

SemNet: Discussion in appreciation of Father Jack Olivier, S.S.

From: Bill Wall

Sent: Tuesday, February 22, 2011

Sem List Guys

I enjoyed Bob Murnane's piece on his memories of Rocky and his mention of Rocky playing a mean game of tennis at St Joes brought back a couple memories to me.

One is the Tennis Ladder at St Joes and the other is **Fr Jack Olivier**.

The tennis ladder was a flat piece of wood that measured about 2 feet by 2 feet. It was hung on the wall outside the door of the Third and Fourth High study hall, which was on the first floor under where the Infirmary was up on the fourth floor. This piece of wood had little brass pieces of metal on it that were about an inch high that you could slide a card into with someone's name written on it. The pieces of metal or names were organized in a pyramid fashion with one name at the top (best tennis player in the house), followed by 2 names under that name, and so on. I do get detailed, but that is how I remember things. When I was at St Joes. Fr Brien O'Kane was always at the top of the Tennis Ladder. He was a small, wiry guy, but he could play a real game of tennis. He was really on top of the ball. He drew a small crowd when he played. There were both Priests and seminarians on the tennis ladder. Needless to say, I was not on the tennis ladder. Of course, a guy on the tennis ladder could challenge the 2 guys above him to a match and thus it went. There were bets made on games and so on, but we weren't supposed to know about that.

Jack Olivier This is a little funnier story. One bright and sunny spring morning, right after High Mass, I had just changed into my BO's (remember those?), and was headed down to the Campus with some of my classmates to play some baseball. As we walked by the tennis courts, we beheld Jack Olivier in a tennis outfit getting ready for a game with someone. This was a sight to behold, and we stopped and looked for awhile. Jack was dressed in this impeccably white and clean, fancy, men's tennis outfit. He looked like he had just showed up for a photo op with Gentlemen's Quarterly. He also had this fancy looking tennis racket. He or someone paid some real bucks for the tennis outfit and racket. I am not kidding. He looked like Cary Grant getting ready for a tennis game in a Hollywood movie. Not a hair was out of place and everything was spotlessly clean and neat. Wow! We just looked at him with our crummy old clothes on. What a class act. Everything he did was done well.

I mentioned BO's. Those, of course, were our athletic clothes that the Nuns did not wash (too gross), and we took them home and cleaned them, I guess, when we went home every 3 months or so. Well, Jack Olivier did not care for our BO's at all. He made a comment once or twice in a music class I had him for. He said, if he were ever the Rector at St Joes, there would be no BO's at all. We would wear the proper uniforms to play sports and those uniforms would be washed and cleaned as required. He was dead serious. I never saw Jack wear any BO's.

My memories. I would love to hear yours.

Bill Wall

No 294 Rhet '63

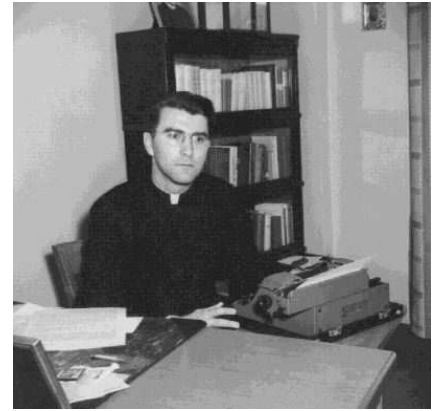


Photo: Source unknown (If somebody knows, then please let me know)

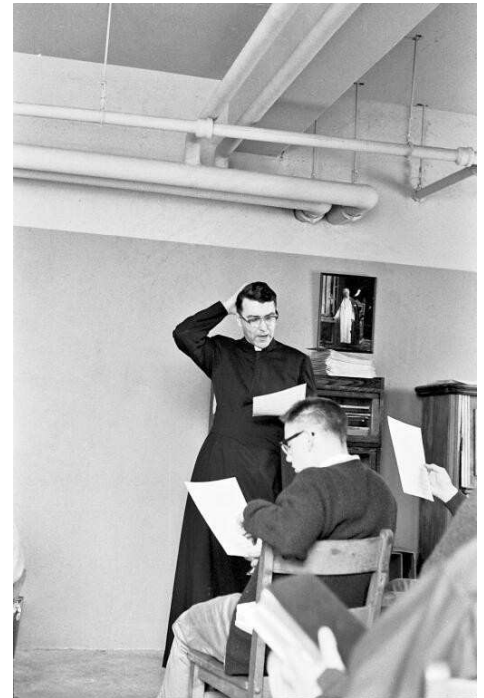
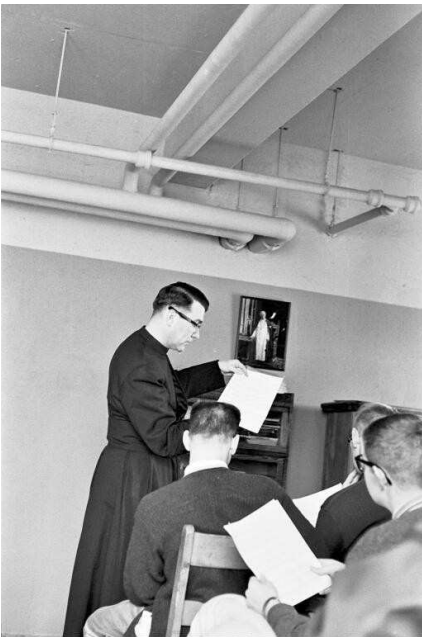
From: Edward J. Nevin
Sent: Wednesday, February 23, 2011

Bill Wall's memory compels a *responsorium*:

I left St Pat's in mid 1st Theology, staying long enough to take the final exams and get credit for the semester [whatever for?] in January 1964. I was driven home that day by **Frank Norris**, my confessor, whom I dearly loved. He stopped off in a restaurant in Menlo Park and bought me a manhattan [or maybe two] and lunch and then drove me home to my family on 26th Avenue. He wanted to be sure that all was square with my dear family and so he stayed for dinner and then left fully satisfied that I was being received home with love and understanding and was in no danger of any "spoiled priest" risk.

I worked in the Elections Department of the City and County of San Francisco while waiting for the September '64 beginning of 1st year at Hastings Law School. I finished Hastings in June '67 and started the traditional Bar review course during that summer. Frank Norris, with all his experience of former seminarians going on to the law, called me up in August and said.,
"you must just now be finishing your bar review course and I assume the bar is coming up in a couple of weeks or so. How would you like to come down here and study, live in the Deacon House and get three meals a day while doing your final study for the bar."

My St Pat's classmates had just been ordained a few months before and the Deacon House was sitting empty for the summer. I accepted his wonderful offer and every day for two weeks or so, I would get up in time to meet Frank and **Jack Olivier** just outside the refectory after they had finished their morning mass and they would take me to the refectory for a fine breakfast. Jack's



cassock and especially sash was as perfect each day as were his tennis whites described by Bill Wall. The three of us would talk about Frank's need to accept the irony that he had gained such deserving worldwide recognition as a renowned theologian and yet was now condemned to the fate of being no longer the independent intellectual, because he was so chemically dependent upon a small, but daily required pill, to get him through his recent onset of occasional mania, and painfully more often, his depression and despair. Even on the worst of days he would do his best in those magnificent repartees with Jack.

I would then go off to spend 10 hours in study for the bar exam, breaking occasionally for a swim in the wonderful old pool. Frank and Jack would come by at 5PM or so and take me up to Jack's room where Jack would make the most perfect martinis (or maybe two) for the three of us and we would then go off to dinner in the very quiet, minimally occupied, late summer refectory. The conversation was scintillating-my love for the two of them overwhelmed me. I would go back to my Deaconate room, do a little bit more study and then turn in early to be ready for the wonderful hours of the following day. I can't describe a memory of my youth or my later years which means more to me and I certainly cannot point to any two people who had more to do with who I am or, better yet, whom I want to be.

Two Photos on this page: by
Dan Folliard, R'63

Ed Nevin

Dear friends,

Ed Nevin and Bill Wall have exchanged emails about Jack Olivier. The first one below provides information about how Jack is doing.

Best wishes, Tom

From: Edward J. Nevin
Sent: Monday, February 28, 2011
Subject: RE: Your Responsorium

Bill,

Thank you for your email. Sorry I did not get back to you before Tom did. Bill Stokes, a good friend, responded to me that he did not realize I was that close to Jack Olivier, his piano teacher. He insisted that I call Jack and I told him to send a copy of the email to Jack. He replied, "Get real", Jack does not read email and he is blind. So I called. Jack, now 91, is blind from ARMD [age related macular degeneration] but he has a wonderful life, his 4 favorite styles of music playing in his room at 4 periods of each day. He takes The Great Courses [audio lectures] on a daily basis so he keeps up in his scholarship and musical studies. He does well by the reading services for the blind. He lives in Sulps retirement community in Baltimore and is very happy with his community of 10-12 retirees. He is not the oldest. He sounds as wonderful as ever. I read him my email and described yours to him. He said we made his day and made him so happy. It was too difficult for him to make notes of my phone/email/etc, so he decided that he will get back to Bill Stokes and let him know whenever he wants to hear from us again. It was a wonderful moment.

Ed

From: Bill Wall
Sent: Sunday, February 27, 2011
Subject: Fw: Your Responsorium

I sent this E mail to Ed Nevin after he sent that Responsorium to my Rocky Russell story that you put on the Sem Net. I was really moved by the gratitude that Ed showed toward Frank Norris and Jack Olivier. I thought you would want to see my response to Ed. Maybe it is appropriate to put this on the Sem List. Maybe not. That is obviously up to you.

Bill Wall Rhet '63

From: Bill Wall
To: "Ed Nevin"
Date: Friday, February 25, 2011

Ed,

Hi. My name is Bill Wall. I read with great interest your response to my E mail about tennis at St Joes. I didn't know you at St Joes, but I think you were in Tom Sheehan's class or Third High when I was in First High. I left in the middle of my Third High. I didn't know Fr Frank Norris at

St Pat's, and I wish I had. The only Frank Norris I knew was the man who wrote the book called "The Octopus" back in the 1890's.

Anyway, I really like your description of what Frank did for you at St Pats. He went home with you when you left the Sem in your ninth year to make sure you landed on your feet at home, That was a class act. He also provided you the quiet solitude of St Pats in the summertime in those critical two weeks before you took the Bar Exam, which I know from brother is an intense study period required in order to pass the Bar. What I

liked about your writing is the gratitude that flowed from every line that you wrote, plus you write very well. You really appreciated what Frank Norris and Jack Olivier and I am sure other priests did for you, things they taught you, and the genuine interest they showed in you. The reason I am making a point about this is a few of the seminarians of my vintage occasionally whine about St Joes and St Pats a bit, how tough it was an so on. Where is their gratitude for the sacrifices those priests made for us? I think some guys take a lot for granted. Sure, there were some Priests at St Joes and St Pats who were jerks, but most of those guys were good men who made the "silent sacrifice", and did a good job of teaching us and mentoring us, and, believe me, they didn't get a lot of thanks for it at the time. Your gratitude is inspiring

Thanks for the E mail and your thoughts

Bill Wall
No 294 Rhet '63



Photo: **Paul Feyen**, R'61 – Pirates of Penzance with Fr. Olivier at the piano, a **1957** production.

From: Tom McMahon
Sent: Wednesday, February 23, 2011

Ed , Tom, and sem net fellas.....I am an old timer who never had Jack Olivier in seminary , yet one who can recall Frank Norris starting the boredom knock at a far back table at St. Joe's , only to have it return to him as a prof.

Dave Norris was our classmate who died in 1943 at St. Joe's after a head injury falling from a moving auto in our 6th latin. Every time I pass Sullivan's market street I have icky feeling of our going by bus to San Francisco for the rosary, not the mass.

Frank and I were good friends and I often lift my spirits remembering Frank in a wheel chair at SPS, taking my hand with tears in his eyes and saying "Tom, what future does the church have when it gets rid of guys like you just because you married. "

Then and now I believe in a holy spirit (the very core of creation) calling some of us out so that we can carry on a wholesome ministry. Jack O used to send me stamps, encouraging me in my writing. He told me once to keep up writing, he adding "if I wrote what you did they would kick my ass and take away my pension." That is one perk I don't miss as I have the freedom to say what I wish, my truth.

Keep sharing these stories on semnet more tho than just laundry numbers. There is a treasure

house of stories in you guys. Tom, 82, still writing weekly column for Australia's Catholicism which has an outreach of two million. Even the Vatican reads it. One paper I wrote about sacraments in the age of technology was found circulating Europe, totally translated into Italian with my name at the bottom.

P.S. The Norris boys were raised by their widowed mother in Marin . Their Jewish neighbors gave them Christmas tree and presents during the depression, an experience Frank translated into his love of the Jewish People and his book GOD'S OWN PEOPLE. .

P.S. 2 in the latest Sulp publication they mentioned some French Sulp martyrs at the time of the French Revolution too bad they did not include Giegere and Norris.

From: arnold kunst
Sent: Tuesday, March 01, 2011

I have read with interest this series of e-mails about Frank Norris and Jack Olivier. I left after First Theology so didn't know Frank very well, but Jack was another matter. When we St Pius X guys [Osness, Kelzer, Kidder and I] arrived from Sacramento in September 1959 we - well, I anyway - felt like country hicks arrived in the big city for the first time. We were used to being big frogs in a little pond, and St Joe's was a very big pond indeed! And one of the classiest things about that big pond was Jack Olivier. I didn't have him for class at all - maybe I'd think differently of him if I had failed to prepare my Latin sufficiently for him - but I did for choir. I had never seen anything like him! I was mesmerized by everything about him including the ever-applicable natty attire. While we were there he began work on an MA in music from Stanford - and nothing was more top-drawer than Stanford! Under his direction we performed the Missa Salve Regina, we dabbled a bit in Gilbert & Sullivan - all breath-taking, nose-bleed stuff to guys from the Huck Finn world of the Eel River Valley in Humboldt. Anyway, talk of him being blind and 91 and living in a retirement home in Baltimore sounded, maybe, so sad I decided to Google him and here's what I discovered:

Rev. John H. Olivier, S.S.
St. Charles Villa
603 Maiden Choice Lane
Baltimore MD, 21228
(410) 747-3587

To make a long story short, I gave him a call this afternoon [4 PM our time, 7 PM his time - he picked up after two rings]. He was over the moon hearing from a voice from the past. 'What did you end up doing?' 'Teacher.' 'You couldn't have chosen a better, more important profession.' 'And what keeps you busy?' 'I check out CD's on philosophy and literature. You don't need to see to listen and learn; I couldn't be happier!' And so on. I told him about the 50-year thing on April 30, and could almost hear the sigh of a little kid with nose pressed against the candy-store window. Even so, 'your call will keep me going for weeks!'

Every one of us can recount tales of horror at the hands of these guys. On the other hand there was more, much more to them than institutional, sanctified, refined sadism. They enriched each of us immensely.

Remember natty Jack? Might I suggest you give him a call - you just might make his day!

From: Al Larkin
Sent: Monday, February 28, 2011

Some more about John Olivier -

I too remember John in his tennis attire. Another example of his impeccable style was the night the newly installed fire alarm at St. Pat's went off at about three in the morning. We all assembled on the front lawn in robes or hastily pulled on clothes. Except for John who was fully dressed and groomed.

I also remember the morning I was unprepared in our third high Latin Class. John was one of our outstanding teachers but could be merciless on those unprepared. I still remember where I was sitting in the classroom.

One of the few dates I have ever remembered is the reign of Gregory the Great (590-604). It has in chant class that I developed an interest in liturgy which has stayed with me ever since.

I learned later how difficult life was for the pros at St. Joe's. John was teaching class every day as well as directing the choir, and doing the other stuff that was expected, study hall, penitents, faculty meetings, etc.. And faculty members weren't treated much better than students by the rector.

At one point, probably in college years, he asked me to audition for the choir. I did and he told me "I will get in touch with you." He did many years later, in the early '80's. He called and asked if I would like an associate; I was a new pastor and did not have one. I welcomed his offer - for his good company, his excellent preaching, and his gift of music.

One year, a week or two after Easter, he said to me: "Al, you have a hell of a lot of gall." I said, oh, why is that? "Imagine asking someone to improvise on a theme from Handel for fifteen minutes." John, I replied, I knew I would get my request. I had asked him to improvise on "He was despised and rejected among me" during the veneration of the cross on Good Friday.

A few years later, he again joined me when I was pastor in Palo Alto.

I consider John Olivier one of the formative influences in my life. I visited with him when he turned 80 and was about to move back to Baltimore. He was reading a book of "Prayers to an Evolutionary God." This past May, I visited with him at the retirement home in Baltimore. He is as alert and gracious as ever, still eager to learn.

After lunch, John Mattingly gave Bill O'Connell and me a tour of the grounds, including the Sulpician cemetery where we recognized many familiar names. May they rest in peace.

Al Larkin



Photo: **Don Broderson, R'62**
Fr. Olivier at our athletic field
(other person not known?)

From: Kierin McCormick

Sent: Tuesday, March 01, 2011

Regarding John Olivier - Whenever someone brings up the subject of "fine preachers," I simply say that in my experience, John Olivier was the finest. Kieran

From: Dennis Lucey

Sent: Wednesday, March 02, 2011

I visited John October 2009; I had used my SW Air Rapid Reward for a free trip to Baltimore/DC. I called to see if I could come by to visit, and he invited me to stay at the Sulp retirement place for a few days. Kevin Joyce arrived the same night and also stayed a day. We had a great time, reminiscing great chants for various occasions, Latin poetry, and some of the introits and other antiphons John had composed in the 60s for the first wave of translations on Liturgical texts into English (before the 1970 one). We'd sing a couple of chants at each morning Mass, and John would create an refrain for the Responsorial Psalm and I would improvise neumatic chant for the verses in the appropriate mode.

I had a rental car, and John loved going for rides and being a tour guide. Though his eye condition prevents him from driving, his peripheral vision allows him good sight of the larger scene, just not what is right in front of him. He led us through all the grand historical sites of the Sulps and the Cathedral of Baltimore, we went and visited the convent of Benedictine nuns, most of whom had just changed from Episcopal to the new Anglo-Catholic (in union with Rome) rite (it had been in the news, and John wanted to see what the hell was going on); he led me on an auto tour thru both the grandest and seediest sections of Baltimore, and we went to lunch. Getting to the restaurant, I thought for sure his blindness had gotten the better of him, as we dodged big rigs in a plain of truck unloading warehouses, until he said, "turn left here," and, "*ecce, mirabile dictu,*" we pulled into the parking lot of a great waterfront restaurant right on the bay!

He walked slowly but well, and around the house often used a motorized scooter for convenience. He dress casual but well, and each evening fixed us a great martini.

It was also good to see John Bitterman, Jake Mattingly, and especially Al Giaquinto, who was such a breath of fresh air as rector of SJC my last year there, succeeding Beansy and Chuck Dillon.

One of John's favorite Scripture verses, expressing a sense of gratitude about the blessings of life, is from Ps. 16:6: "*Funes mihi ceciderunt in amoenis.*"

Dennis

From: bob Norris

Sent: Thursday, March 03, 2011

Reading all the reminiscences about Fr. Olivier and his always perfect attire (even in the middle of the night) reminded me of a tipsy encounter with him.

I was waiting on the profs' table and carrying a large platter of meat with a moat of gravy in each hand. As I gracefully put one platter on the table to his right, I unknowingly tipped the platter in my left hand, resulting in a flow of the nuns' finest down the shoulder of his immaculate cassock. Pop Rock, seated next to him, began furiously wiping up the mess with his napkin while I tried to hide under the table.

Testimony to his sense of humor, Fr. O was able to joke about it later and never carried through with his threat to send me the cleaning bill.

Bob Norris

From: severon buechel
Sent: Friday, March 04, 2011
Subject: A Maryknoller remembers Fr. Olivier

I have been thoroughly enjoying the recollections and updates about Father Olivier these last few days. He was always one of my favorite professors at St. Joe's and the one with whom I had a lot of exposure – four years of chant, Latin, Trig and Civics. He went out of his way to get to know us Maryknollers. Many of you guys had a much closer relationship both living there and later residing near him in the Bay Area. You may recall we spent a good portion of the day going up and down the hill with an extra trip on the “summer schedule”. I was fortunate to be able to visit with Father later on several occasions in Mtn. View and Cupertino. Our students came from all over the western states and dispersed after we left. I, however, just returned to Sacramento and spent over thirty years delivering babies in the hospital where I was born. Not being able to get out of the delivery room where you entered the world might be the ultimate rut! A few of our students you will remember: one time state librarian Professor Kevin Starr, UCSD Professor Dick Madsen, “Odd Bodkins” cartoonist Dan O’Neill among them. Also Tom Brady shuffled and recombined his genes to produce a football great.

I was fortunate to attend the dedication of the “pop Rock” in September and renew some acquaintances. I was pleased that all of you were able to attend the reception at Maryknoll afterwards so that you could experience the beauty and serenity that we knew there in the fifties. I regret that, due to whatever powers that were, the St. Joe's students got to know only a few Maryknoll Fathers who taught at St. Joe's - Harold Krumpelmann, Cy Hirst, Henry Dirckx and a few others. Several of the priests had been stationed in China and suffered severely at the hands of the Japanese army in WWII only to survive that and be persecuted by the Red Chinese. Knowing them was inspiring.

Hopefully, we all will see more of each other at future Alumni Days. Thanks for maintaining Semnet.

Sev Buechel (Maryknoll and St. Joe's 1956-1960, but no laundry number)

From: Bill Myrons
Sent: Saturday, December 17, 2011
Subject: Fr. Olivier joke

One day at choir practice we had a chuckle at a joke that Fr. Olivier told about how seminarians woke up:

Those who got up at the bell, had plenty of time to wash and dress, got to chapel and said, “*Lavabo me.*”

Those who got up a bit later and had to hustle to arrive in time said, “*Asperges me.*”

Those who slept in and arrived in the nick of time said, “*Vidi aquam.*”

Bill Myrons, R'61

From: Matt Gaffney
Sent: Saturday, December 17, 2011

Bill Myons brought up a very good rendition of Jacques Olivier's sense of humor. Another such is that he related this incident re. fellow Sulpician Andy Forster. Fr. Forester was giving the morning meditation and was repeatedly interrupted by the click, click, click of someone trimming his nails. Fr.

Forester stopped, and the clicking stopped. When Fr. Forester resumed his reflection the clicking started up again. Again Fr. Forester paused. So did the clicking. Following the third stoppage Fr. Forester came up with the line that Fr. Olivier stated the entire Sulpician community wished they had delivered: *What are you, a centipede?* This incident happened well before Fr. Olivier came to St. Joe's, so it must have had repeated telling among the faculty to have attained such prominence. Extra points for anyone who can identify the seminarian. Hint: he rose to a high place in California politics.

Matt Gaffney



Photo: **Paul Feyen, R'61**
Fr. Olivier Conducting our choir in **1957**

From: Jerry
Sent: Tuesday, December 20, 2011

One morning in class Jack Oliver was in a relaxed mood and teased the class asking us to translate:

"Malo malum malui non equi."

After stumping even the brightest among us, he gave us the answer: "I prefer the apple of an apple tree not horse apples." (dynamic equivalence)

Pleased with the mood of the day, he then presented the following and gave us the hint that it was found on a hitching post outside a stately home in Baltimore. He asked "what the following mean?"

**"TOTI
EMUL
ESTO"**

The answer: TO TIE MULES TO.

Jerry Kennedy