

**BROTHER HAROLD RUPLINGER, C.S.C.**  
**35th Holy Cross History Association Conference**  
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**By Joseph J. Tobin**

The Brother's multi-generational community at Archbishop Hoban High School in Akron, Ohio, consisted of 40 Brothers, and in this community was a very talented Social Studies teacher and artist.

Brother Harold Ruplinger, CSC.

My first year of teaching in 1962 was to acquaint me with Br. Harold and to have a close, working relationship as his assistant as Yearbook Moderator. He also was a fine photographer who climbed up high or scrunched down low to get the most interesting photos at every school event. Athletic contests were covered by someone else.

Harold and I squinted at the negative strips to select the most captivating shots from which the student staff members could choose.

Harold had a bit of a temper, and sometimes I'd hear....."Eeeeeeee"  
Even today, if someone does this, most think immediately of Br. Harold.

We worked together closely – sometimes late at night proofreading and checking the cropping of photos for the yearbook. Crucial deadlines meant some chaos. Different sections were mailed out at various times.

Only about 60% of the lads purchased the yearbook, so we held a sock hop the last school day for yearbook distribution. The students invited girls and sat in groups reminiscing and signing each other's books.

In its 12th year as an all male high school, Harold and I referred to the

school in early adolescence. Larger enrollment was needed. One of the Brothers coined the phrase: A School for Men / Taught by Men. Students were achieving in every way. Br. Jerome Ziliak formed the school's News Bureau and worked hard to get numerous articles about Hoban into the Akron-Beacon Journal.

I was alarmed when I was appointed to succeed Br. Harold as yearbook moderator for 1964 because I had only used a Kodak Brownie camera previously.

The Brothers went to their summer assignments and when I returned to Akron, the student staff met with the representative of the Publishing Company, The salesman told us that Br. Harold opted out of having any full color photos because of the expense. I had heard that some schools included a yearbook in the registration fee for every student and we accomplished this.

When the 1964 yearbooks arrived that I moderated, I quickly got one to Br. Harold who greeted it with alacrity. Br. Harold always seemed reverential of me, and I think it was because I majored in Art for my first two years at Notre Dame before switching to education courses. I think Br. Harold would have liked it this way for him, but he was assigned otherwise.

Thomas Merton once observed, "Art enables us to find ourselves and lose ourselves at the same time." Yearbook creation enabled Harold and me to lose ourselves in publication design, but when he was relieved of yearbook work, Harold turned an unused bedroom in the Brother's house into an art studio. Four panels eventually emerged, measuring : 5 feet by 2 feet wide.

The first panel depicted Father Basil Moreau---later Beatified in 2007. Next , one of Pere Jacques Francois Dujarie, who founded the Brothers of

St. Joseph just 10 years before Moreau joined them with his auxiliary priests.

Third, a painting of Br. Andre Bassette--of Canada--prior to his canonization in 2010, and the fourth panel was of Brother Ephrem O'Dwyer, the first Provincial of the United States Brothers' Province. Here am I, 63 years later searching for them, but their whereabouts is unknown.

Harold was a great lover of Opera. and he also appreciated ballet and other arts. Once asked why he was moved to tears at opera, but not at ballet, Harold said, "Ballet is fantasy. But Opera is real life, real emotions."

( Birth and entrance to Holy Cross )

Harold Aloysious Ruplinger was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, August 4, 1928. It is reasonable to think that some German was spoken at home. He attended both Catholic grammar and high schools, \* and worked for a company doing commercial art until he was 19 years of age. There is no indication how he found the Brothers of Holy Cross, but often teachers will encourage certain students to think about priesthood or religious life.

He entered Formation in Holy Cross in Watertown, Wisconsin, and then Novitiate in Rolling Prairie, Indiana. He pronounced First Vows in February, 1949, and he headed to Notre Dame University for studies. Due to the great demand for teachers in the growing number of Brothers' schools, Harold was sent out teaching without a degree. Harold's initiation into teaching began for one year at St. Edward High School in Lakewood, Ohio and another year at Cathedral High School in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Twice, he opened new schools. In 1953, the new St. Joseph High School

opened in South Bend, and Harold was among the pioneer faculty, where he remained for 7 years. In 1954, he earned his Bachelor's Degree, majoring in Social Studies with a minor in German, and in 1961 his Master's Degree.

After South Bend, Br. Harold came to Hoban for 4 years where he taught, Social Studies courses, painted scrimms for the Musicale, moderated the newspaper and yearbook. He was delightful, helping whenever needed, a champion for students

with little ability and devoted to his religious exercises. His classroom was decorated

with large posters from European cities and historic objects to spur student interest.

When obediences were posted in 1964, Br. Harold was sent to serve in another new school in River Grove, Illinois, named Holy Cross High School, located just a bus ride away from downtown Chicago. Here he initiated a winning art program for the students and even offered adult Drawing classes at night.

Some artists produce great masterpieces. Others like Br. Harold, continually search for ways to coach others to discover their visual art skills. He evaluated his own experience in drawing and focused on how he became aware of the importance of artful seeing and meticulous observation of proportions, highlights or shadows, the intensity of color and their interplay.

He and I believe that anyone can learn to draw. Most often a good drawing teacher helps students to remove their fear of failure. They create their own instruction methods which build from years of practice.

Living for 16 years in the Chicago suburbs, allowed Br. Harold to take

advantage of great cultural events and classes at the American Academy of Art in the Loop where he studied Figure Painting and Design.

I was able to reach one of Harold's most talented students, Tom Susin, who wrote me, "Harold was the kindest and most considerate human being I have ever met. He was a great favorite of my family and he was often invited to dinner where he would invariably fall asleep afterwards. "

Another great opportunity came to him at River Grove. The Foreign Study League is an organization that seeks teachers who can attract between 16 - 18 students to travel to European cities and study different cultures during the summer. The teacher travels free. Accommodations are in school dorms or hostels. Harold's history and art background lent itself perfectly to this program.

Harold kept meticulous notes in small journals about his daily experiences. On his first journey in 1970, he flew to Rome along with some parents to bring his pack to 16. For some reason, the adults were unhappy in the same, little hotel with the students, so they moved to a hotel nearby. To quote Br. Harold's journal, "No drinking age in Italy, so at bed check we found many students were drunk. Good Lord, I hope things shape up. It's difficult at this point."

In the Archives are 6 individual, neat, ledger books describing the flight, every meal, good or bad mattresses, hot or cold showers, even when he brushed his teeth.

In July of 1973, the whole group attended the night performance of Aida in the Baths of Caracalla along with thousands of tourists.

Several visits to Rome included a Papal Audience where his group had

benches up close to the dais arranged by Fr. Edward Heston. If you have been to an audience, a bishop introduces every group in the hall to the Pope, and H wrote that the length of the introductions was so long that he dozed off.

In 1979, Pope John Paul II, visited the United States, and his itinerary included an open air Mass in Chicago. One ticket to receive Holy Communion from the Pope was sent to each house of religious. The superior at Holy Cross, Br. John McMuldren, held a drawing and Harold won. Harold was more than excited and returned as if "his hair was on fire" proclaiming "This was the happiest moment of my life. "

The Papal visit attracted many clergy to Chicago including Archbishop Francis Hurley of Anchorage, Alaska. Through his good friend, Bishop William McManus of Ft Wayne-South Bend, Hurley learned that the Brothers operated a camp on Bankson Lake, Michigan. Archbishop Hurley sought help for a youth camp he had at Soldatna, Alaska. Hurley visited the Provincial who contacted Br. John McMuldren at Holy Cross in River Grove, and asked if he would be interested. Br. John initially thought the Provincial was kidding. Once he got all the information, Br. John agreed to go. Br. Charles McBride said "YES." Br. Harold was 52 at the time....but eager to sign on.

His talent in teaching arts and crafts would be heavily utilized. The youngsters were between 7 and 14 years of age. At weekly Camp Circle before lunch, Harold received cheers and whistles when manipulating his puppet made from a white sock.

While walking along the ocean shore, Harold collected stones with a flat side. He'd stay up at night when no one saw him and painted images on them

as gifts for every camp counselor. Many others treasure these painted rocks.

Archbishop Hurley asked the Brothers to stay on and accept a new ministry of youth retreats for his parishes. All 3 Brothers were from Holy Cross High. They wrote a petition to undertake this work, and it was accepted..

They called themselves The Northlight Community. Each Brother bought an old jalopy. (There's a word seldom used any more.) They lived in a white, clapboard house with room for guests. Furnishings came from a Used Furniture Store. The 7 acre homestead has been torn down now.

A Superior was needed and Harold was elected by 2 of the 3 votes. He grew up during the Great Depression, remember. So spending money was the bane of Harold's position. He would wait until something like bread was marked down two or three times and then he'd buy a dozen loaves for 10 cents each and put them in the freezer. Brother Charles who worked with Archbishop Hurley, finally spoke up, "Harold, unlike wine, bread does not improve with age."

Harold arrived home one evening. his face as white as the snow outside. He admitted he had fallen asleep while driving, but caught himself before running off the road. These incidents show signs that Harold suffered from narcolepsy.

Moose droppings are always a uniform circumference and quite hard. Br. Harold learned to dry them in the sun, poke holes, paint them, and string them for necklaces. All the women here will find one on their pillow when returning to your room. (PAUSE) "Just kidding !"

Summer camp during the warmer months, and Parish Youth Retreats kept Br. Harold and Br. John McMuldrin moving. They created their own

retreat materials and activities, slept in the parish dining halls on the floor in sleeping bags. Br. Harold's head touched the pillow, and he was instantly asleep. Of the three men, Harold was the champion snorer.

After three years, Br. Harold was burnt out, so he came back to Notre Dame where he worked in the vocations office and helped with community publications. He had the opportunity to return to his first love, teaching art, and accepted a position at Holy Cross College, remaining there for 20 years. The original college buildings did not include an art room so Harold taught his classes on the auditorium stage. As soon as I learned of his retirement, I sent an application to step into his shoes, but I never heard back.

While living at Riverside Place with other professors from Holy Cross College he learned about the FOREVER LEARNING INSTITUTE founded by Fr. Louis Putz, CSC. The program offers challenging educational classes for the older adult population. Br. Harold volunteered for many years to teach drawing and painting and students sometimes took his classes over and over because they liked them so much.

When he reached the age of 80, he decided to retire from Holy Cross College in 2004. In the Holy Cross College writing magazine is this dedication to him:

"Brother Harold has been a tremendous influence on many students, not only creatively but spiritually. Our lives have been touched for the better because of his presence at Holy Cross College."

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I visited Br. Harold when he was bed-ridden In Dujarie House,. A Brother would bring him a bottle of beer around 2 o'clock every afternoon. His eyes would light up. "Eeeeeeeeeee."

As I was driving back to Illinois after the last time I visited him, I kept thinking how some soft Operatic music would bring Br. Harold great joy in his final days.

\* Schools attended: ST. FRANCIS of ASSISI GRADE SCHOOL  
ST. JOHN CATHEDRAL HIGH SCHOOL

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