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# GESU

Spring  
2016

## Alumni and Friends Newsletter

### Little Orphan “Annie” Returns, 30 Years Later

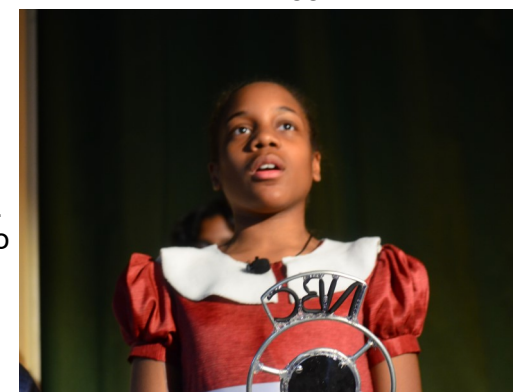
By Allison Cutuli

This spring, twenty-nine 4th-8th grade students participated as cast and crew members for the Gesu school musical, “Annie Jr.” which took place in the Gesu School Gymnasium on Friday, April 29th. After four months of rehearsals, the play was a huge success with both a matinee school performance and a sold-out evening performance for the public, selling over \$1,400 in tickets for more than 240 seats. “Annie” was directed by Ms. Pat Shay, mother of David ‘83 and John ‘81. The play received rave reviews from all ages, especially for the students’ commitment to their characters. Candice Threat ‘17, who played billionaire Warbuck’s secretary Grace Farrell, shared her experience of the play, “It’s really fun. I learned how to control different emotions of my character.” The students’ hard work was very noticeable by their incredible acting!

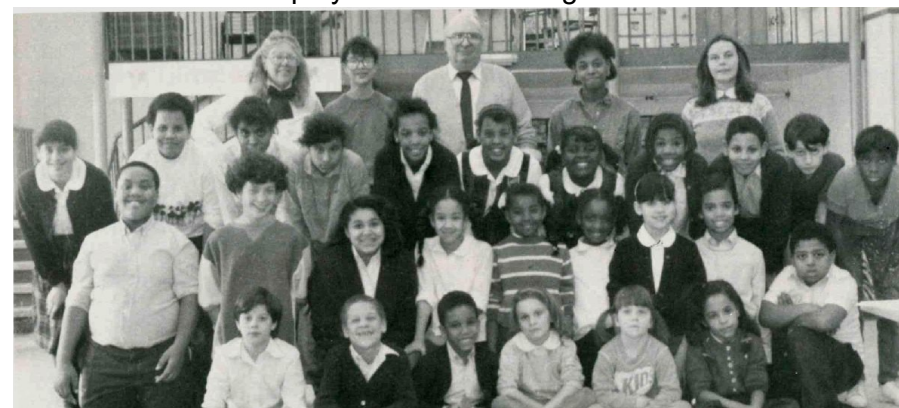
The last performance of “Annie” at Gesu occurred in 1986. Annie was played by Victoria Matous ‘90, President Roosevelt was played by Fr. Serrick, S.J. and another notable player was then first-grader Aali-

yah Houghton ‘93 who later became a R&B sensation. Her participation in “Annie” reaffirmed her desire to pursue a career in entertainment, with help from aunt Gladys Knight and parents who worked in the entertainment industry.

Fast-forward thirty years to spring 2016 and the spirit of Annie is still alive. Cierra Leggs ‘17 who played Annie expressed, “I liked that she [Annie] never gave up on anything and kept on trying. I always like to try something and keep on trying.” The musical has created a strong (cont.. on Page 3)



Cierra Leggs ‘17 sings “Maybe” on the Bert Healy show as Annie.



#### The Cast of “Annie” ‘86

Top Row: Mrs. Samul, Ann Sempowski, Mr. Snyder, Alana Simon, Miss McGill

Second Row: James Hunt, Jennifer Howard, Laura Parker, Shawn Smith, Dara Maurant, Valerie Vaughn, Vickie Matous, John Woolridge, Condrige Smith

Third Row: Stacy Ward, Kris Key, Bridget Cole, Shikira Perrin, Stefanie Greenlee, Laticia Thweatt, Tamika Golden, Shawna Brantley, Emory Burns, Finian McGaffey, Maisha Maurant  
Front Row: Molly James, Chris Sempowski, Damon Clark, Jamela Debelak, Erin Scott, Aaliyah Houghton



Danny Doyle ‘19, Kennedy Eberhardt ‘16 and Jaime Parker ‘17 sing “Easy Street”.

## Alumni Notes

**Dr. Bob Buckman ‘53:** Thank you for sending the newsletter about Gesu. I have too many funny stories that originated from the time I was there.

**Anne E. Schneiders ‘52:** My days at Gesu are good memories and prepared me for life. I entered the Daughters of Charity and spent 30 wonderful years as a teacher in Ohio, D.C., NY and MA before becoming a Social Worker and serving mentally challenged and mentally ill children in the Archdiocese of NY. I then left the religious life and moved

to DC and got my law degree to better advocate for special needs children in foster care. I now live in a condominium

with another Gesu alumnus and worship at Holy Trinity Parish [DC] (Jesuit) which has a grade school of the same caliber as Gesu. I have had a wonderful life and attribute my success to my start at Gesu. Thanks!!

**Maggie Quinlan Riley ‘49:** Just received the Gesu Pewabic Tile from one of my classmates from 1949. It is a real treasure to me. I lived in the area and was very involved in Gesu my entire life. I have nothing but wonderful memories of the IHM Sisters along with the Jesuits. It is one of the greatest gifts to my life along with my parents who helped build the school and church. I am happy to see that the dream lives on. God bless! P.S. I am still in contact with my classmates of 1949.

**Andy Howe ‘73:** I live in North Carolina, have (3) beautiful, wonderful (grown) boys who have the wonderful values that I have passed on to them from what I was taught at Gesu! Thank you!

### Have We Made A Mistake?

Have we made an error in your name or address? We apologize. Please help us correct any mistakes by calling the school, sending a note or emailing the correct information to Anita Sevier at: sevier.a@gesudetroit.org. We want to be accurate and we thank you for your support.





# Thomas Aloysius Collins, '52, Reflects on the Good Old Days

By Marybeth Dillon-Butler

Collins walked to Gesu School from his home on Stoepel, the first street west of Livernois in the second block north of Six Mile. He was the only child of Helen (Klein) and Vincent Collins, a traveling salesman. "Our whole life was centered around the church and school," he said. "I remember Fr. Henry; he was about as tall as the first-graders. I was an altar boy during the entire time. I can remember the tunnel between the school and church, and my Dad having to drive me to the convent at 4:30 a.m. to serve Mass in the chapel," said Collins. "The police stopped him one day, asking why he was sitting in a convent parking lot at 4:30 in the morning."

There were 950 students attending Gesu that year [1951], and 41 students in each of the three 8th grade rooms. Both 5th-grade classes contained 57 students. The school year began with Mass to honor the Holy Spirit at Blessed Sacrament Cathedral; and 1951 marked the opening of the new kindergarten. Gesu presented a Christmas play and a mock session of the United Nations, replete with international song and dance. Bishop Babcock confirmed 155 students.

During Holy Week in 1952, Fr. McKenna, S.J. led Gesu School's 7th and 8th graders in a silent, three-day retreat, described by the I.H.M. Sisters as "the most important days of the entire school year. The goal of the retreat is to impart to students the courage to lead a good, clean, Catholic life based on a deep love of Christ and His Blessed Mother," the Sisters wrote in the 1951-52 Gesu School Chronicles.

Fr. McKenna and Gesu teachers Sr. Marie Leone, Sr. Johnice and Mrs. Roy would be delighted to know that, like legions of Gesu graduates, Thomas Aloysius Patrick Collins, '52, is still doing them proud and leading an exemplary life, 63 years after leaving grade school.

Collins, who lives in Saline, MI with his wife Geri, retired as president of Saline Savings Bank and is a managing partner of a real estate company. He served on the community hospital board for 25 years and on several city commissions. A graduate of the

University of Detroit High School, he earned his Bachelors of Science degree in Business from the University of Detroit and graduate degree in Finance from the University of Wisconsin.

Collins joined the Army after college. During the Cold War, he worked for the National Security Agency. "For two years, I was a spy on the East German border, intercepting their radio and teletype transmissions and Morse Code, monitoring the Warsaw Pact," he says.

Asked if he still practices his Catholic faith, Collins said, "Are you kidding? After eight years with the I.H.M.s and eight years with the Jesuits and having five aunts who were Dominican nuns praying for my soul, I would be afraid not to go to church," he said with a laugh. "We belong to St. Andrew the Apostle in Saline."


Education remains close to Collins' heart; his daughter Mary Anne is a teacher in Brooklyn, MI. She and her husband have two sons: Aidan, 12, and Logan, 10. Collins is thrilled to see Gesu still thriving, and he keeps in touch with a few classmates. "I try to help Gesu when I can. The Catholic school system is super," he said. "The future is in our kids. Whatever you can do to make them successful, it's going to be worthwhile."



Above: Class of '52, with Tom Collins at bottom center with sign.

Below: Detroit Free Press article on Saturday, August 15th, 1936 regarding the opening of the current Gesu Church, which opened 80 years ago come August 2016.

**GESU 1st Annual Golf Outing**  
Saturday, June 18, 2016



12:00 pm  
Registration & Lunch

6:30 pm  
Dinner & Keynote Address

**18 Holes!**  
Warren Valley Golf Club

**313-862-4402 or 248-797-6589**  
**GesuGolfOuting.bpt.me**

**GESU 1st Annual Golf Outing**  
Saturday, June 18, 2016

**GESU's 1st Annual Golf Outing will benefit GESU Catholic School in Detroit, MI. Funds from the outing will go directly towards athletic programs, school building improvements, equipment, uniforms, etc.**

**For Tickets:**  
**GesuGolfOuting.bpt.me**  
**313-862-4402**  
**or 248-797-6589**

**High Mass Will Open**  
**Gesu Catholic Church**

The formal opening of the new Gesu Catholic Church will take place at 10 a. m. Saturday when a high mass will be chanted. The pastor, the Rev. Joseph Lannon, S. J., will be celebrant. Aiding him will be the Rev. Joseph Scott, S. J., and the Rev. William Foley, S. J. The new male choir of 40 voices will sing under the direction of Alex J. Pepin. Of Spanish style, the new structure will seat 1,500 persons. It has seven exits and five altars. The congregation has been holding services in the parochial school.

## “Annie” Continued

(cont. from Page 1) momentum for continuing performing arts at Gesu with expanded interest among the students. The actors and actresses learned more about themselves while challenging themselves in the process. Jaime Parker '17, who played cruel orphanage matron Miss Hannigan, shared, "I had bad stage fright and never sang in front of people. With auditions and rehearsals, I got used to singing in front of people." We are excited to see where the future will take our new "Annie" cast and crew and performing arts at Gesu School! When asked if they are interested in acting again, both Candice and Jaime replied with an emphatic "Yes!" Jaime added, "I made lots of new friends." Gesu school looks forward to continuing an annual musical which has been a highlight for many students this year. If you are interested in sharing your time, talent or treasure to support our students on-stage, contact Anita Sevier at [sevier.a@gesudetroit.org](mailto:sevier.a@gesudetroit.org).



"Star-to-Be" played by Barbara Reed '16 takes the spotlight during "N.Y.C."

## Immigrant family finds a warm, welcoming home at Gesu in the 1950's

By Marybeth Dillon-Butler

For Nigel Fullick '66, transitioning into Gesu Parish from Great Britain wasn't bad at all. "I was the only person in my class who had come from another country," said Nigel Fullick, 50 years after graduating from grade school. "We emigrated from England. But at Gesu, it was pretty welcoming. I remember Gesu being a very pleasant part of my life. At Gesu, there were a lot of Irish-Catholics. My Mom being from Ireland, and my Dad being from England, they were very much welcomed in the community." At Gesu in 1965-66, the student body had mushroomed to 1,562 children.

Some of Fullick's most vivid and favorite memories involve the outdoors. "We lived directly across the street from the convent," he said. "I used to be in trouble all the time, seriously. One day after a big snowstorm, there were a few guys shoveling with me who also got in trouble during the week. While I was shoveling, I got hit in the back with a snowball," Fullick said. "I thought it was one of the guys shoveling who hit me, but it was one of the nuns! Half a dozen of

them came out. We built a snow fort in the parking lot, and we had a snowball fight with the nuns. We called it the Great Snowball Fight of '65 between half a dozen nuns and four of us. And the nuns won."

The Sisters surprised the kids in the summer, too. "Every once in a while, when we were playing pick-up baseball, a couple of nuns would come out, hitch up their skirts six inches, pull up their sleeves and play with us," said Fullick, who has a younger brother and three younger sisters. "Some of them were pretty good athletes."

Serving as an altar boy was a major part of Fullick's junior high years. "We'd serve Mass daily. Some of us would serve two or three Masses a day," said Fullick. "We're talking about being Catholic in the 1950's. They went on daily for two and a half hours."

Gesu and University of Detroit High School classmate Gary Gallagher played a prominent role in Fullick's life. "Gary taught me how to ski" he said. Sadly, Fullick suffered a horrific skiing accident. "I found being a Catholic and my faith to be a big part of my recovery. I believe my faith is a huge part of

getting through the difficult things in my life."

After graduating [from University of Detroit High School], Fullick enlisted in the Army. Fullick then survived nearly twelve years combatting organized crime and drug trafficking for the federal government, and later for a Florida police department, traveling the U.S., Caribbean, South America and Europe. Fullick earned his degree in Criminal Justice from Florida Atlantic University.

If his life sounds like a novel, pick up *Kill the Angels*, a thriller by Robert Coram, or Coram's NARCS series. You'll find a thinly-disguised Nigel Fullick among the heroic characters you encounter. "His book *Kill the Angels* is dedicated to me, and he put me in the credits."

Fullick would like to reconnect with former classmates. "I hope everyone is well; I truly do. I have great memories of growing up in Gesu." If alumni want to contact Fullick, he can be reached at [nfullick@swfmtg.com](mailto:nfullick@swfmtg.com). 50th reunion anyone?