

## PRESERVING THE PAST AND PRESENT **FOR THE FUTURE**

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# “NOW LET US PRAISE A FAMOUS WOMAN”

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**D**uring this past summer Nelligan Hall, Le Moyne’s bastion of male exclusiveness, was completely renovated at a cost of more than \$1,700,000. To the inquiring mind this might raise the question: why is the dormitory named Nelligan? The answer requires responding to two other questions: who was the remarkable Mrs. Nelligan? And, what was her connection to Le Moyne?

In 1934, Genevieve Derschug married Paul Nelligan, who then became president of Easy Washing Machine Corp., a company founded by her father, John Derschug. Years before the feminist movement, Mrs. Nelligan used her energies to make a place for women’s views and achievements. She won numerous awards: the *Post-Standard* Woman of Achievement, the *Herald-Journal* Woman of the Year in Industry and the Theta Phi Alpha and Beta Sigma Phi awards for outstanding community service. She served as director of the Syracuse Red Cross and of the Community Chest and was on the executive committee of the Syracuse Symphony. In 1951, she became president of the board of the Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, the predecessor of the Everson. Mrs. Nelligan was a director of a number of civic institutions and corporations. Her interest in education was attested to by her being on the board of trustees of Maria Regina and Cazenovia Colleges. She was the only woman on the planning commission for the Syracuse War Memorial auditorium. She helped found a club for women leaders, the Corinthian Club. All this she accomplished at a time before any movement for affirmative action or gender equality had developed.

Mrs. Nelligan had a long and close connection with the Jesuits. Her uncle, Gregory Derschug, a member of the faculty at Xavier University in Cincinnati, performed her wedding ceremony. Her husband was one of the members of the original Le Moyne Board of Regents and was influential in aiding the new institution financially and in public relations. After the death of her husband in 1952, Mrs. Nelligan was the first woman to serve on

the Le Moyne Board of Regents. Perhaps typical of the period's mindset, she was appointed secretary of that body.

In 1954, the Le Moyne College President, William J. Shlaerth, S.J., informed the Regents that the institution could not survive if it held strictly to its original mission as a commuter college for Syracuse. Numerous inquiries about admission were coming from outside the city but many complained about the lack of housing. There were 225 students living in private homes. The number of incoming students for the next September was going down, and if there were no dormitory, the president predicted that there would be no increase in the number of students for at least a half dozen years. He ended by telling the Regents that a dormitory would cost between \$550,000 and \$650,000 and asked for their help.

At this crucial moment, Genevieve Nelligan came to the rescue. She gave \$100,300 outright. Through her Derschug Trust, she took total responsibility for the collateral and paying the interest for 10 years on an initial loan of \$250,000. She then successfully solicited her friends for money to finance the new dormitory as a memorial to her husband. At the 1955 commencement, Le Moyne gave recognition to her vital service by awarding Mrs. Nelligan an Honorary Degree. The college rightly hailed her as “a public-spirited citizen, a prominent industrialist, and woman of high ability and diversified interests.”

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### **THREE FOOTNOTES:**

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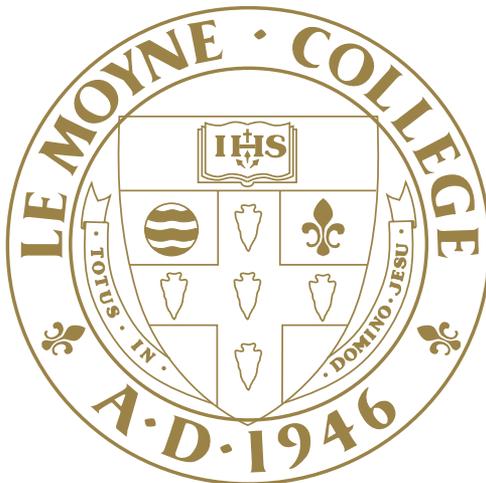
First, as noted, the building of Nelligan Hall radically changed the nature of Le Moyne. The original concept of Bishop Foery and the Jesuits was to establish a commuter college to educate the students of the Syracuse

area. Nelligan was the first step in Le Moyne becoming primarily a residential institution.

Second, an aide to the Jesuit General, who was a gracious gentleman but whose mentality perhaps was limited to 19th century patriarchal customs and protocol, once met Mrs. Nelligan. He informed her of his opinion: “I don’t understand how Le Moyne ever became coed or how you ever became a member of the Board of Regents.” When Mrs. Nelligan repeated this to Father Schlaerth he was flabbergasted. He wrote to the Jesuit Provincial that he felt torn between two Societies, “one of official pronouncements and one of actively opening opportunities for women.”

Third, Mrs. Nelligan must have been a very understanding woman because she did not let the remark sour her on the Jesuits. In 1957, she donated to Le Moyne the family summer home on Cazenovia Lake. You may have been in this magnificent house on a student retreat, a department party, or a planning meeting.

Genevieve Nelligan was a wonderfully gifted and generous woman. Nelligan Dormitory should carry the family name with pride and gratitude. ■



# “THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES...”

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**T**imes have been good not only in Lake Woebegone. At Le Moyne, publicity about the Alumni Reunion repeatedly mentioned the Archive and it paid off. A request for the memorabilia of the frosh beanies brought an overwhelming response so that a great display was possible. Beanie donors were: **Christine Bart '63**, **Diane Buchta '64**, **Barbara Holes '72**, **Helen Makarushka-Kolodiy '69**, **Michael Rauer '72**, **Susan Rauer '72**, **Katherine Uebelacker '69**, **Sandra [Morrison] Caccamise '68**, and **Margaret Knapp '68**. Margaret also sent a treasure trove of items about St. Mary's. [Cf. "From the Past"] **Beth [Flood] Leanza '69** and **Gail Mastella Larson '59** donated black robes and **Chris Bart '63** gave a Le Moyne blazer. **Bill O'Donnell '65** provided a letter sweater and information about the early '60s track team. **Mary Kay Stone '73** returned for an afternoon of photo identification and left memorabilia, playbills, and drama photos. **Susan Cunningham '61** sent photos of her senior show, and **Marieke Van Damme '00** donated a cap and t-shirt.

**Mrs. Alice May Nelligan** and **Joan [Nelligan] Carlin** graciously supplied information on Mrs. Nelligan for the *Archive News* article.

Present Le Moyneites also seem to have caught the spirit. **Steve Fleury '75** and **Tony Eppolito '64** of education and **Dennis DePerro** and **Karen Alexander** of Enrollment Management provided valuable materials. Last year's two retirees, **Jim Duffy '57** and **Bill Telesca**, properly cleaned out their files by donating them to the archive. **Fr. Edmund Ryan**, **Diane Litteer**, **Susan Gang** and **Nancy Ring** have been the usual faithful contributors. **Mike Pasquale** gave a great number of items from the International House files as well as a graduation cap and gown. **Br. Leonard Marsh** provided the first gift from the foreign language department. **Patti Schmidt** relinquished her collection of political memorabilia to the higher cause. **Cheryl Berardi** has been faithful in saving copies of the materials produced by the print shop.

My apologies to any of the "good guys" whose gifts I have not noted, especially to the donor of the "ancient" wool baseball uniform whose name I missed.

I have a list of over 20 persons who have promised items. So, do I have hope for the future? ■

# “THE GOLDEN FOURS”

## TOPICS + TRIVIA

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*You’ll Find it in the Archives—*

### *Research Topics*

- Rise and fall of Senior Week
- History of Le Moyne Academic Reorganizations
- Evolution of Current Academic Standards at Le Moyne College
- Development of Minority Organizations

*Did you know?*

### *Trivia from the Archives*

- The Nob Hill apartments at LaFayette and Seneca Turnpike on the south side of Syracuse are situated on the identical plot of land bought by the Jesuits as the first site for the college.
- In 1946, the Jesuits decided to name the proposed administration building, now Grewen Hall, as Foery Hall. Bishop Foery, however, suggested delaying until the building was actually constructed. The naming never took place.
- In 1951, a fraternity and sorority were recognized at Le Moyne. Theta Phi Alpha, a select women’s organization based on scholarship and service and Alpha Phi Omega, a men’s service fraternity.
- As early as 1975, the Registrar documented the history of “the Grade Inflation Phenomenon at Le Moyne College.” ■

March 15, 1967

MEMO TO: The Residents of St. Mary's Hall  
FROM: Margaret A. Dwyer  
SUBJECT: "Is a public display of affection necessary to your private life?"

"In dating it is expected that your conduct in or around St. Mary's or anywhere on campus will in no way display poor taste or be a source of embarrassment to anyone whether this be a priest or another resident of St. Mary's. Each student will be responsible for the conduct of her date."

I call this paragraph from the St. Mary's Hall residence information and rules to the attention of all residents and apologize to the 85 or 90% who do not need a reminder. Frankly, I have become disgusted by the conduct in the lounge, and particularly in front of St. Mary's, and in the fishbowl. Marathon necking contests obviously conducted specifically for public benefit, reflect the maturity of about high school sophomores, and can only be described as vulgar and cheap. This situation reflects a total disregard for all other people who must be subjected to this without any choice, and hardly reflects mature, deep, sensitive feeling for the other party involved.

An ultimatum: Either the girls (and I certainly use this term rather than women, and hardly ladies!) who have been putting on this exhibition voluntarily cease and desist now, or any resident who must be spoken to by a member of the residence hall staff or the council will be given an automatic weekend campus by her resident advisor. The automatic campus rule will go into effect if the situation does not change by Easter vacation.

MAD/jr



*From  
"Blackrobe,"  
1951*

## **SHE PROBABLY.....**

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- trashed department correspondence and minutes
- or tried to “reinvent the wheel” by not checking the archives to find out why the program failed three times in the past
- or promised and promised but never delivered her “goodies” to the archive.

**Send all inquiries and materials to:**

William J. Bosch, S.J.

Le Moyne College Archives

Archive Hours: 8:30 a.m. - noon / 1:00 - 4:30 p.m.

E-mail: [boschwj@lemoyne.edu](mailto:boschwj@lemoyne.edu)