

HOUSE OF CARDS

Entrance and Exit

Thursday, August 15, 1957. A bright sunny day. My father wishes me well, gives me a hug, and departs for work on his usual train. My sister goes off on the bus to school. My mother and a friend drive me from our home in Garden City to the airport on on Jamaica Bay, then called Idlewild and later JFK We walk out on the tarmac; my mother cries; hugs all around, and I board my first and only flight in a old DC-3. We fly out over the bay, then turn north, making one stop at Albany along the way to Plattsburgh.

At my destination I am driven to an old resort hotel on a hill. I have brought with me the required black suit, pen and notebook, a sheaf of papers, eager curiosity, and some fright. I am reporting to the Jesuit novitiate on Lake Champlain, not far from Montreal.

Friday, August 15, 1969, Another sunny, warm day. I walk into the superior's office at Woodstock College outside Baltimore and sign the papers that state I am departing of my own free will and that I will not be suing for back pay. I collect my new brown suit, books and boxes of notes, but I leave behind the iron crucifix from my vow day. I drive away in a car I had purchased in May. I am leaving the Jesuits.

How had it come to that?

There were plenty of complex psychological motives for starting, and also for ending, my Jesuit life. There were intellectual adventures, and organizational blunders. But if I had to say it briefly, I would say that I entered looking for the deeper wider central world. I found deeper and wider worlds in history, in philosophy and science. But I learned they had no single center, no pole around which everything revolved. And I found that I had no interest in representing a flawed institution that claimed to be that central pole. Nor could I credit its claims. So I left, moving out into the wider world. (What I didn't know at the time was that that the superior who co-signed my papers was himself preparing to leave, as was the teacher and mentor at Woodstock who had helped me through the departure.)

Deciding to Enter

My decision to enter the Jesuits at 18 was not taken lightly. In fact I had thought too much about it. I agonized over the details without asking enough about the big choice. The idea of entering a religious order had first hit me as I finished grade school in 1953.

I purchased a book listing religious orders. I had no interest in becoming a diocesan priest of the kind I was too familiar with from my altar boy experience of earnest self-confident back-slappers, cold authoritarians, and fearful worrywarts. There was a religious order that had a so-called junior seminary not too far away on Long Island. I investigated it, a high school for people who thought of joining that order. It was small, dingy, and had no intellectual pretensions. It didn't attract me. But the idea of becoming a more monkish sort of priest attracted me enough that I mentioned it my parents. They put their foot down; I was too young. They were right. I put that plan aside and saw my future as a scientist. This was the time of Sputnik, and I was reading science fiction. If religion hadn't intervened, I imagine I would have gone on to study physics and astronomy.

By my senior year a religious call, a "vocation," had resurfaced. I was constantly being told that God was calling those who would dare towards a higher more difficult life in the service of others. Was I willing to take up the challenge? I didn't want to be cowardly. If there was a higher life I wanted it. My motivations were multiple, as you might expect. Partly they were an adolescent desire to rise to a challenge, coupled with the thought of being observed by the God who was holding out such a challenge. They included a desire to be closer to the center of things and to find a deeper life. Then there was a standard adolescent mix of self-doubt, fear of an emerging sexuality, and attempts to gain status, validation and belonging.

I walked our dog late at night; over and over I approached the choice between the Marianists who taught at my high school, good people whom I admired, and the Jesuits whom I encountered at debate tournaments and in books. The Jesuits were more sophisticated and a little scary, with an impressive worldwide history and an esprit de corps that made the other group look pale. I had met young Jesuits who coached high school debate teams, and made two visits to an uncle who had decided at age 30 to join the Jesuits. I read stories about becoming a Jesuit and found them both off-putting and attractive.

There was no sudden moment of decision. I was so busy deciding which religious order to enter, that I didn't give enough thought to whether I truly wanted to enter a religious order at all.

The Jesuit application procedure involved interviews in New York City. Then, the morning after my senior prom, with little sleep, I showed up at Fordham University for

a battery of psychological tests. I remember the Minnesota Multi-Phasic Personality Inventory that I had already taken in high school, an interest profile, and several projective tests (“draw a person on the blank paper...now turn it over and draw a person of the other gender...”). I must have passed the tests, but given some of the people I met later in the Jesuit novitiate, I doubt the tests were very sensitive.

What Might Have Been

I didn't know it at the time, but my parents opposed my entering the Jesuits. However, they didn't believe in blocking the choices of their children. They did go out of their way to say explicitly that they would be delighted to finance my way through college and on to a PhD in any field I chose. I appreciated but did not weigh their offer properly.

As it turned out, I received a very good education at no cost. I didn't earn a salary until I finished my PhD in 1972. I had worked for three years teaching philosophy at Fordham University, but if there was a salary I never saw it. The Jesuits may have been strict, but they were generous with support. My father made some financial contributions to the order but nothing like what he would have paid for a full educational ride, even at those days' low prices.

What would I have done if I had been refused by the Jesuits in 1957? My plan was not to try any other religious order, but to go to Notre Dame and study science. At Chaminade we had been strongly urged to attend a catholic college. Preoccupied with the question of religious life, I hadn't really considered that as a student with my record, I could have attended a prestigious secular college. My good friend Rod did so and benefited greatly. I can't imagine the me that would've resulted from such a choice, though later I had a taste watching Yale undergraduates when I was doing graduate school there.

Nor can I imagine the me that would've resulted from attending Notre Dame. It's conceivable, since Notre Dame was at that time more religiously and philosophically conservative than the Jesuits, that I might have rebelled sooner. It's significant that I planned to study science. I don't know whether I would have been attracted by philosophy and other humanities that were strong at Notre Dame. When in the early '60s I chose among various specializations, science was available but my humanistic Jesuit education had attracted me to other fields. Linguistics was the closest science that

I thought about, but philosophy won out, still seeking the center and widest horizons.

Novices

About 60 of us young men joined the New York Jesuit Province in 1957. Numbers had grown so high that the traditional novitiate at St. Andrews, which had opened in 1903 on the Hudson river near Poughkeepsie, had been supplemented in 1955 by a second location near Plattsburgh, on Lake Champlain close to the Canadian border. The Jesuits had purchased the old Hotel Champlain in 1952, renaming it Bellarmine College. The hotel housed Jesuits studying philosophy until 1955, when a new philosophy building near Peekskill opened and Bellarmine became the second novitiate. I arrived there two years later.

The American Jesuits had a plan for us novices. It was to take fifteen years. At first we were to be isolated from “the secular world,” then by stages allowed more contact. We were to be imprinted with Jesuit spirituality and customs, then immersed in classical languages and literature, then trained in a rigorous philosophical system, then thrust into a teaching job at a Jesuit school. After that we would be isolated again for theology studies, ordained as priests, and touched up during a reprise of the novitiate experience. We were to emerge fearsomely educated and ready to change the world.

The plan was to impose a certain shape on our lives. There was a style of spirituality involving clearheaded dedication to God's work, particular types of meditation and self-examination, a no-nonsense form of life in community, and the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Poverty and chastity were to free us from distractions and make our energy available for the work, and obedience would direct that energy as God wished. All would be secured within a strong intellectual framework of philosophical and theological ideas and disciplined practice.

The institutional arrangements for the plan claimed to embody four hundred years of Jesuit tradition, though their American form was maybe fifty years old. Teachers in “houses of formation” located safely away from “the world” stood ready to “form” us.

Central to the traditional novitiate was the strategy of gradualness. The Jesuit, destined for immersion in the secular world, was to start with almost complete detachment from that world, and then, step by step, reenter it to work

successfully in it. ...the two years of novitiate be devoted not to studies but to mortification and growth in spiritual perfection. After the desert experience of the novitiate, he spent the next two years in the juniorate, which might be the same house as the novitiate but in a separate wing, where he followed a very different life. He was engaged full time in secular studies and had more personal responsibility for the allocation of his time. The next three years found him completely removed from the novitiate environs in another house of formation called the philosophate, engaged in the study of philosophy and science and with still more personal responsibility for the allocation of his time

During the next three years he was completely immersed in the active life. In these years of regency, he taught full time, usually in a high school, and acted as a moderator for many of the school activities: athletics, newspaper, yearbook, students' and parents' clubs, and so forth. He was back in touch with all the usual secular books, magazines, and entertainments. While he was still somewhat more supervised than were those who had completed the course of formation, on the whole this period was a very effective test of the solidity of his sacral, eschatological values. He learned a great deal about himself and the strengths and weaknesses of his previous seven years of formation.

The next four years took the now not-so-young Jesuit back to studies and seclusion, to life in the theologate. These years offered the opportunity to strengthen any weaknesses disclosed by the preceding active years of regency. The final year, tertianship, saw a return to novitiate life. (Joseph Becker, S.J., *The Re-Formed Jesuits: a history of Changes in Jesuit Formation During the Decade 1965-1975*. San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1992, 1997.)

This plan began to falter as I went along, and it collapsed around the time I left the Society. More than 70% of my fellow novices eventually left the Jesuits, and those who did finish the training did not resemble the originally planned Jesuits. What happened?

The first problem was controlling access to and from "the world." There is a saying attributed to various early Jesuits, "if you give me a child at six years old I will give you the man." Likely this was a fabrication by someone attacking the Jesuits, but it sums up the spirit behind the Plan for us young Jesuits. But we were not six years old. We

children of the Eisenhower years arrived carrying worlds with us. The week I entered the Jesuits Elvis Presley was the number-one hit on the radio and you can be sure I had been listening to him. Then for me there had already been the Korean war, high school debates on current events, concert band music, work as a photographer, exploring science-fiction worlds, plenty of science, and a surprising amount of Chinese and Indian history and mythology. Others had their own wide backgrounds and experiences. We were not pliant matter waiting to be formed. The world would not stay conveniently outside and it was changing too fast for a fifteen or even a two-year delay.

We were not allowed newspapers or radios or TV. Our only contact with world events was to be what the novice master might choose to pass along. But news and culture leaked in around the barriers.

It's two months since I came to Bellarmine, and I'm jolted awake after midnight by roaring sounds. My room overlooked the Strategic Air Command base immediately to our west. Dozens of bombers and tankers are taking off, one after the other, not waiting for the ones before to completely clear the runway. It's a special alert because of some Cold War crisis. I am not as cut off from the world as the Plan wants me to be. The next morning I'll hear about the crisis.

The novitiate was more successful in controlling what information went out than blocking what came in. We were encouraged to write letters home each week, but those letters had to be placed unsealed in a box at the novice master's door. Such censorship ended after two years. But rereading the letters my mother kept from my Jesuit years I saw how little I told my family about what was really going on.

Austerity Amid Luxury

For my group in Plattsburgh, architecture and surroundings also resisted our austere first stage of formation. The old first Hotel Champlain had sat gaily on its hilltop looking out over wide Lake Champlain toward the Green mountains in the east and the Adirondack mountains to the south and west. A network of steamships and railroads brought families for long vacations. That hotel had burned down in 1910 and had been replaced by a less flamboyant but solidly comfortable building. The hotel grounds included freestanding cottages which we used for summer residences, a golf course, plus acres of woodland trails leading down to the hotel beach and the vast lake for swimming and ice skating. Unlike the shared dormitories and study halls at other novitiates, we were provided with single hotel rooms with a private bath. Also unlike

many houses of formation, our hotel was not divided into separate parts for its two groups of students. We all lived along a single long corridor: novices lived toward the north, juniors toward the south, but there were no separations. During the day the groups intermingled. Novices and juniors were not supposed to speak to one another but good natured comments were frequent.

That unified floor plan enabled and expressed a degree of freedom and interaction that made Bellarmine different. Andrew Brady, our novice master, had changed the traditionally strict rules for novices to allow more spontaneous connections among us. Brady was the first American Jesuit novice master to challenge the traditional way novitiate days and social interactions were managed. We could address one another as Tom and Jeff instead of Brother Jones and Brother Smith. We had a more occasions during the day when we could speak English instead of the more usual Latin. We were no longer forbidden to cultivate close friendships, though we were cautioned against cliques. We prospered in this relatively liberal regime.

Andrew Brady did not attempt to model Plattsburgh on the old New York province novitiate at Poughkeepsie. While he accepted most of the traditional house arrangements, simply because they were already in place, his general approach was not to do some- thing because it was traditional but to do that which seemed to fit the current situation. ...Father Brady used some of the language of the new humanistic psychology which had begun to flourish in the 1950s. He wanted the novices to establish their identity; to get in touch with their feelings; to be open and at ease with other persons, including women; to value interpersonal affectivity; and to exhibit more spontaneity and initiative than the traditional system produced. The new psychology could very well have been one of the forces shaping the master and his novitiate. ...That not all the novitiates changed at the same time or in the same way is illustrated by **the** following incident. When [the New England Province novitiate at] Shadowbrook burned (1956), some of its novices were sent to Plattsburgh, some to St. Andrew's (New York), and some to Wernersville (Maryland). When they returned to a rebuilt Shadowbrook as juniors, they reported different experiences, which they memorialized in a play. Those who had been to Plattsburgh came on stage dressed in jaunty summer suits, with straw hats and canes. Those who had been to St. Andrew's entered dressed in traditional cassocks, with hands clasped and

eyes cast down. Those who had been to Wernersville were depicted as falling between the two extremes. This distinctive Plattsburgh flavor seemed to have perdured. When the Plattsburgh juniorate closed in 1964, about twenty of its members were transferred to Shadowbrook. In 1965, a community member at Shadowbrook wrote to the New England provincial, "Many of the Buffalo Juniors [from the Plattsburgh novitiate] stressed fraternal charity as opposed to religious observance... while the New England Juniors put more stress on religious observance. This has caused some friction in the Juniorate." (Becker)

Brady urged us to believe that we were a select group attending a Jesuit novitiate like no other, one that was facing up to the situation of the modern world and not hidebound by old traditions. It would be a half dozen years before any other novice master in America enacted reforms similar to Brady's, and then took them further. Brady's novices, full of energy and creative projects, became a generation of creative Jesuits who would enliven many institutions — and also amplify the tensions and disruptions of the '60s.

William Gleason, the overall superior of the house and himself a former novice master, had resisted but then allowed Brady's innovations. We novices felt loyal to Brady and mistrusted those older Jesuits who looked askance at his innovations.

I found the camaraderie and intelligence of my colleagues bracing and supportive. Outside, we worked on the grounds and the forest and we had sports: swimming or ice-skating at the lakeshore below the hotel, handball, paddle ball, basketball and tennis, and a form of touch football. The novice master joined us for athletics; he was a murderous competitor at handball and paddleball.

Spiritual Problems

A 30 day Long Retreat began our spiritual training. Four weeks of silence, five meditations day, a spiritual lecture each morning, repeated meetings with the retreat director, intense self-examination, all leading us to resolve to dedicate ourselves to following God's orders. The Plan scheduled the long retreat twice, at the beginning of the novitiate and at the end of the 15 year plan.

My long retreat proved frustrating. I wasn't very good Ignatius's elaborate visualization meditations on the life of Christ. I thought I was good at the self-examination he required, but I made mistakes. The retreat master asked each of us to

identify our key fault and I said "pride". He agreed. I realized later my real issue was unworthiness, as judged by the ever-observing Eye. I came to grips with that unworthiness later in therapy, not in the pressure cooker retreat. So Brady had assigned me with great authority a direction for self cultivation 180° away from what I needed. Brady's skills made him a great advisor for social and institutional matters of community life but not a gifted individual spiritual director.

I realized later that Jesuit styles of elaborate visualization meditation failed for me because quiet was what my overactive mind needed. At Madonna House one summer in Canada that I learned a style of quiet Christian meditation from the Russian tradition, then later discovered Buddhist meditation techniques that brought me to a place the Jesuits never helped me find.

We also had problems with our assigned spiritual reading. Traditionally Jesuit novices were assigned a multivolume work by an early Spanish Jesuit, Alonso Rodriquez. We read it every day. Brady allowed that once we had finished going through the volumes we could then move on to other reading, but it took a long time to get through Rodriquez, whose rhetoric and imagery was so foreign to our experience. A few years later the next step in novitiate reform would eliminate Rodriguez entirely.

There were many modern and classic spiritual books that we could have read with profit, but the authorities worried that if we were given classics like Augustine's *Confessions*, or *The Cloud of Unknowing*, let alone highflying mystical treatises by Teresa of Avila or John of the Cross, we would launch ourselves into delusive spiritual quests. Even on our thin spiritual diet, some of my fellows did go too far that way. Still, we felt starved. We were given was only negative ascetical writings about devotion, self-control, and mortification rather than inspiring visions of a path forward.

What I found most valuable from all that spiritual reading were Ignatius's Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, insightful advice on how to use the interplay of one's emotional moods to help decide important life issues.

At our daily morning conferences I am taking studious notes on what Brady is saying. He works hard on his talks, speaking with great emphasis, frankly admitting how difficult it was to present some matters in a clear way. His talks cover spiritual practices, the Jesuit constitutions and rules, and community life. I am learning a great deal from him about Jesuit community life. While I am taking notes I am developing an elaborate shorthand to take notes more rapidly.

Although I can't admit it to myself at the time, I am busily distancing myself from what I am hearing. I was more interested in devising new abbreviations and techniques than and really listening to the content. Five years later I had thrown out those voluminous notes but even today I still use many of those abbreviations.

Natural Happiness

Getting Away

As a novice with experience driving, I was sent on errands to purchase things in town or to drive someone to a doctors appointment in Plattsburgh or even north into Canada. It was exciting to get out, though rural Clinton County was the most impoverished in New York State. But over the border there were prosperous Canadian towns, the wide St. Lawrence River and the foreign excitement of Montréal.

Traveling south by car or by train would bring us through the mountains, to Lake George, Saratoga, and Albany. Ignatius had prescribed that novices should go through "experiments" designed to test them and give them a taste of Jesuit life. The original plan included periods of begging, service to the poor, and other events. In my time most of that had disappeared, but we were sent for several weeks to serve at a Jesuit retreat house for priests not far from Albany. The house stood near a shrine for martyrs who had died for their faith during the French and Indian wars. We cleaned, made beds, served meals. The work was not hard; we were freed from the usual novitiate routine, but once we had explored the strangely designed shrine building, the location grew boring. If the experience was meant to toughen and test us, it wasn't hard enough, and if it was meant to give us a sense of daily life outside the novitiate, it was too restricted. Though we did enjoy the train ride down and back through the Adirondacks. the whole endeavor felt like a ritual that had lost its purpose.

Visitors

August 15th, 1959, two years to the day since I left home. My parents bring my sister and both grandmothers to my Vow Day. They have been driving the eight or 10 hour trip from New York four times each year, leaving early Friday afternoon, staying over near Albany, then driving through the mountains, arriving for lunch on Saturday and leaving after lunch on Sunday for the long drive back to Long Island. Once they had brought my high school friend Jerry Maier, once or twice my cousin Margie Munsch. My sister is excited that they have rented a large mobile home along the lakefront to accommodate the crowd. But I am not allowed to visit off the

grounds. One aspect of novitiate life that Brady has not modernized is our treatment of guests. They are restricted to small "guest parlors" in a row on the first floor. We can sit and chat there, or we can walk freely around the grounds and down to the lake. (One winter visit we build a snowman and pose around it for a family Christmas Card.) But I can only show the interior of the house to my father. Women are not allowed. Nor are we permitted to eat lunch or dinner with our guests; they are served in a small dining room near the parlors (which, however, Brady had encouraged those serving the meals to make more festive). Nor can my family attend the actual vow ceremony in the morning.

Juniors: The Next Stage

So on August 15, 1959, at age 20, I pronounced the three religious vows: poverty, chastity, and obedience, and became entitled to put S.J. after my name. I remember feeling elated and buoyed up. Much changed once I left the novitiate. Days were busy with classes and homework, but I could allot reading and study time as I chose. I had access to a good college library presided over by an eccentric priest. I still had morning meditation, mass, and meals together, but only occasional manual labor. We were not encouraged to visit each other's rooms but such visits were not forbidden. Our rec room now featured the New York Times summary of the week's news (though one older Jesuit remarked, "why bother reading the newspaper? Better to wait 10 years and read about events in a history book.")

Worlds to Explore

We studied literature, history, languages, rhetoric, and a little science. My teachers were all Jesuit priests, most good teachers and some superb, such as John Boyd and Herbert Musurillo. Teachers were informal and friendly but they had their own separate recreation and did not socialize much with us.

Our schedules followed an older pattern with Thursdays and Sundays our days off. Class days usually started with a two or three hour class devoted to Greek and Roman literature, language, and history. Meeting five days a week for so many hours let us wander along interdisciplinary connections without time pressure. Especially in my second year I found myself entranced by the mix of drama and poetry ranging from Homeric Greek to medieval Latin, with history, language and interpretation mingled together.

It's the fall of 1960. Some of us have been assigned to write and deliver sermons in various languages, and I am to preach in French. After hours of expert coaching from a Hungarian priest, I mount the pulpit and declaim about a seventeenth century French Jesuit, the Blessed Claude de la Colombière. This exercise permanently improves my French accent, which is very helpful later, though my German classes prove more useful for my professional work.

Other classes were in standard single topic format: French and German, history, rhetoric, some social studies, but little math or science. I snuck in science readings on the side, and I discovered a cache of books on Eastern history and philosophy which I quietly devoured out of sight of our teachers.

My reading science fiction and fantasy had come to an abrupt end when I entered the novitiate. But in 1959 our literature professor, John Boyd, gave us a list of books to read over the summer, books he said we should have already have read as teenagers, and if we didn't read them soon it would be too late. They included R. L. Stevenson, John Buchan, classic Celtic, English, and Germanic myths, Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, C. S. Lewis's planet trilogy, Lewis Carroll, and other such books. *The Hobbit* led one of my classmates with Scottish connections to talk about *The Lord of the Rings*, which he knew about from Britain, although it was not yet widely known in the United States. We ordered copies of the Tolkien trilogy and the Lewis Narnia novels, for our library. They all arrived the same day. Tom Maguire and I stashed them in my room. That afternoon I started a Narnia book while Tom began the long first volume of the Tolkien trilogy. At midnight Tom was knocking urgently on my door begging for the second volume.

With my love of fantasy, world building, and languages I found Tolkien entrancing. Tom and I argued whether or not the Elvish quotations were actual languages or just pleasing sound patterns. We also had detailed questions about figures in the background of the story. So I wrote a letter to Tolkien, and he answered, a handwritten letter on one of those old blue airmail forms, partially typed when he was running out of space. He described the grammar and historical connections of the two languages, as well as answering other questions we had posed. He also invited me as to visit him in Oxford. You can imagine how I regret never having been able to accept his invitation. My intermittent correspondence with Tolkien continued for some years but diminished as he became more famous and inaccessible. I treasured those letters and later passed them on to my sister, another Tolkien devotee.

The friend who introduced us to Tolkien, John Vincent Strong, a wry Scotsman with a gift for science and for collecting odd facts, was, along with Tony Koltz, a constant companion. While Tony and I left the Jesuits, John went on to become a priest and physics professor at Boston College. Tony and I were shocked at his sudden death from pancreatic cancer early in his teaching career, the first of our close Jesuit friends to die.

More Nature

Our golf course at Plattsburgh, rumored to be the third oldest in the US, ran along the lakefront facing Valcour Island. As novices we had not been allowed to play, though we helped with its maintenance and could walk along the striking coast line. At a gazebo along that coast I and a few friends would gather for conversation and picnic snacks. Once out of the novitiate we were able to play golf but I seldom did. My father had patiently taught me the basics of golf but whether out of rebellion or for lack of time and skill I never really took it up.

The old hotel had built several houses scattered about the property, which stood empty most of the year, but during the summer we Juniors moved out into them. We returned to the main house for meals, but smaller groups living together created cemented friendships. I recall summer lazy afternoons on a screen porch as the sun streamed in and the forest sighed softly, listening with John Muller to Bartok's Music for strings percussion and celesta, and Beethoven's pastoral symphony, while the novices toiled on lawn maintenance in the distance.

We Juniors were allowed to take long walks along country roads off the property and at times we could drive into the Adirondack Mountains and hike the high trails.

It is early summer 1960. We Juniors are sitting on the bare rocks atop Cascade Mountain, reveling in the view, lunching together while Father Gleason is distributing orange slices to each of us, more slices than we really need. But we are happy to have gotten him out of his office for the day. A few months later: Thomas Maguire, who helped start my correspondence with Tolkien, has been appointed Beadle of the Juniorate, an intermediary between the superiors and the student body. He has managed to persuade the rector to a new adventure: an overnight camping trip in the mountains. We have set up our tents by a small remote lake. After a night of whippoorwills and stars, we celebrate mass at an improvised altar in the stillness as the rising sun tints the mist rising from the lake. It is one of my most memorable liturgical experiences.

I followed Tom Maguire as Beadle, so I had many chances to talk with our superior,

William Gleason, who had himself been a novice master at the older novitiate along the Hudson. We got along well. He was genial and goodhearted, suspicious of Brady's reforms but willing to see how they developed. After some wine in the priests' recreation room of an evening he could be relaxed and voluble. His tastes were decidedly retro and he liked to scoff at the modernist poetry we were studying in our literature classes. But Tom and then I had found him more open than we had expected.

It's spring 1961, near the end of my time at Bellarmine. I am finishing my term as Beadle of the Juniorate and a new rector has been appointed. The Jesuit ceremony for handing over authority consists of reading out a letter of appointment, followed by a simple exchange of seats as the new rector moves to the head chair at the faculty table. Gleason has planned to leave quietly for his new assignment immediately after dinner. During the meal I slip out through the kitchen and slide into Gleason's suitcase a packet of thank-you letters I have gathered secretly from the students. Most had found him a decent man but had not been as impressed with him as I had been from dealing with him at close range. But all of us are about to learn that compared to the superiors at our next Jesuit house, Gleason was a real star.

Those two Juniorate years were my happiest time in the Jesuits. I was living in a gorgeous location, with time to study and explore new languages histories and literature, new civilizations. I had time to spend with friends and new worlds to talk about. Brady, whom I had some personal problems with, could not easily reach me. The heavy religious and pious pressure of the novitiate had diminished and our studies were neither religious or ecclesiastical, nor burdened with later demands for philosophical and theological orthodoxy. Gleason ruled with a light hand and left most decisions to the faculty, who were creative and inventive in their own right. Some of our teachers were superb, and all were adequate. We could enjoy intellectual adventure and institutional tensions were rare. There were no great problems with our superiors; those would develop in our next stage of training. John Kennedy had been elected in my first voting election and I didn't yet feel the tensions of the '60s.

I was happily living the life I would have encountered if I had accepted that invitation to visit Tolkien and his Inklings: a band of close male friends excited about literature, exploring worlds of history and fantasy, meeting for close conversations and hiking in the countryside on weekends. We didn't smoke pipes or drink English beer, nor were we as conservative in our literary tastes, but we were self-consciously outside the mainstream of American culture and, though we didn't know it at the time, outside

mainstream American academia as well. Like the Inklings, our fellowship would soon break up.

It was, looking back, not a particularly religious time for me and certainly not a priestly time. I should have been more attentive, applied Ignatius's Rules for the Discernment of Spirits, and left the Society of Jesus. But I was too busy exploring.

Moving On in the Plan

The next stage brought me to an angular red brick building on hill north of New York city, where we were to study philosophy. The building, only a few years old, had been financed by donations collected over twenty years and it was built for the ages. Its design embodied the austere lines of the Plan.

A news release about the dedication of the seminary building described its plan with proud satisfaction:

As one approaches the main entrance court up the long curving driveway from Stoney Street, the adjective that springs to mind is "massive." For the building, covering six acres of land, is nothing less than huge. It is of brick, Colonial rose in color, offset by Indiana limestone trim. The central section of the building is a hollow rectangle, enclosing a garth 150 by 87 feet. From this section stretch out four wings. Two, extending diagonally to the southeast and southwest, contain the living quarters of the Scholastics; at the end of the southeast wing is attached the classroom building. The food services are housed in the wing projecting to the west. The library thrusts forth from the center of the northern facade. The Entrance The main entrance is through a two story limestone arch at the eastern end of the north facade of the central section. (Ref)

Each of these huge wings, four stories high and 251 feet long, contains, besides stairways, bath and service rooms, 124 living rooms, 31 to a floor. Each room, twelve by fourteen feet and equipped with running hot and cold water, contains bed, wardrobe, chest of drawers, desk, bookcase, a typewriting table and two chairs. The ceilings of the rooms, eight feet six inches high, as well as the ceilings of the corridors, seven feet wide, are covered with acoustical tile, and the partitions and floors are designed to minimize the transmission of noise.

The New York Jesuits had purchased the land even though their superiors in Rome

had urged them to locate their philosophy students on a city university campus, as was done in Europe. The Americans chose to continue locating their "houses of formation" in the countryside.

The result was an angular red brick building with an imposing chapel, a pleasant dining hall, and a decent library. There was a small courtyard whose cloistered colonnade was the most humane space in a building where the chapel was too imposing, the rooms too uniform, the corridors too long.

Our classrooms were furnished with long tables or "forms." Our private rooms were in long wings angling away from a bare grassy space; the larger faculty rooms were between the wings. Rooms were utilitarian and furnished with identical pieces of furniture: a bed, a comfortable reading chair, a dresser, a movable closet and a small bedside unit with a door. We called this last item a "loof" because a superior had advised us to "keep aloof in our rooms." Rooms also contained bookshelf units, one for most students, as many as needed for faculty. People worked hard to devise unique room arrangements using these standard components. I remember one student's room contained a structure providing a loft for his mattress. One teacher's room contained two defensive walls of bookshelves you had to detour around before arriving at the inner sanctum.

Opened in 1955 with great fanfare, in a ceremony attended by cardinals and bishops, the seminary was closed abruptly in 1973. When the Jesuits sold the building it became a small Bible college and then a middle-security drug rehabilitation center.

I know of no two words more likely to cause a violently negative reaction among New York Jesuits than "Shrub Oak." I've lived in the former New York Province (now part of the Northeast Province) for almost 20 years, and I'm always amazed at how many of my brothers, even the mildest ones, react when one mentions the name of the former Jesuit philosophate in this Province (where young Jesuits studied philosophy). Technically, it was the "Loyola College of Philosophy and Letters," a division of Fordham (or "Loyola Seminary") but every Jesuit I know calls it by the name of the town it was located in: Shrub Oak, NY. And usually shivers after he pronounces those words. Opened in 1955 and closed in 1973, the place was notorious for many things, including cold architecture (straight lines only) and a long line of, well, apparently crazy-making rules. ... If you doubt any

of what I say, just ask a New York Jesuit. And I apologize to any of my Jesuit brothers who like the place, and I'd be happy to meet you! Shrub Oak was sold after vocations declined and was for many years "Phoenix House," a substance abuse rehab center. I once visited with the former editor in chief of America, George Hunt, SJ. When we entered the lobby, George said, "I used to live here." The receptionist said, "Oh, were you a patient?" And George laughed and said, "Something like that." Phoenix House has now been sold and Shrub Oak is empty and somewhat forlorn. I showed the photos to a Jesuit in my community, who had studied there, and asked him if he had ever returned after he finished his philosophy studies. "No," he said, "and I have no plans ever to do so." (Ref)

We had a fine library, good food, and we often travelled off campus down to Fordham for graduate classes in our fields of specialization. We studied hard, and there was fun to be had. The grounds included a swimming pool and walking paths. One student was plastered his corridor with posters urging people to select him for the nonexistent post of corridor representative, promising wonderful benefits to his supporters, including visits with his pet iguana. We organized traditional skits satirizing the faculty and administration. We were impressed when a local Republican politician came to address us, having realized that several hundred seminarians formed a convenient block of voters. We explored the food stocked in the seminary cellars during the Cuban missile crisis. We lived through the Kennedy assassination. We were busy and in touch with the world. What could go wrong? Everything, as it turned out.

The proud architectural design of the building towering up on its hill embodied the conflict between separation and engagement that was undermining the grand plan. The building, while efficient, was soulless, lacking in proportion and architectural subtlety. Its one curved line was the entrance archway, so large as to make you feel insignificant. The high airy dining hall was the most satisfying space in the building. The library reading room was effective and pleasant, but we spent very little time there because the style of study enforced by the curriculum kept us in our rooms.

The grounds included several houses left over from the original owners of the property. They were used for some meetings, as lodgings for guests, and we used them for clandestine late-night parties

Intellectual Tensions

The building's rigid design echoed the Plan's overcommitment to the rigid intellectual system we found ourselves constrained by. At Shrub Oak the most course time was given to philosophy courses. In a contemporary American university those courses would have been labeled theory of knowledge, metaphysics, philosophy of religion, philosophy of mind, philosophy of science, and ethics. But in our world they were called epistemology, metaphysics, natural theology, rational psychology, cosmology, and ethics — the classic "six tracts" of a scholastic synthesis that pretended to be medieval but had mostly been created in the late 18th century.

The aim of this curriculum was to have us internalize given doctrines. This was monitored by an oral examination each spring, and a grand oral interrogation after three years.

I stand waiting outside a classroom in the spring of 1964. I am about to go in for my session of the Big Exam. I held in my hand a stiff paper, with dozens of statements that I was to "defend," a group for each of the major tracts we had studied. The exam covered three years of coursework. We had prepared for it by shorter oral exams at the end of each year. My job was to explain the meaning of the terms and produce arguments for the truth of the statements, answer objections from the examining panel, three questioners at least one from the from outside, for one grade on a scale of 10. Oh, and all this was performed in Latin.

This ritualized exam was a modern remnant of medieval defenses and disputations. In medieval times the examinee would have been defending statements he had composed himself. Here, the statements were dictated by our teachers and controlled by a larger orthodoxy.

That exam sounds ferocious and it was. We sweated our weeks of preparation. But it was not *that* hard, given the closed structure we were being tested on. Latin was no one's first language; everything was stated in a well-known vocabulary. Deep philosophical challenges from outside the accepted set of opinions would have been hard to maneuver. The test was not to show our philosophical acumen and originality. It was to confirm that we knew our way around a pre-determined tree of arguments and refutations. This was indoctrination, not philosophy.

Still the examination was scary and much hung on it in terms of one's intellectual status in the Society. Success in the exam was required if one was to be admitted to the higher levels of a quietly invisible caste system within the Jesuits.

All this rigor was to prepare our minds for the crowning glories to come when we studied systematic theology, using the elaborate philosophical system to interpret the mysterious doctrines of Trinity, Incarnation, and Redemption. These, together with deeper study of Scripture and history were to produce sophisticated interpreters of and missionaries for Christianity.

But this Plan had no real place for the new academic specializations that were taking us off campus and out of the restricted intellectual areas we were supposed to be concentrating on. New fields, new media, new connections worried our superiors. The Plan depended on controlling access and careful administration of measured doses of content. Neither was working.

Including a tract on epistemology at Shrub Oak was already a concession to modern philosophy's questioning the nature of knowledge, which challenged any quick move to dogmatic philosophy. Our epistemology course was supposed to sweep away the pernicious questions raised by Descartes, Hume, and Kant, clearing the way for the dogmatic courses. It did not succeed, and it didn't even approach 20th century challenges from analytical philosophers of language.

Our more conservative teachers thought they could get away with avoiding those challenges and just setting out the dogma. They became impatient if we questioned the mode of knowledge behind their pronouncements. They wanted us to work our way through a standard tree of arguments and refutations, coming out with the right conclusions. Other of our teachers, though, had been trained enough in modern philosophy that they could no longer accept the presuppositions of our standard curriculum. Their course materials quietly grated against the official curriculum and its exam system.

The faculty worried about these unorthodox courses, and were relieved that the Dean, himself quite conservative, was able to write "Jesuitical" course descriptions that misled Rome without actually lying. Nonetheless we all felt the pressure. At one of the annual student skit evenings, two students sang, to the mournful tune of the *Dies Irae*, "They are coming to inspect us, / And there is no one to protect us. / See them coming like marauders, / The bishops with their tape recorders."

Perhaps students who were busy specializing in other fields were not fully aware of the quiet disagreements of some teachers. Yet it led them to take the philosophy courses

less seriously. We who were specializing in philosophy sided with the teachers who were undermining the system. This put us intellectually at odds with the more conservative our teachers, who had the ear of Jesuit superiors who were already worried about rebellious disobedient students. Those superiors had been clamping down on behavior when I was at Shrub Oak. Then they began to purge the threatening teachers. Fortunately, that happened after I had left Shrub Oak, so I received a good dose of intellectual rebellion hidden under seeming conformity.

I worked at navigating the rapids between between the official goals of our philosophy curriculum and what I was learning from our best teachers. Specializing in philosophy did expose some of us to different strains of philosophy, including in my case John Dewey, St. Augustine, American Pragmatism, Muslim philosophy, and Hegel. These influenced my later thinking but didn't help me with the exam system. Shrub Oak's scholastic method did, though, make it easier for me later with contemporary analytic philosophy's similar methods.

Practical Tensions

Our rebellion was far more than intellectual. We were in our early 20s, intellectually and emotionally alert. Our days were free but not free enough. Did we need a strict "lights out" time? Could there be more flexibility in our class schedule? How about more trips off campus? Why couldn't we get this or that book? Disobedience was in the air.

Quite literally in the air. A year or so before we entered, Pope Pius XII had for some reason told the Jesuits to cease the use of tobacco. Facing this unavoidable command, the Jesuit superiors decided for age discrimination. People in the period of formation were ordered to stop smoking, while their superiors and teachers were allowed to continue. The priests rooms stank of cigarettes and cigars.

Having never smoked myself I wasn't in on the game, but furtive smoking continued. One student bragged how his mother would send him packages of lovely tasty brownies, each one wrapped lovingly in aluminum foil, but below the first layer of true brownies the foil covered cigarette packs.

We'd be in a study group and people would be smoking; suddenly the second in command of the seminary would fling open the door with the triumphant expression of a FBI agent uncovering a terrorist cabal. There were few penalties yet we felt unjustly

attacked.

My fellows came up with clever, often amusing, sometimes questionable tactics for obtaining tobacco or outside money to buy tobacco. The prohibition had encouraged a culture of evasion and disobedience.

There was no no student council or student-faculty senate, no organized way to discuss or negotiate with the superiors. Tensions and troubles were not negotiated; they were acted out. Regulations were routinely ignored.

People began stealing food for late-night snacks. Our superiors responded by putting heavy locks on the walk-in freezers. Students removed the screws from the hinges, opening the doors on the locks. Late at night in the basement corridors I might see a large dining room service cart flying by with food for a clandestine late-night party. I enjoyed some of those parties very much.

Students were taking advantage of the weekly trips to Fordham to do quite other things than classes. The problem was not the individual escapades, fun or scary, but the breakdown of traditional Jesuit obedience, producing sullen resentfulness as what we saw as our obvious needs and worthy reforms being squashed by inflexible unthinking authorities.

The rector at Shrub Oak had previously been the superior of the whole New York province. He was renowned for strictness but he was really a hesitantly warm person whose duties of office had frozen his public demeanor. His second-in-command we already knew as the man in charge of "temporal" affairs back in more freewheeling Bellarmine on the lake; he was a genial unintellectual fellow whose actions depended totally on orders received from above. He had been friendly at Plattsburgh but at Shrub Oak he became the Enforcer.

These superiors expected rigid obedience. They faced the Sixties.

They seemed confident in the Plan, confident that what they had been given was worthy to be passed on to us. But, we thought, surely they were beginning to worry that it may not fit the new world? We thought of them as trying to form us for a time that had passed away.

The superiors said it was our duty to shut up and obey. They knew best.

We were the '60s; we replied, "oh really?"

They countered with their high card, the strong Jesuit doctrine of obedience. In the Constitutions of the Society, Ignatius had written:

All should keep their resolution firm to observe obedience and to distinguish themselves in it, not only in the matters of obligation but also in the others, even though nothing else is perceived except the indication of the superiors will without an expressed command....Consequently, in all the things into which obedience can with charity be extended, we should be ready to receive its command just as if it were coming from Christ our Savior.... Therefore we should be ready to leave unfinished any letter or anything else of ours which has been begun and to apply our whole mind and all the energy we have in the Lord of all that our obedience may be perfect in every detail, in regard to the execution, the willing, and the understanding. We should perform with great alacrity, spiritual joy, and perseverance whatever has been commanded to us, persuading ourselves that everything is just and renouncing with blind obedience any contrary opinion and judgment of our own in all things which the superior commands and in which some species of sin cannot be judged to be present. We ought to be firmly convinced that every one of those who live under obedience to allow himself to be carried and directed by divine providence through the agency of the superior as if he were a lifeless body which allows itself to be carried to any place and to be treated in any manner desired, or as if he were an old man's staff serves in any place and in any manner whatsoever in which the holder wishes to use it for....

(Footnote by the translator: The subject was expected to keep his eyes sufficiently open to see that there was no sin and whether there were factors which should be represented to the superior.... Ignatius' example can be gathered for instance from the measures he took, after learning that the Pope remained firm in his decision to make Jay a bishop, to convince him that there were sound reasons to the contrary for God's greater glory.) (The Constitutions of the Society of Jesus. Translated with an introduction and commentary by George E Ganss SJ. St. Louis Missouri the Institute of Jesuit Sources 1970, part six chapter 1, numbers 547 ff.)

They had us there; we were indeed disobeying clear orders and we did not respect our superiors.

But we argued in return that the Jesuit doctrine of obedience depended on superiors being discerning and understanding the situation, and our superiors were out of touch. Themselves formed as Jesuits during the hard times of the depression and WWII, they didn't know how to handle an age of intellectual abundance and social flexibility. Their orders, we felt, were actually harming the goals and values we shared with them. Both sides needed to learn how to talk together.

I am talking to the superior at Shrub Oak, trying him to understand what I thought was going on. I had talked with my father about the problems we were having with Jesuit administration. From his experience in organizational analysis and development he made some suggestions, but the Jesuit administrators are caught in an older conception that had no room for mutual self formation in dialogue. The superior politely appreciated my remarks but did nothing.

The Plan is the Problem

In truth there was a deeper problem with their Plan that neither we nor our superiors fully recognized at the time. The rigid Plan itself was the problem. Buoyed by their success in the postwar years and seeing the need for Catholic education, the Jesuits had become overcommitted to a wide spread of institutions. Staffing needed to be provided: slots had to be filled. Although originally conceived as a Papal special forces unit to be sent to crisis situations where they would use imagination and flexibility far away from Rome, the Society had bogged down as an occupying force doing routine policing and street maintenance.

The elaborate plan for our formation was trying to fill slots in that vast machine by producing well machined parts. But that system was foreign to the early Jesuits and no longer appropriate for the age we were entering. Even more, it was itself overcommitted to a conceptual system that was cracking under the strain of intellectual and social forces that we were not supposed to encounter.

Moving Out into the World

In the fall of 1964 I moved on to the next phase of the Jesuit training, the Regency. Most of my group were assigned to high schools, but I was sent to Fordham University in the Bronx. Fordham at that time had its main campus on Rose Hill in the Bronx and a smaller campus in downtown Manhattan. They had just acquired a block of land near Lincoln Center in midtown Manhattan and eventually built a major campus there, closing the one further downtown. I lived at the Jesuit residence on the Bronx campus, with an attractive central quadrangle facing an impressive library.

To the south was a mafia-influenced peaceful Italian neighborhood. Alongside the campus ran a train line to Manhattan, and the last remaining piece of the old 3rd avenue El. Up the hill on the Grand Concourse, now past its glory days, ran the D train to Manhattan. Fordham's campus was attractive and green; there were dormitories but many students commuted. The NY Football Giants practiced there during the baseball

season, and I walked by Y. A. Tittle and Frank Gifford on my way to class. Across the street from Fordham I found two escapes into nature, the Bronx Zoo and the New York Botanical Garden.

Daily Life

I lived with other young Jesuits working at the college and its high school, Fordham Prep. There, with the best of intentions the local superior prided himself on supporting the Jesuits' work with a comfortable life and exceptional food. I had never lived so well. Our vow of poverty was not in view. Furnishings were first class, food and drink abundant; Puerto Rican servants cleaned the building and even made our beds. Poverty, one of our three vows, seemed far away. Chastity, the second vow, was maintained but soon to be tested. Obedience, the third vow, seemed easier than at Shrub Oak, but the '60s would stretch it here too, as I collided with the local superior, who spurned me for not staying within the arbitrary limits he had set.

This teaching stage of the Plan fulfilled its purpose well: confronting us with the needs of real people and measuring our formation, showing us the value of what we had learned and motivating us to do better. But it also undermined the Plan by exposing us to all the crosscurrents and forces that the Plan had not taken into account. It encouraged creative invention, new media, new teaching strategies, and indeed new kinds of institutions beyond those envisioned by a plan overcommitted to one model of institutional activity and a rigid intellectual system.

Teaching at Fordham confirmed my skills and showed the need for new ways of teaching and learning. I had already met many of my new faculty colleagues when I was taking graduate courses from Shrub Oak. Now I came to know them better, especially Patrick Heelan, an eminent philosopher of science, Norris Clark, a gentle but bright and influential Thomistic philosopher, and Quentin Lauer, a forceful teacher who had introduced me to Hegel. Two non-Jesuit professors arrived with me, Robert Neville (who had written an exciting dissertation about religion and metaphysics and later had a distinguished career at Boston University) and Alexander von Schoenborn (a Kant scholar who later taught at the University of Missouri).

In my first year teaching I was assigned two sections of a class that met for an hour and a half five days a week for, an echo of the interdisciplinary classics classes from my Juniorate. The class appeared in the students transcripts as four smaller courses. I

enjoyed the course immensely and came to know the students well, with enough time that we could wander and make connections. At the end of that year my students banded together and bought me a radio which I kept proudly in my room for fifty years.

During that period I helped reform the philosophy curriculum at Fordham. It would have horrified the conservatives at Shrub Oak, as it worried the conservatives in the department to see us young Turks turn the philosophy curriculum into something less dogmatic and more historical and questioning. When we arrived the philosophy program still echoed the classic six tracts I had studied at Shrub Oak. As at the seminary, the Fordham curriculum had been designed to impart a firm system by which to interpret the world and guide ethical decisions. We regularly heard from alumni how they valued the solid base of concepts and values that it gave to their lives.

But we younger faculty saw this as indoctrination, not philosophical searching in the tradition of Socrates, who had been executed for disturbing the simple faith of Athenian youth. So we did to the curriculum at Fordham what the teachers at Shrub Oak were not allowed to do. We young teachers knew the gaps and make-shifts in that supposedly solid foundation, and we weren't willing to continue imposing it on students. Conservatives hated the results, and with some justification, if what they were looking for was perfectly formed obedient alumni. We thought the reformed curriculum would produce critical and alert students. I think it did, but at the cost of the certitude and firm guidance that many students sought.

Debate, Again

Also at Fordham, I unexpectedly reentered the debate world. I'm not sure how much the superiors knew about my high school debate experience, but they asked me to run the College program. I hired local law students as coaches, and I was the manager, travel agent, tour leader, and judge at tournaments. The traveling circus of debaters, coaches, and judges from schools all over the east coast would descend on a college, debate four or five times a day for two days, then stage an elimination series. I was very impressed by the best collegiate debaters.

Unlike high school debate, college debate at that time did not include cross-questioning. This difference led to my most egregious mistake as a judge. I had been asked to be one of seven judges for the final round of a national Catholic high school

debate tournament. The debate case presented was intricate and difficult to follow. In the end, I judged that the team with the elaborate case had made arguments which had not been refuted. This was true; however in terms of debate performance the other side had done much better. As I labored over my decision, studying my notes, I learned that the other six judges had split and my vote would be decisive. I was considering the argumentative structure of the cases and not sufficiently the behavior of the two teams under cross questioning. My philosophical training had led me astray and I made a bad decision. An hour later I knew I had made a mistake. It was my worst debate moment amid many enjoyable experiences.

The students and I spent many hours together, traveling, practicing, working with the coach. I'm amazed that I had the time to do so much in addition to my teaching and my philosophy research.

Busy Summers

In the summer of 1965, after my first year at Fordham, I wanted to learn more analytic philosophy so I attended summer school at the University of Wisconsin in Madison. It was not difficult to get permission so long as I found a suitable lodging, which I did at a small Catholic seminary outside the city. The seminary was mostly empty in the summer, but I enjoyed meeting the teachers.

I now found myself in a secular setting and not marked as a Jesuit. I did well in the courses and learned much, although our teacher Paul Ziff was not satisfied with the books he had assigned. I enjoyed Madison's congenial atmosphere and explored southern Wisconsin, visiting some relatives nearby. It was a good summer and I grew in philosophical maturity and self-confidence. But it had bad moments. I especially recall being unable to bring myself to buy a Henry Miller novel I wanted to read. I stood in fear of being recognized — but by whom? I was indistinguishable from the students around me. Jesuit education had transformed the judging God of my childhood into something more intellectualized, but my own internalized Judge was still dominant, as were my hesitations about sexuality.

The summer of 1966 I opted for nonacademic exploration. I lined up two experiences, one at a spiritual community in Canada, one at a civil rights organization in Chicago. I extended the first so long that the second became quite abbreviated. That summer brought me into contact with spiritual people in rural Ontario at Madonna

House. Their founder, Baroness Catherine de Hueck Doherty, a Polish noblewoman, had influenced Thomas Merton. She once said to me, "I told Merton and I'm telling you: you have to fold the wings of the intellect." I could never do that properly. But she, influenced by Russian Orthodox spirituality, could. Her people did quiet deep retreats there, alone in a cabin for a week with a Bible, rather than the sermon and prescribed meditation routine the Jesuits called retreats.

Madonna House was imaginative in their organization. They joked that they contained all three sexes: men, women, priests. Each group lived separately on the property but joined together for work, worship and socializing. One of the men said to me that it was important to position yourself at mass so that at the time of the kiss of peace you would be near several attractive women. They were able to relax and be strict at the same time. I revisited them several times and kept up with them for a long while, and I treasured my correspondence with "the B", who died in the mid '80s.

While there, I helped out with a summer program for poverty-stricken farm children, drove a truck and ran errands into town. I was happy in such a freewheeling, humorous but deeply spiritual group dedicated to serious meditation, prayer, and working at high causes for the lowest people. They didn't stress intellectual activities, but they energized me for a time when I returned to my studious academic work. I had seen an example of free spirituality that hewed to Catholic doctrine but felt free to create new life spaces.

My last summer at Fordham, 1967, I resolved to face the issue of Eastern philosophy. I had been reading steadily for about five years and had obtained a good general background. To decide if I wanted to specialize I enrolled in a summer course in Sanskrit at the University of Pennsylvania. Already familiar with Greek and Latin, I found their cousin Sanskrit's grammar easy enough, though complex in its own way. The writing system was a bear but learnable. The course was fun and the esprit among students strong. I lived in a graduate dorm along with people studying Hindi and Tamil. The halls were filled with the murmurs of people practicing new languages.

By the end of the summer I had decided that I didn't want to devote my time to translating eastern texts; I wanted to study philosophical questions directly. I think I could have fitted in well with the small group then working on eastern philosophy, and it would have let me explore new areas and bring back news, which I always enjoyed. But I saw that the study of eastern philosophy was still in a "show and tell" period, not

yet trying for the real dialogue that now is finally beginning.

Though I chose not to specialize in eastern philosophy, I have often referred to eastern ideas in my teaching and writing, and Buddhism has continued to increase its hold on me. I have had contacts with Buddhist communities since the mid-sixties, and almost joined a Zen group in Eugene. I have taken some retreats and try from time to time to get myself to sit regularly, but with mixed success. I find the Buddhist emptiness doctrine appealing, and the idea of non-personal transcendence liberating, and I find myself stressing compassion and the bodhisattva vows as key values for myself.

New York Life

Living in the Bronx we young Jesuits were free to plan our own time and deal with the secular world. I could travel to Manhattan; I could request a car and drive outside the city. Although we were expected to dress appropriately I soon was dressing informally in town and for formal occasions wearing more often a coat and tie than a Roman collar. I visited art galleries and museums, went to concerts – Balanchine's New York City ballet was premiering new works every month -- and tried out restaurants when I could afford them.

My father occasionally came from Texas to his company headquarters in New York. We would have dinner and attend plays together. I recall sharing with him *Sweet Charity* with Gwen Verdon, *Dylan* with Alec Guinness, and the original-cast versions of *The Fantasticks* and *Man of La Mancha*. We enjoyed our times together and even went shopping on Fifth Avenue.

More entertainment came from the Fordham student council, who had realized that they could make money by bringing in big-name singing acts and gathering teenagers from all over the City. As a Jesuit I could wander backstage; I was able to observe and shake hands with Simon and Garfunkel, the Supremes, the Beach Boys, the Kingston Trio, Peter Paul and Mary, and others. I felt so sophisticated.

Many other notable guests visited Fordham. The university had trained many of the best New York politicians and officials (and some not so good ones too). Political figures were always about. I was also able to meet and share meals with intellectual figures, such as the anarchist Paul Goodman, the reformer Ivan Ilich, media guru Marshall McLuhan, and civil rights leader A.Philip Randolph. I felt far away from insular Shrub Oak.

Breaking out of Orbit

Although I was teaching fairly standard Catholic and historical material, reading and discussion were pushing me in new directions. Catholic philosophy at this time was moving away from its official Thomistic base through the influence of Europeans working in phenomenology and existentialism. Heidegger was their most important figure. Attending philosophical meetings I began to make professional contacts outside Jesuit and Catholic circles. With Pat Heelan I was exploring analytic philosophy, reading Wittgenstein, Wilfrid Sellars and W.V.O. Quine. Learning what was going on in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy challenged my opinions, which were already morphing away from the standard Jesuit and Catholic lists. I also worked to deepen my reading of Eastern philosophy and religion, helped by Thomas Berry, who lent me Sanskrit dictionaries and grammars, and introduced me to Eastern teachers living in the New York area.

Loyalty Tests

It is November 9, 1965, shortly after 5 PM. I'm in a meeting room at the student center judging a practice debate. The lights begin to flicker and then go out. We leave the room to discover that the whole campus, the whole area, the whole city has gone dark. It is a huge blackout, which had started in Buffalo New York and spread through the Northeast. The student debaters commute from homes in the far reaches of Brooklyn and Queens. But the subways have shut down and the streets are clogged. The kitchens on campus are without power. There's no food to be had and the students are hungry. I have an idea; I'll take them across the street to the Jesuit residence where I should be able to scrounge a plate of food for them. We enter the back door and go up to the kitchen. To my surprise, I discover that the kitchen has prepared what we called in those days "a first-class feast." On certain days the superior would arrange for an exceptionally elaborate meal. Extra courses, soup to nuts. Somehow despite the blackout, the resourceful kitchen staff has managed to finish preparing a six course meal, and are serving it to a candle-lit dining room. Glad to help out, the staff finds a corner off a storeroom and serves me and the students the entire fancy dinner, with our own little candle. It's dramatic and a great adventure. I'm proud of the ingenuity of the kitchen staff and of my cleverness in finding a way to help the students. The students leave grateful for the experience, probably thinking the Jesuits eat that way all the time. I feel that I've done my good deed for the day. But the next morning I'm called on the carpet by the superior who chews me out for disrupting and bringing outsiders into the community. I respond that it seemed a simple act of Christian charity, and we ate in a back

room and didn't disrupt the main dinner at all. The superior is adamant that I have violated the community. I wonder if he's worried at revealing the luxury he provides .

This was not the first time I had come up against this superior. He disapproved of my not coming promptly down to the 6 am chapel visit. I protested that I was serving mass each morning in a side chapel for a priest with odd hours, and it didn't make sense to add in the additional chapel visit, whose purpose was to assure we were up and meditating. He still demanded that I attend, and at the priest friend's suggestion I appealed to the president of the university, who oversaw the several Jesuit communities at the university. He agreed with me and overruled the superior.

My blackout dinner raid on the kitchen only confirmed the superior's opinion of me. Little did he know, at that point, about my much bigger disobedience. During each Fordham summer I made clandestine trips to Texas to see my parents, telling myself that it was not fair that I could not see them just because they were far away. I was not impressed by my superior's argument that "if we let you do it we would have to let everyone do it". I didn't see why my parents should suffer because my father's job had taken him to Texas. All three summers I slipped away to Texas for a week or two. My father provided the money. We toured Texas, I visited the Alamo. On my third trip, however, an obscure virus with a high fever forced me into a hospital. I had to invoke my medical insurance, which revealed my location to my superiors. They were not happy. The superior told me I was going my own way far too much and later he would say what he had to say. He did so. His input helped the provincial superior decide against my request that I be allowed to study theology in Europe. They said I should go to the standard theology house of study at Woodstock College outside Baltimore. They said they weren't sure about my commitment to the Society. They were right to worry.

Doubts

Thinking back, I recall that in seventh grade, I was asked to attend a Catholic picnic at a Long Island boarding school. They dressed me up in the many layered regalia of a priest at mass, and paraded me out on the steps of the school for a pageant. I don't remember the details but I remember feeling nervous and silly standing there with all these heavy garments.

This should have been a clue to me that I really wasn't interested in the priesthood. My desire to be at the Center of things was more intellectual and contemplative than preaching and representing an institution. I had had another chance to realize that

during my Juniorate years on Lake Champlain, and now again when I was teaching at Fordham.

Summer 1967. I am at summer school for Sanskrit at the University of Pennsylvania. I've come to nearby Princeton for a day visit with a former student studying there. Walking by myself on a quiet road near the University, clear as a bell the thought comes to me "I'm going to leave the Society." From then on it stays in the back of my mind. This moment of clarity at Princeton helped but no firm decision resulted. I moved on to Woodstock.

On to Theology

After three years teaching in a wilder intellectual world than had been officially allowed at Shrub Oak, my group moved to Woodstock College, near Baltimore, to begin the theological studies that were to be the intellectual crown of our Jesuit training.

Of all the Jesuit houses that the Plan put me in, Woodstock College was the freest and the best run. The superiors were intelligent and flexible, and the faculty was facing up to the problems of faith in the modern world. Although the college was the oldest of the rural houses of formation, its century old buildings with their creaky corridors were comfortable and pleasantly worn. They were also partly empty. So many had left the Society that many of us appropriated a second room: I ended up with both a bedroom and a study across the hall.

Aside from classes, our schedules were open. Daily mass had been moved to noon. The imposing central chapel was seldom filled because experimental liturgy groups were conducting mass in new ways in smaller rooms. Many of us attended mass in small groups with a number of priests concelebrating, varying the liturgy. I remember planning one session with readings from the Koran. Another where people stood in the corners of the room reading out contrasting Bible passages at the same time.

Students and faculty shared a pub room where one could get a beer or ice cream soda. There was no official lights out. Meals were informal and not tightly scheduled, and although the building was located miles outside Baltimore there was much coming and going to the city and to nearby Washington DC. (This was the high tide of protests against the Vietnam war and we were busily engaged.)

Many of my colleagues had benefited from teaching in high school and had been more exposed to worldly changes while I had been slogging through philosophical

changes and debate tournaments at Fordham. I do remember marching down Madison Avenue in a protest parade, the Fordham contingent in kneeling in front of Cardinal Spellman's residence and chanting "end Spellman's war!" Cardinal Spellman was a great patron of the Diem family ruling Viet Nam. The war was being presented to Catholics as a conflict between good South Korean Catholics and evil atheistic communists. Now, during the fall of my first year at Woodstock. I joined fellow students in DC for the huge March on the Pentagon. In the spring of the following year several of my colleagues at Woodstock joined The Catonsville Nine in their dramatic protest at a Maryland draft board.

Most of my problems with Jesuit life at Shrub Oak had went away because of the enlightened regime at Woodstock. But now academics, which had been my salvation at Shrub Oak, became my problem.

I began theological studies with a repertoire of intellectual tools and wide knowledge of history and contemporary philosophy. The theology studies that were supposed to be the intellectual crown of our Jesuit training could not harmonize with that expanded background.

Our classes in theology were both exciting and disappointing. At Shrub Oak some philosophy courses had diverged from the prescribed scholasticism but we were rigorously tested on the official doctrines. At Woodstock we found that the style of theology that the rigor of Shrub Oak was to prepare us for had departed before we arrived. We found that the lofty theological castle we had been trained to defend had been dismantled and replaced by temporary outbuildings. Excavations were underway, inquiries into the nature of faith and interpretation searching for solid rock on which to build a new castle, whose plans were in dispute. Instead of a triumphant metaphysical-theological synthesis we found courses questioning the nature of faith and frankly posing the difficult questions that the official Shrub Oak philosophy had tried to brush aside. This brought real intellectual freedom at last, though it still presumed our allegiance to the doctrines however they were to be stated. It was an open question how to combine faith as a relationship to be lived with faith as affirming an official set of propositions that must be believed.

Slip Sliding Away

Most of my fellows adopted the changed theology and its social emphasis. I was the

one behind the times. Unfortunately for me I was finding the faith propositions increasingly unbelievable and the personal relationship strained near the breaking point. As usual with me, I found help by pushing beyond borders. I was moving outside of both the propositions and the relationships of Christian faith. Although I had decided not to pursue Eastern philosophy as a speciality, I now knew enough about Hindu and Buddhist thought that I could teach a good introductory course, which I did, first at a Catholic girl's college in the area, and then with great success as an introductory survey for my fellow students at Woodstock, at least one of whom went on to a successful career in that field.

Woodstock, good as it was, and Christianity, rich and vibrant as it was becoming, no longer felt home. When I had entered the Jesuits my adolescent religiosity featured a judging God who made demands and dared me to meet them, moderated by stories about Christ and his mother interceding and promising forgiveness. In the Jesuits my faith gradually moved away from an already weak relation to Christ, and became more "philosophical" as the personality of God receded into mystery. I thought more and more in terms of a Neoplatonic One, an ineffable non-personal source of all reality. Then I moved from Neoplatonism to there being no center or source (though that can fit with Neoplatonism, and, in another way, with Buddhism).

Part of my motivation for joining the Jesuits had been the desire to touch the center, to be at the origin, to find the place which brought value, order, and hidden power, and, yes, with all the Freudian implications, When I began to study philosophy I discovered many conceptions and denials of the center. On a more practical level I was losing faith in the institution that claimed to represent that center.

I was finding myself without the requisite motivations or beliefs, yet my friends who were approaching ordination felt an excitement which I did not share.

Increasingly tense about my role in the Jesuits I tried, as at Plattsburgh, to find consolation in nearby nature.

Our wooded grounds are pleasant and include a small golf course the Jesuits had constructed over the years plus a popular one mile circular path for conversation. The quiet Maryland hills don't match Lake Champlain's mountains, but I do find one adventure. A freight line runs through the small valley outside our entrance. Freight trains move very slowly along the curving track. I've always wondered what it would feel like hop a freight so I do, swinging up onto the the

platform of a tank car, intending to drop off after a mile or so. To my chagrin the train begins moving quicker and I realize I have to get off somehow, or I will end up in West Virginia. Holding on to the pipes around me I lower my legs in preparation for jumping off. But my legs swing inward, near the huge wheels that seem eager to amputate my feet. Really frightened, I swung back out and quickly jump off the train, landing hard but unhurt. When the caboose passes the crew waves to me as I walk innocently along the track, on my four mile trek home.

There wasn't much occasion to go into Baltimore, but I had the opportunity once a week to visit Washington DC. itself where I often visited museums and explored the city with my cousin Patricia Kolb, who was attending college there. She was very patient with me, sensing that something was going on with me though I didn't talk much about it.

I decided that therapy could help me understand and come to grips with my situation.. I mistrusted the cadre of psychologists the Jesuits relied upon. A fellow Jesuit with a degree in clinical psychology and local contacts set me up with someone outside that circle, an analyst in Baltimore, Jerome Hartz, who taught me the value of free association; he helped me come to grips with my situation and clarify my feelings about leaving the order. He helped me arrange for further therapy at Yale, with Walter Igersheimer, who taught me to express my feelings straight out rather than to fill the time with clouds of verbiage. Both of them helped me pry open sexual and social desires. I count those hours of therapy among the most valuable I have spent.

Leaving

Once I had decided to leave the Jesuits events moved swiftly. I applied for and was selected for a Kent Fellowship from the Danforth Foundation. This would pay my way in graduate school and bring me together with my first non-Jesuit friends, as caring and insightful a group of academics as I have ever encountered. I helped plan their annual conferences, read applications and interviewed their candidates for many years. At my first conference I met Rose Subotnik, a musicologist, and it was her husband Dan who later in Chicago introduced me to my future wife. If Donald Magnetti had not pushed me to apply for that fellowship, my later life would have been very different.. Accepted for philosophy study at Michigan and Yale, I chose Yale.

The summer of '69 I worked from Woodstock as an intern in the Baltimore city planning office. It turned out I was very good at the writing and organizing the city

office needed. My boss offered me a permanent job; he couldn't understand why anyone would want to study philosophy.

I drove to work in a 1967 Ford Falcon I purchased with funds from my father. Some days I met with a Baltimore woman acquaintance from my summer at Madonna House. We talked a lot, sharing and almost flirting; that helped me as I was easing my way out of the Jesuits.

The day I left Woodstock I drove to Rockville MD, where my parents had recently relocated. My father, on leave from his Houston job with Exxon, was reorganizing the US Postal Service Management Institute in DC. A few days later I and Margaret Booth, a "girl next door" friend from my Long Island childhood, went off together camping down the Shenandoah and Blue Ridge and on around the North Carolina's Outer Banks. We stood together on the windy beach where a new world of soaring flights began.

The Plan Collapses

Woodstock College was closed the year after I left. That move had been in the works during my final year. Woodstock's valuable library went to Georgetown University and its students and faculty to a new house of study on the upper West side in Manhattan, affiliated with Columbia and Union Theological Seminary. Its promising but radical experiments in life styles and teaching, the small study communities, the liturgical novelties scared the superiors. Woodstock had been the kind of creative place that the Plan should have hoped to produce. But those administering the Plan frowned upon it. Too loose, too experimental, and with declining numbers of students entering, the superiors shut it down. It went too far beyond the constraints of the Plan. The superiors failed to realize that these troublemakers were in fact giving birth to the imaginative new tactics and institutions the Jesuits would need in the future.

But some more far-seeing Jesuit higher-ups were agonizing behind the scenes, and shortly after I left they abandoned the Plan. New entrants were to be accepted only after college. The isolated rural houses of formation were abandoned, their functions moved to the city campuses of Jesuit universities, for a shorter more flexible training course. The "regency" period of teaching in high school or college was shortened to two years.

In 1967 Bellarmine in Plattsburgh was closed. The next year the original New York

novitiate at St. Andrews on Hudson was closed and the novices moved to the campus of a Jesuit college in Syracuse, ending their isolation. Bellarmine became Champlain Community College, while St. Andrews is now the home of The Culinary Institute of America. Shrub Oak was also closed, its philosophy students moved to the campus of Fordham University. Shrub Oak's building was sold to a small Bible college who after a few years sold it to a medium security drug rehabilitation center. A fitting end, we thought. By the end of these changes the Faber House faculty residence at Fordham University remained the only Jesuit house I had lived in that still functioned, but in 2016 it was converted to a student dorm.

Looking Back

Looking back, I realize that I never saw the Jesuits as a surrogate family so much as as an organization with the kinds of internal structures and challenges my father had trained me to perceive. Despite the excellence and high motives of individuals, the organization had become ossified. It was looking for ways to continue doing what had been done for a long time. Jesuit institutions had to be maintained. Rumbblings outside and below were beginning to bother the powers that be, and Jesuit historians were making unpleasant comparisons with the flexibility of the order's early years. I have the impression that nowadays the Jesuits have recovered some of their early verve, refocusing on service to the downtrodden, with individuals freer to start radical projects. They are becoming a better organization, but one with less appeal to me at age 18, or now.