

A Tribute to Brother Jerry:  
A Public Service of The Duquesne Community

During this Centennial year, all of us here at Duquesne are paying tribute to the members of the Order of the Holy Ghost Fathers. Their collective efforts and sacrifices made during the first 100 years have established a new tradition. The story of Duquesne's history tells the story of the people. Only this past week we were given an image of the history through personal life experiences shared with us by a very special person on campus: Brother Jerry.

Brother Jerry is 84 years of age. He has spent 54 of his 64 years in the Order of the Holy Ghost Fathers on the Bluff. As a Brother in the Order, he is a skilled craftsman, dedicating his life to the care and tending of Duquesne's spirit.

He has served our communal history in almost every capacity, coming originally to the campus as a chef. Before his retirement his last assignment was to care for the grounds, for the life on the Bluff.

Brother Jerry cared for the greenhouse, the plants, the flowers and the alcove on the Bluff. His care nurtured the ever-renewing growth of the life of the spirit as well. Perhaps one story he told to us provides an image to tell the story metaphorically.

As we stood in the first warming rays of spring sunshine outside the doors to Trinity Hall, brother Jerry took us right into his own heart as well as the heart of the spirit through his stories. Telling one's story, his own or the development and growth of Duquesne, could not be done without including the meaning of the other.

"Do you see those two holly trees over there? The one closest to the brick border is the female tree. The one which stands just in front of my window is the male. They were planted together a few years ago and for the longest time only the male tree grew. She remained as she was," Brother Jerry said.

"Then, during the past few months or so, as everyone has become concerned with the women's movement, Women's Lib, etc., you know, the equal right for females the male tree stopped growing. Then the female tree

began to grow and grow, shooting up past the male tree in height until her branches began to branch out at the top.”

“Then,” he continued, “it seems that as she was beginning to slow her growth it was as if she turned to the male tree, calling to him to catch up with her. Again the male tree has begun to grow, catching her now as they are the same height, standing beside one another.”

Brother Jerry’s metaphor of the two holly trees, the male and female, whose natural and organic life processes include periods of alternating growth and dormancy tells the story of the growth of Duquesne’s spirit. Of course we also can see our own personal stories in this metaphor, he speaks for each of us here.

His story is one which arises from an imagination sparked by this wisdom offered by patient observation and personal experience. As an artisan of the earth, a Gardner of the Spirit, Brother Jerry’s story also recounts the story of the founding of the Order of the Holy Ghost Fathers, illustrating metaphorically the pioneering spirit of Rev. Francis Liberman who first planted the seeds of Duquesne’s future.

Liberman’s guidance and spiritual faith enabled the successful merger between the Mother-Father Spirit of God through an original joining of the Holy Heart of Mother Mary and the Holy Ghost Fathers over 100 years ago. The spiritual marriage between the male/female principles of the Spirit has called into full flower the creative nature of Duquesne’s spirit.

The rich fertile soil of the Bluff upon which it now stands provided the clay and stone for its first foundation. It has grown up out of its own ground. The flowering of its many talents, the opportunities afforded to each of us who now share in its history bring us back to the images of life provided by the symbol of the greenhouse, where new life arises most naturally out of the old.

The creative space offered by Duquesne’s campus offers those same possibilities for renewed life and spirit as one might find in the ever-renewing cycles of life found in the greenhouse. Each gives expression to and provides a place for the futures we will come to share, as well as the pasts which root and unite us in common soil.

Brother Jerry's life of service has been acknowledged over the years. He showed us several humanitarian certificates and awards rarely received by a Brother in the Order, even one which places Brother Jerry's name in the Duquesne's Sports Hall of Fame. He has demonstrated over the years countless skills and talents, doing whatever he could, where he could.

As he says: "If you do something for one, then you've got to do it for all the others. So, you wind up doing everything for everyone." That is Brother Jerry's motto, that is the rule which seems to guide his action; each is included and cared for, each is considered individually.

For example, Brother Jerry told us of the time when he painted the nurse's quarters during the nights, moving their cots to the center of the room as they lay sleeping while he painted their walls and ceilings. His time was donated, this was extra.

Brother Jerry was always there. And as we watched his proud, straight posture move towards the doors to Trinity Hall we were struck by the apparent strength and nobility of his spirit. Brother Jerry stands tall and erect, sensitive to the movements of those who are coming and going, leaning back easily on his cane as the warmth and quick-witted humor of his expression revealed the meaning of the light which still shines out like a beacon from the bespeckled eyes whose own visions are now beginning to fade.

Still Brother Jerry took us right to the heart of his life, to his room. He willingly shared with us the very heart and center of his personal existence. As Brother Jerry took us on a personally guided tour of his own history, of Trinity Hall and of the history of Duquesne, each story he shared with us revealed his ways of touching and being touched by others throughout his life. Today the Gardner's touch on life is as gentle and kind as ever, respectful of each individual nature.

We could see that Brother Jerry cares for each person he meets as if a flower from his own garden. The vision which he sees is the vision of the spirit. The spirit of Duquesne lives in Brother Jerry's heart. His greenhouse was a living symbol of the creative space provided for each of us here at Duquesne, a time and space to develop our own special talents and individuality. It was a living symbol of our creative potential, of our future

and of our futures together. But now Brother Jerry's greenhouse is gone. For him it remains only a dream for the future.

As Brother Jerry's story unfolded, we could see him reflecting upon the contributions and legacies left by others who have shared his history. Although a new greenhouse has been proposed, it does not appear that Brother Jerry's dream of a new greenhouse will be realized in the near future without concerted interest and help from those of us who wish to return his care.

No space has been established on campus to carry on where Brother Jerry left off. No longer does one find Brother Jerry strolling about campus after sunset in order to protect each tree, shrub and flower from malice or theft.

He was a familiar sight during the early evening hours, watching over and protecting the budding life all over campus in order that it might follow out its own unique nature under his faithful and loving eye. Brother Jerry's personal commitment and dedication to the life of Duquesne's spirit also tells metaphorically the part he has played in the lives of many of the student body.

Today Brother Jerry's resilient spirit seems strong and tempered by life as his eyes reflect the many visions once held only as the hope which sustained the early years of Duquesne's development. Those visions have become the reality we now live.

The stories Brother Jerry chose to share so freely and openly with us gently touched upon and revealed the founding truths of Duquesne's own becoming. It seems that Brother Jerry's story only vivifies and enhances the symbol of its creative beginnings.

As an artisan of the earth, Brother Jerry's vision, his dreams and his spiritual imagination span the space and time of Duquesne's history, gathering up in one vision our shared history and ground.

Although a new greenhouse has been in the making for some time now, Brother Jerry patiently waits and abides by the natural laws of life which he understands to guide all living creatures. He understands the

organic growth of life, the times of growth and dormancy, realizing that perhaps the new greenhouse for him will ever remain only a dream.

But it seems to us that *A New Greenhouse For Brother Jerry*, moving towards making that dream a reality for each of us who share in his vision, would be a good opportunity for the students, faculty and the Alumni of Duquesne to reaffirm our common ground during this Centennial year.

*A New Greenhouse For Brother Jerry* would symbolize the ever-renewing cycles of life which carry us forward in time together in a Centennial project which would gather up the meanings of our shared history.

*Brother Jerry's Greenhouse* is an image of life, it calls us to reaffirm and deepen our individual commitments to the quality of the future we establish for those who will follow us in time.

Each of us during the upcoming year has an opportunity to make our own contribution to the renewal of Duquesne's founding spirit. Each of us flowers from its soil.

Sunnie D. Kidd  
Jim Kidd

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