinforced a strong Aristotelian and Thomistic foundation for the course of study but also identified themselves with the student life of the campus. In this regard, no doubt, many of the alumnae, especially those on the basketball team, recall that while Father Shea sounded his drum, Father Georges, in his enthusiasm, blew his trumpet loud and clear every time they made a basket, giving only "a soft tweet" should the opposing side do so.

However, the validity of the program of studies and the professional qualifications of the faculty as well as the value of various support systems of the institution depended realistically on the acceptance of the College by the accrediting agencies.

The College first sought affiliation with the Catholic University of America under the expert guidance of Dr. Roy Deferrari. By 1954, the College was affiliated with Catholic University for an indefinite period. [This relationship was terminated in 1969, for by that time the College had already been accredited by the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools.] However, there still remained the very important step of its accreditation by the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools and by the National League of Nurses.

Three visitations were made, namely, in 1954, 1956, and 1960, by the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. The recommendations made in 1954 were substantially fulfilled by the addition of the library in McAuley Hall and the fact that the areas of concentration of art, business, and education were reduced to minors. A limited accreditation was given in 1956 with the stipulation that the President live on campus or in the vicinity of the College and that the standards of admission be improved.

The report of the accrediting committee received in January 1961 granted accreditation for ten years. The following summary taken from that accreditation report is indicative of the degree of growth not only since 1947 but also since 1956.

The Committee noted in particular the following improvements in the academic area:

- Within those four years the enrollment had increased from 236 to 432 students.
- In a faculty of fifty members, fifteen were lay persons together with an increase in the numbers having doctorates.
- There was a choice now of fifteen fields of concentration.
- Developments within the English and sociology departments as well as the honors programs in upper division courses were especially commendable.
- Altogether, the faculty showed a high degree of competence in using a variety of methods of instruction.

- Additional facilities for residences and classrooms as well as the increase in library holdings and personnel represented an achievement of distinction and importance.

On the other hand, the Committee recommended the following changes:

- The Office of Admissions should be set up separately from that of the Registrar.
- The Dean of Studies should be relieved of guidance duties and a Director of Guidance appointed.
- Funds ought to be provided for the purchase of standard works and reference material for the library.

The report made by the Accrediting Board representing the National League for Nursing following its visit in October 1960 was likewise both positive and remedial. The Board made the following affirmations:

- The content material of the general curriculum was found to be complete, with an equal balance between education in the arts and sciences and the curriculum outlined in the professional field of nursing.
- It was observed that the instructors made use of various teaching methods involving much student participation and sharpening their ability to make correlations with principles used in other courses.
- The Nursing collection in the library and those of the cooperating agencies were found to be adequate.
- The organization of the Nursing Division as a whole and the interest of the faculty in developing the curriculum were primary assets.

In addition the Board recommended that:

- The course in Community Health be improved in terms of more specific application to particular related areas.
- More consecutive days of experience be allowed to insure continuity in the course Maternal Child Health.
- The summer sessions be eliminated.
- More faculty be added and some released for post-Master's study.

On December 24, 1960, the Division of Nursing received official confirmation that it was fully accredited by the National League for Nursing for a period of eight years.

Such reports by both accrediting agencies speak for themselves relative to the dedicated effort of all concerned in the development of Salve Regina College as an institution of higher learning.

Another major problem concerning the growth of the College during these years was the need for adequate facilities for housing and classrooms. As our numbers increased, so too did this demand. Fortunately within the Providence of God, doors were opened, ways and means found, and friends provided.

In 1955, through the generosity of Mrs. William A. M. Burden, daughter of the late Mrs. Hamilton McKown Twombly, who died in 1952, the estate adjacent to Ochre Court known as *Vinland* was acquired. The property included the three-story mansion of fifty rooms, a gatehouse, greenhouses with potter's shed, the stable, and the residence of the caretaker.

The College made use of the mansion for a residence hall for its growing population and for the expansion of the library formerly in Ochre Court. It has come to be known as McAuley Hall. The stables, today known as Angelus Hall, were converted into a classroom facility of thirteen rooms supplementing those already in Ochre Court and Mercy Hall. The building is now used as the Instructional Technology Center. The art and music departments were centralized in the gatehouse, known as Rosary Hall, and at this time is used as the Campus Ministry Center. Marian Hall, once the caretaker's residence, utilized first as a small dormitory, then as a residence for the Sisters, presently houses the offices of the Education department.

La Verriere, the estate of Mrs. Geraldene E. Godey, the former Mrs. Moulton, was purchased in 1959 for a dormitory called Queen Hall. Two years later the College leased *Wayside*, the former home of Mr. and Mrs. A. Thomas Clagett for use as a dormitory called St. Joseph's Hall. In 1962 the Clagetts generously gave the property to the College with the proviso that the College accept the $10,000 mortgage. Both dormitories were later sold in an effort to centralize the campus facilities.

Within this period the College also purchased the property directly across from Ochre Court from the Hatch Preparatory School. At this time the College Health Services, the College Counseling Services, and the faculty offices of the Graduate Department are located here.

A major step was taken when the Jacobs estate, *Whiteholme*, was purchased and the building razed for the construction of Miley Hall. Thus more dormitory space could be provided as well as a large dining room. The ground was broken on October 2, 1963, the cornerstone laid May 22, 1964. Since the building was not ready for occupancy until February 3, 1965, the College purchased the Althorp estate on Ruggles Avenue for a dormitory, now Founders Hall. Since the anticipated enrollment of freshmen for September 1964 was 250 students, the building adjacent to Miley Hall, *Shady Lawn*, was leased as a temporary dormitory.

In view of the rapid growth of the College, it cannot be overemphasized that the members of the administration of the College and the Board of Trustees, then the Provincial Council, were guided and helped immeasurably by the Advisory Board reactivated in 1958. The first meeting of this new Board was held March 25, 1958, at Salve Regina College. It included at this time the following members:

- His Excellency, The Most Reverend Russell J. McVinney, D.D.
  Honorary Chairman
- Cornelius C. Moore, Esquire, Chairman Emeritus*
- Mr. Henry R. Sullivan, Chairman
- Mr. James Foley, Secretary
- The Right Reverend Monsignor Matthew L. Clarke, V.G.

- Very Reverend Robert Slavin, O.P.
- The Right Reverend Monsignor Thomas V. Cassidy
- The Right Reverend Monsignor John J. Kenney
- Reverend Cornelius Collins
- Reverend Gerald F. Dillon
- Reverend Walter Leo Flynn
- Miss Mary Eagan
- Mr. Walter Farrell
- Mrs. Mary Fogarty
- Mr. Thomas Gilbane
- Mrs. Joseph Hickey
- The Honorable Francis J. McCabe
- The Honorable Francis I. McCanna
- Mr. James E. McGwin
- Miss Lillian McMahon
- The Honorable Florence Murray
- Mr. J. T. O'Connell*
- Miss Regina O'Donnell
- Dr. John F. Quinn
- The Honorable Arthur Sullivan
- Dr. Michael Walsh
- Mrs. Peter Walsh

**Not able to attend the March 25, 1958 meeting*

Representing the Board of Trustees:

- Mother Mary Catherine, RSM, The Mother Provincial
- Mother Mary Antonine, RSM, The Assistant Mother Provincial

Members of Salve Regina College Administration:

- Sister Mary Hilda, RSM, President
- Sister Mary Rosalia, RSM, Dean
- Sister Mary Martina, RSM, Registrar
- Sister Mary Rose, RSM, Treasurer

Their work in the standing committees gave evidence of their undivided interest in the development in particular of the areas of educational policy, finance, public relations and publicity, endowment and scholarships, and the library.

Another source of support which supplemented the work of the Advisory Board was the organization of the Fathers Council. It grew out of a suggestion from a group of fathers vitally interested in the progress of Salve Regina College. One of the prime movers of its establishment was Mr. Edmund P. Tobin of Rye, New York, who worked closely with Mr. Kenneth Brasted, director of public relations and development, together with an executive board consisting of the following:

- George A. Bisson
- James J. Dillon
- Terrence Duffy
- John Lazzari
- Richard Lee
- Conrad Matte
- Earl Mullare
- Robert Robinson

The first step in fostering such a proposal was the inauguration of a Father-Daughter Weekend, in October 24-26, 1962. On the Saturday afternoon of the weekend a business meeting with the fathers resulted in the establishment of the Council. Eventually, officers and an executive board were elected. One of the chief objectives of the council was to foster a closer relationship with their daughters and to introduce the fathers to the teachers, to the curriculum, and to the campus as a whole.

An offshoot of such an endeavor was the desire to help the College financially. One of their first contributions was the furnishing of the dining room in Miley Hall, then in progress of construction. The proceeds from a *Souvenir Journal* of the College were transferred to the Miley Hall project.

By 1964, the Council was divided into seven areas with an area chairman in charge of the operation of each area. In November 1965, while still realizing the success of the *Souvenir Journal* as a vehicle of funds for the College, the officers, executive board, and area chairman felt another method should be tried. Thus the *Salve Regina Gateway Club* came into being. It was felt that the *Club*, as opposed to the *Journal* as a source of revenue, would be more acceptable to a larger number of contributors and would produce greater financial results.

In July 1964, Mother Hilda retired as President of the College, a post she had held for sixteen years. In those years she saw the College grow from fifty students to almost six hundred, from one building to twelve buildings. It is fitting then as we close this chapter on the early growth of the College that its contents should stand as a memorial to her who brought it into being and nurtured it. At the same time she passed on to others a desire to share in the intensity of her devotion to all the College meant to her. In her last public speech as President at the blessing of Miley Hall, she voiced the depth of her inner conviction when she said: "If you look into my heart, there you will find Salve Regina."[49]

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[49] All material in this chapter was taken from the Archives of Salve Regina University.