00:00:06 [Kayla Harris]
So this interview is being conducted for the Marian Library's 75th Anniversary Oral History Project, the interviewer is Marian Library archivist Kayla Harris, and we have three narrators with us today, Phil Powers, Mike Foley, and Harry Mushenheim. Today is Tuesday, September 11th, 2018, and we are in Rush Library. So thank you all for agreeing to be part of this and for coming over here to sit and talk with me. So we're just gonna start off easy, if you could introduce yourselves and tell us a little bit about your occupation, or former occupation?

00:00:51 [Phil Powers]
Okay you wanna start with me?

00:00:53 [Kayla Harris]
Sounds good.

00:00:54 [Phil Powers]
My name is Phil Powers, and I've been volunteering since about 2009, I am a retired electrical engineer from the Avionics Lab at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, and I guess I started here when the library advertised in the bulletin at Saint Luke's, and I checked into it.

00:01:26 [Mike Foley]
My name's Mike Foley, I'm a retired civil environmental engineer, I worked with the Butler County Department of Environmental Services for about 25 years, before that I worked as a
consultant, with Hooper Consultants here in Dayton, I retired in 2006, and started working at the Marian Library in 2007, doing pretty much what I'm doing now, I started with Sister Jean Frisk, she was my recruiting officer, and we had a long time together which was good. That's all for now.

00:02:12 [Harry Mushenheim]
I'm Harry Mushenheim, I graduated from UD in 1955 I came back to teach here in 1965, and taught here for 40 years in the mathematics department. After I retired in 2005 I began working here and maybe the second year after I retired, so somewhere around 2007, and have been doing pretty much what I did then, although at the time I was sort of a gopher for the person who designed and built the creches, and since he was unable to come after several years, I assumed his job.

00:03:03 [Kayla Harris]
So was this the person, I think you mentioned before, he was from Canada?

00:03:07 [Harry Mushenheim]
He used to come during the summertime, for a couple of weeks, 10 days, two weeks I believe, and he would work away, he would start early in the morning and finish late at night, and he accomplished quite a bit of work in that period, and as I say, I used to keep his workplace, he didn't have time to be neat and careful, so I used to help clean his brushes and things like that at the time. His name was Michael Forrest, he had a French pronunciation, his original language was French, but he spoke English very well, and he was a trained artist, he had a degree in art from the University of Montreal I believe, and he was underemployed, he used to design department store windows and things like that, but he wasn't doing fine art let's say, and I think he enjoyed the opportunity to come here and work on the creches. And a lot of his creches are still in use, there's a whole lot of them that he did, and they are still in use today.

00:04:35 [Kayla Harris]
So Phil, you mentioned that you saw a bulletin, so was there anyone that prompted you to come join to volunteer, and I know that you said Sister Jean, because that was a question I wanted to ask, is who or what specifically really motivated you to come work with the Marian Library?

00:04:58 [Phil Powers]
Well there were several people who volunteered from Saint Luke's at that time, I think Mike is from Saint Luke's.

00:05:07 [Mike Foley]
Yeah.
And I don't know if I talk to him at the time I was coming down. But Anne Perskinski was also volunteering from there, and there's probably five or six more people from Saint Luke's that volunteer here.

Sorry what was the other name that you said?

Rita Blumal. Patrick Kareote, don't ask me how to spell it. Fritz Austac was very active for a little while.

He's still active, but more on the special projects.

Yeah special projects, he's quite a carpenter. Can you think of anybody else?

Well I know there's probably one or two more. Saint Luke's is well represented.

They were called the Lukies.

So other than Harry who said you had a connection to UD, did you have any specific connection?

Well yeah actually my wife was working on her Masters in theology, and she's the one that met sister Jean and introduced me to her, she says I think I've got a job for you, like I was looking for one, and she says come down and talk to this lady, so I did, and that's how I got started, so she was my contact, before that I used to root for the Flyers, that's about it, I'm a graduate of Ohio University and I graduated in 1966 with my Masters in environmental engineering, so before that not really. New people here, that's about it.
I had no connection to the university, I'm a graduate of Bradley University in Illinois, and I spent 38 years working for the Air Force, not doing carpentry work, doing electronics.

00:07:16 [Mike Foley]
He's the reason the train set works. (laughs)

00:07:22 [Kayla Harris]
Would you just talk a little bit about what you do currently over at Fitz Hall?

00:07:32 [Phil Powers]
I do a lot of the I call it large-scale carpentry work, and occasionally I'll help Harry with repairing sets, or Mike, but I'm mostly into repairing things and building new things, in the way of stands and cases, and repairing things that have been broken. I'm also responsible for the layout what do you call that large area? Storage area will be keep all the creches, and try to figure out how to get as many in as we can, then get mad when people just stick them anywhere. But yeah, we've grown a lot in the last five years, from a little space down the second floor, to more space on the fourth floor, to even more space on the fourth floor, a few years ago we had a flood down the second floor, and we had a large number of our sets that were damaged.

00:08:49 [Harry Mushenheim]
Well we had storage on the first floor at that time. The flood was on the second floor, but as the water wouldn't behave, it seeped through the roof of the second floor, and I would say some of the cases were sitting at about 2 inches or so of water, and they were water stained, I think around 70 or so were damaged, and the insurance made up for them, and we actually recycled some of the old cases, some of them ended up being painted so the damage didn't show.

00:09:33 [Mike Foley]
Fortunately there was very little damage done to the artwork itself, these were just the stands that hold them up, and they were up high enough, it was a waterline broken in the ceiling is basically what happened.

00:09:48 [Harry Mushenheim]
Well the story I got at the time was that the second floor was being taken over by the art department, and they were almost getting near the end of the project, and they were putting in the wall things, the fire suppression system, and one of the workers apparently didn't close off a valve or something like that at the end of the work day on Friday, so it had all weekend to do its thing, so they ended up, I think they had to replace some of the flooring on the second floor that they had already put in, so they suffered more damage than we did, and as Mike said, the plexiglass cases protected the settings or the creches inside, and the wooden bases took the
brunt of the water damage.

00:10:50 [Kayla Harris]
We hope that doesn't happen again.

00:10:52 [Mike Foley]
We hope not. That wasn't beautiful.

00:10:54 [Kayla Harris]
It was fortunate, but yeah, that kind of stuff can be very detrimental.

00:11:01 [Mike Foley]
In my first years here I was working on the seventh floor in the back, and we got this awful set from the Czech Republic, and it looked like, and I go why are we keeping this? It was awful, so Anne Perskinski spent weeks cleaning all these figures and getting them nice and clean, and was tasked with rebuilding these buildings, most of which they all have mirrored windows, and all of the mirrors had gone cloudy, so I had to replace all the mirrored windows, I had to paint these and reinforce them. And the old windows, this is just fascinating, because the old windows were held in by newspapers, they had been repaired before, this was built around late 1800s, maybe 1870s or 60s, and it was all cardboard, early cardboard Nativity, but the papers were held in with old newspapers, and they had been repaired before, and these were papers from the 1930s when the Nazis took over Czechoslovakia, and there was one of those, I have it over there, is a notice for a Nazi party meeting at such and such a time, with the swastikas and everything on it, I'm going wow this is history, this is all history, so that was probably, and they still use it, we used it last year, it was up in the gallery area last year, and it turned out to be a good set, which amazed me, and Father Roten, he is the incentive for a lot of this stuff, I look at that stuff, you know, and he sees in that something that can happen, and once you figure out what he wants, it becomes a good labor, it's a good labor, a labor of love, and he's good to work with, so he was the reason that set exists, that was probably the first big set that I worked on, and it's the most memorable, I'll close probably, so yeah.

00:13:11 [Phil Powers]
You did a lot of work on that Provence village.

00:13:13 [Mike Foley]
Provence village, yeah that was parallel to the train set that Phil and Harry worked on, and that was also interesting, because we had to build all the settings from scratch, the people were there, and they were beautiful people, they were in pretty good shape, but there was no settings, so we build, actually we, I was the designer, but we built the buildings.
Mike built all these cardboard buildings.

To scale.

To scale, and then came to Harry and me and said make them in wood.

And they did.

What did you initially build them out of?

Sarah Wright and others, a dozen building also, there's a cathedral, and I built them all out of cardboard, I used up all our stocks of cardboard during that thing, and I built them to scale, and then when I got them the way I like them, I'll go myself, or Harry and Phil, can you make this for me, and then they would make it out of wood, and then we would paint it, they looked really nice, they came out really good, and there was another one similar to that that you guys built, which was a centerpiece, I can't think of the name of it.

The courtyard? The cathedral?

The courtyard, yeah. We still have that one.

A very large cathedral.

Yeah, a big, big cathedral, I mean you could set mass in there. But it's fun, it's a lot of fun.

Did anything go wrong? Say for example the village, was there a challenge or something that you had to think about how to make it work?
Deadlines.

00:14:55 [Mike Foley]
Deadlines, yeah you're working--

00:14:56 [Kayla Harris]
Deadlines, okay?

00:14:59 [Mike Foley]
Seven days a week towards the end there, to get it done in time, I know Father came with Provence, and I said Father, I can promise you the centerpiece, I can't promise I can get the city done or the village done in time, I said but I'll have you centerpiece. He said, "You'll get it."
Okay, and I did, we did it, I mean it's all a labor of working together, it's not just one person, but I think the biggest challenge, is we send these out, we make these beautiful settings, we have gathered these beautiful collections, and we send them out essentially to the world, they go to Notre Dame, they go to Hartford, Connecticut to the Knights of Columbus Museum, they go all over campus, they go to lots of churches in the Dayton area, and then they come back, and they are not always the same way that they went out, there is damage done, and these guys have done repairs all of them too, but the worst one, we had this beautiful Paddington city set, and we sent it to Rochester, New York, and somehow, and I knew I should have gone there and watched them pack it, well I didn't, anyway it came back and it was pretty badly damaged, and the Mexican set that went out there too.

00:16:14 [Harry Mushenheim]
Well the disappointing thing about that was that the person that should have taken care of the thing was a collector himself and should have known better.

00:16:24 [Mike Foley]
Should have known better, so we spent a lot of time repairing, and I dare you to find, you'll find where the repairs are, but I dare you to find them, we do a good job, we do the best we can, and when they're done, hopefully, they have lost value, anything that has value in its pristine way it loses value when it gets broken, and an expert if you look at it you can find the cracks, we do a pretty good effort to not let that show, and that set's been exhibited again several times, so that's probably one of the biggest challenges, keeping everything fixed.

00:17:03 [Harry Mushenheim]
Did you move the Knights of Columbus Museum from New Haven to Hartford a minute ago?
00:17:10 [Mike Foley]
Did I do that? It's amazing, it's a geographical miracle, no, they're in New Haven Connecticut, I'm sorry.

00:17:18 [Phil Powers]
I wonder where Hartford came from?

00:17:21 [Mike Foley]
I don't know, they're all insurance company places I guess.

00:17:24 [Harry Mushenheim]
Knights of Columbus for insurance.

00:17:26 [Mike Foley]
There's a beautiful museum, if you ever get to New Haven, it's worth a stop.

00:17:33 [Harry Mushenheim]
Well in that respect too, that museum, they are so well curated, and they employ no volunteers, they pay all their staff, and when we send some things there, it comes back in better shape than it was when we sent it, several times they build better cases and things like that.

00:17:57 [Mike Foley]
Which we still use.

00:17:59 [Kayla Harris]
That was you said the knights nights of?

00:18:01 [Phil Powers]
Knights of Columbus in New Haven, that's where their big museum is. Something that's come out of that is, some of the work I've been doing lately is making travel cases for delicate sets. Trying to figure out how to package these so that they can get there and be in one piece and come back and be safe, so that's more stuff we have to store, but hopefully less damage we have to repair.

00:18:39 [Harry Mushenheim]
I was thinking, why I ended up doing this was the fact that after I retired, my wife was still working, my wife is Cecilia who worked at that time full-time in the Marian Library, and I felt since she was working and I was retired, I would assume the household duties, especially
cooking, so for the first year or so I did that, and then I always kid with her and say I came down to the library to get out of doing the cooking, so that may or may not be true, I don't know.

00:19:29 [Phil Powers]
You see you don't get sick is often.

00:19:31 [Harry Mushenheim]
Well I never got sick as such, we may have gone out to eat more often.

00:19:42 [Kayla Harris]
So since you have such diverse backgrounds, and then the stuff you're doing at the Marian Library, building these sets, repairing pieces, did you for example work with wood in your spare time, did you have some of these skills from your hobbies or interests that then translated over?

00:20:06 [Harry Mushenheim]
I always say I built model airplanes when I was a kid, and this was entering into my second childhood, so I've just continued doing that, it's basically almost the same sort of thing, you just end up with a different kind of product.

00:20:24 [Mike Foley]
Harry also has a wonderful talent for glazing, when we are working with stained glass, he has a lamp in the seventh floor of the hallway, that was his work, and beautifully done. So I guess that was a hobby.

00:20:41 [Harry Mushenheim]
Actually I don't know what Phil and Mike think about it, but a lot of the sort of things we do run along, a pastime, I mean we do carpentry, we've been doing some today, but almost anybody could do what we were doing. It's kind of a pastime in a way.

00:21:02 [Phil Powers]
When I was young my dad ran a hardware store and a tool rental, and he did a lot of work with his hands, and I worked in his hardware store, and a lot of what I do came from him, he was an electrical engineer too, so I've always been doing things at home, I don't hire people to come in and fix most things, I fix them myself, I think the same is true for you.

00:21:38 [Mike Foley]
Pretty much, I broke the mold, my dad and mom were both registered nurses, I had no desire to get into medicine, I wanted to be a civil engineer, I wanted to build bridges, so when I went to school, I got my degree in civil engineering, and then I fell in love with hydraulics and treatment
and aspect of water and wastewater and I went and got my masters in environmental, which was great, did a lot of managing of contractors, supervised a lot of construction, but like Phil, we bought this house, and all of a sudden this house started springing leaks all over the place, well I'm not gonna pay a plumber, I can do that, and I did, so it turned out the house was improperly grounded, and it was a electrolysis heating the copper pipes, and I get these pinhole leaks, I had to cut out the hole, put a new piece of pipe in and put it back together, and all those repairs held up over the last 40 years we lived in that house. I found out about the electric bit, when I was doing a repair, and I grabbed the plates I got a jolt knock me off the ladder, so I called an electrician, I don't do electric, he does electric, I don't do electric, and they grounded the house, the pinhole leaks went away, and I didn't have any trouble since. But I do repairs, I put in a bathroom for my bathroom, I rebuilt that, put new sinks in, just like to do that stuff, so that's kind of carried over, that's like the macro system, then you come to over here and you do the micro system. Like Harry I built model airplanes and model ships and all that stuff when I was a kid, and they had some wonderful models back in the old days, they were wood, they weren't made out of plastic and stuff, and those were fun. Anyway, it all sort of relates in a way, it's fun.

00:23:32 [Phil Powers] We've had some other helpful people along the way that have donated tools to us, Don Rule, passed away a few years back, he donated his workshop to the library when he passed, so we have a lot of his power tools down there.

00:23:53 [Mike Foley] And they save us a lot, we also have a wonderful carpentry section down in the basement of the center.

00:24:03 [Phil Powers] They help a lot.

00:24:05 [Kayla Harris] So carpentry center in the basement, is that like part of?

00:24:09 [Mike Foley] That's part of the University.

00:24:11 [Harry Mushenheim] Facilities management. One of their shops.

[Phil Powers] They're quick to help give us advice on things, or actually through the, whatever paperwork is
required, they'll help us.

00:24:28 [Mike Foley]
They have a big table saw, really nice.

00:24:33 [Phil Powers]
Well we had a table saw, but we can't handle the big pieces of wood, so they usually handle
the big stuff for us, and once it's down to a size we can manage, then we work on it upstairs.
The library has purchased a couple of tools for us, that have been invaluable, compressor.

00:24:56 [Mike Foley]
Oh, the pressure tank?

00:24:57 [Phil Powers]
The air compressor and the air tools, pneumatic tools, and they purchased us a power chop saw.

00:25:07 [Harry Mushenheim]
That was a donation.

00:25:09  [Phil Powers]
Oh was it?

00:25:10 [Harry Mushenheim]
Because I donated it.

00:25:12 [Mike Foley]
Oh, you donated it?

00:25:13 [Phil Powers]
Okay I didn't know that.

00:25:16 [Mike Foley]
That's the Harry chop saw, okay.

00:25:18 [Phil Powers]
Harry memorial chop saw.

00:25:21 [Mike Foley]
I use that a lot, it's nice.
And we bring a lot of our own tools in, Mike always carries a tool bag.

And he does too, his is on wheels.

Well you know one aspect of things, in the early days, when I started and for a few years, the purchasing of materials was more casual than it is now, nowadays apparently the University has instituted a, certain rules for ordering and paying and so on which were different then we experienced at the beginning, so we go through the channels now let's say, before we just used to tell Sister Jean and somehow we got it.

I think Sister Jean actually went out and bought a lot of that on her own dime.

Maybe yeah, it's possible.

And Mike's been known to buy some stuff and bring it in.

Well we all have.

And so have I.

Well if it's a small amount-- It didn't make sense to ask to be reimbursed.

Little bottles of paint and little tools and things like that.

Nails for the nailer.
Nails for the nailer, staples for the staple gun, all of that.

00:26:45 [Harry Mushenheim]
Well the whole idea of taking pictures of the collection, every object has a number, an accession number and an identification number, whatever you want to call it, and over the years, I know when I first started, that was a big concern, because we had student helpers, and I think one of the people in the library, Adam Alonso, he's an announcer for the Dayton radio station, but he used to work in the library, and was an amateur photographer, and he had showed some of his work in town, but anyway from time to time, that collection of pictures seemed they would get lost quote unquote, and people had a devil of a time trying to find them, and sometimes they were just given up I think, and so they would have to re-photograph the material again, so it seemed like we were endlessly taking pictures of those things. And somewhere along the way, the University, maybe the library or the art department, or both, bought a system called Embark, which provides for a large database of artwork, and that's still being worked on, so that's a big project, none of we three have been involved seriously with that have we?

00:28:17 [Phil Powers]
No.

00:28:19 [Harry Mushenheim]
I did a little work for Sister Jean, but that sort of stuff bores me totally, and actually I think the ladies that we have, the lady volunteers, they seem to, they don't necessarily enjoy it, but they are willing to stick with it and try to get through the quirks.

00:28:41 [Mike Foley]
It has the student helpers--

00:28:44 [Harry Mushenheim]
Oh, the student helpers.

00:28:46 [Mike Foley]
Do a lot too.

00:28:46 [Harry Mushenheim]
Yeah they do a lot in that respect.

00:28:50 [Phil Powers]
We found the students helped on projects too, the train was a good example.
Could you tell us a little bit more about how the train happened?

Well Harry start, because you know the beginning.

Well my feeling is, that I tried to get Father Roten to do a little train idea with just a small set to recognize that many people all over the world associate a train with the Christmas tree and a manger, why, I don't know, but it's kind of been a tradition in Europe, and he's from Switzerland, and he said that they used to do it in his home, so I stared well why don't we do a little creche, sort of recalling that idea, and he never seemed to bite on it, but then all of a sudden, about three or four years ago, he suggested this grand project to make a series of creches, well not creches as such, but depictions of the scenes surrounding the Nativity.

Kind of a diorama.

Yeah and have a train associated with that, and I said wow, where's this coming from, but we kind of got started on that, and then Phil got into it and designed the layout, and the coordination of the stops and so on, and the electronics and lighting.

We ended up contacting one or two of the local train clubs to get ideas on what to do and what not to do, and we went to a place on the way down to Cincinnati called Entertrainment Junction, and they give us a tour, the inside tour of their operation and how it worked, and they give us advice on what to do and what not to do, a couple of smart things we learnt out of that, is use as much off-the-shelf hardware and software, and pieces as possible, and do as little designing as possible, because if something is gonna go wrong it's gonna be in the stuff you design.

In particular don't put switches in.

In particular they told us do not put any switches in it, so that's where we came up with the figure eight with the overpass, because we didn't want any switches, and Harry and I talking decided that there were commercially available pieces of electronics that you can use to control the
operation of the train, to start it and stop it, and also commercially available pieces that you
could do for audio, although we didn't use that one. And so what we did is, we decided that we
needed some extra help in the design, we didn't have enough time to do it all ourselves and with
help from the University, we were put in contact with the Department of Electrical Engineering,
and we pitched our project to them, and they went out to their students, they have semester long
projects that are for the purpose of designing something, and demonstrating a product at the end
of the project, and we pitched it to them, and we got one of their professors, his name was, what's
his name?

00:32:56 [Harry Mushenheim]
I'll think of it 15 minutes after this is over.

00:32:59 [Phil Powers]
Okay, at any rate, he took it on himself to get with the students, and they pitched it to the
students, and we got a group of about four or five students in the first group, and we told them
what we were looking, we told them that we didn't want them to design anything that they didn't
have to, there had to be a valid reason for building anything new, and they came up with the idea
of controlling the train using a controller that we had already picked out, a power controller, and
the engines and the power supplies, and they added a piece of electronics called an Arduino.

00:33:52 [Harry Mushenheim]
Well they used the stationmaster too.

00:33:54 [Phil Powers]
They used the stationmaster, and with the stationmaster, the stationmaster is a device
that controls the power.
00:34:06 [Harry Mushenheim]
The name of the guy is Barrera.

00:34:09 [Phil Powers]
That's right, Barrera.

00:34:12 [Harry Mushenheim]
And interestingly enough, the first fellow I contacted, I just took the website of the computer
engineering department, I looked down the list of names and I was gonna call the first one, but it
was a big long Indian name or something like that, so I went down to the next one, and I called
the guy, and he said, oh hi Professor, it turned out I had him in class, but I forgot all about it.
Anyway, he did a lot of the work I think, he was working with RI too, so he was at the
baseline, but I had never met him on campus and so on, and I didn't even know he was at UD,
but he was the one who led us to Professor Barrera, and a group of students came through his auspices.

00:35:10 [Phil Powers]
So we ended up having a team over the summer, and they designed a system that did most of what we wanted, it didn't have the audio, and it didn't work very reliably, but it was a good first step, and after their out briefing they asked what we liked and what we didn't like, and based on our input, they decided we can do a second group to take the project even further, and the next group basically did all the programming on the Arduino, they added the daughter board for the sound system which they decided that they could do.

00:35:53 [Harry Mushenheim]
They also had the lights, the lighting.

00:35:56 [Phil Powers]
And we told them we wanted the lights, and they figured out a way to add a relay board to control the lights, our input on that was that we had to have low voltage lights, we didn't want anything in the design that would be an electrical hazard to anybody, so there's nothing in the electronics over 12 volt. And the lights overhead are all 12 volt lights, and most of it runs on five volt, and that all worked out nice, and this was one of those times when we were down to the crunch, because the second crew started in September, right, and we were trying to finish up in November, and the Father wanted it ready for display in November.

00:36:52 [Kayla Harris]
In what year was this?

00:36:53 [Phil Powers]
Pardon?

00:36:54 [Kayla Harris]
What year was this?

00:36:55 [Phil Powers]
This was three years ago.

00:36:57 [Harry Mushenheim]
It was three years ago, because it was up for two years, and we took it down this past year.

00:37:04 [Phil Powers]
And that's another thing that we did, Father wanted it all built over in the library, and if you're gonna build it, and it's got all this electronics and circuitry, and then you have to move it to the library, it has to be movable.

00:37:23 [Mike Foley]
That was the same year we were building the Probos village, which we had to do over in the library also, so we didn't have any civil wars, but we had to fight for space from time to time.

00:37:34 [Phil Powers]
That's right, so we figured out how to build it so it could be disassembled and reassembled, undertook probably a full day to wire it after we got it over there. And surprisingly enough, the only real problem we've had, we've had no problem with the electronics since they finished the last version, which they finished in the library on the seventh floor. The same software is running on the system today, and we have not had to reprogram or repair anything, other than cleaning the track and cleaning the engines, otherwise it's been, the lights are still up on the seventh floor.

00:38:27 [Mike Foley]
On the seventh floor.

00:38:28 [Phil Powers]
We couldn't move those back. We got the University to install the lights for us, they wouldn't let us do that.

00:38:35 [Kayla Harris]
And did you also build or create the people the figures in them?

00:38:42 [Harry Mushenheim]
Well the people, yeah.

00:38:45 [Phil Powers]
And the settings.

00:38:47 [Harry Mushenheim]
I forget where I got the idea for that, but essentially what we ended up with the people were these little manikins that artists use to help them pose people, you've seen them, they're made out of wood and their jointed, and you can move their arms and hands around, and you buy five inch ones and eight inch ones and larger ones, and I looked at Amazon, and they had somewhat of a sale on I think a little family consisting of two adults and a child type mannequin.
Three different sizes.

And we ended up purchasing about 10 of those sets, or maybe even more, I can't remember, and then what we did was, imposed on his wife and my wife to dress them. So they had to provide costumes for I would say a good 50, there's 10 stations, and there is at least five or six people, while not necessarily in each one, an average of say five people in each one, I'd say a good 50 little figures, Mary of course appears almost in every one, Joseph appears in almost every one, so they were costumed the same way more or less in each scene, but for the others, the shepherds, the incidental townspeople, et cetera, they were different, the three Kings, they were in their royal robes et cetera, et cetera, so the wives really helped out a great deal on that one.

Nice job.

Then did you do the narration?

That's the only thing I had to do, Phil and I spent a good two hours in one of the studio's.

Well over a few weeks, because Harry wrote all the narrative.

Who wrote the narrative you said?

Harry.

I wrote the script, some of it I just copied from the Bible, and it wasn't that hard to do one or the other, but I figured whatever I wrote, Father Roten was going to change it anyway, but I give it to him and he really surprised me, and he says okay.
So then they give it to me and I read it into the microphone, and they did their little electrical magic and it turned out pretty good, so I was happy about that, but that's about all I had to do with the train set, sit and look at it, wow, that was a big wow, it really was.

00:41:35 [Phil Powers]
It still plays Mike’s voice today when you play the trains. You can't hear us.

00:41:40 [Mike Foley]
No that's right, they don't hear them.

00:41:43 [Harry Mushenheim]
The children really liked the set, you can tell, one of the things that we wanted to do was to make it childproof, children like to put their hands on things, so we did as much as we could, Father didn't want it rubbed off, is that correct?

00:42:05 [Phil Powers]
That's correct.

00:42:06 [Harry Mushenheim]
We wanted to put a stand-off or something in front of it, but he said no, so the kids would get up there with their--

00:42:12 [Mike Foley]
Little sweaty fingers.

00:42:13 [Harry Mushenheim]
Sticky fingers and--

00:42:15 [Phil Powers]
Touch the track.

00:42:16 [Harry Mushenheim]
Then they run up and down and watch the trains go back and forth, so people were kind of attracted to it, I was surprised that it got the ratings it did, I was gonna go over it personally.

00:42:30 [Phil Powers]
We had a lot of track cleaning that first year.

00:42:37 [Mike Foley]
It was a good one.

00:42:42 [Phil Powers]
We are waiting on the disassembly.

00:42:46 [Harry Mushenheim]
Yeah well see it's up in the air as to what its fate is going to be, Father has talked about saving a couple of the scenes and putting them in new settings, something like that, Phil had a suggestion of making countries of the world that the train would visit in your imagination, and put scenes from different countries.

00:43:13 [Mike Foley]
That's interesting.

00:43:14 [Harry Mushenheim]
Suggesting the Nativity and so on. And there is talk of a person, or group in Cincinnati borrowing it, we are kind of dubious about that, it would mean taking it apart again, taking it down there, putting it up again, and then eventually taking it down again.

00:43:35 [Phil Powers]
Plus having someone there to shepherd it.

00:43:40 [Harry Mushenheim]
So we're hoping that doesn't happen.

00:43:43 [Phil Powers]
We've done that with other sets, we've sent the the big one up to, what was that place up north that we drove up to? The retirement home?

00:43:56 [Phil Powers]
- Cartagena, and we took a large set up there, and had to assemble it, and then we had to go back up and disassemble it. We took the Fontanini.

00:44:15 [Harry Mushenheim]
That was the Fontanini, and that was much less--

00:44:17 [Mike Foley]
Oh that's right, yeah.
00:44:18 [Harry Mushenheim]
Difficult to do than the train would be.

00:44:21 [Phil Powers]
It was wired with electrical.

00:44:23 [Harry Mushenheim]
Yeah it still had some lights in it.

00:44:28 [Kayla Harris]
So you said it had an electrical component as well?

00:44:33 [Phil Powers]
I don't know where we got, you know will be got that setting?

00:44:36 [Mike Foley]
I think it came from somebody up Vandalia.

00:44:39 [Harry Mushenheim]
Oh yeah a lady up in Vandalia.

00:44:42 [Mike Foley]
Her husband had passed and she had this wonderful set, they had been collecting Fontanini's which are Italian pieces, they come out every year, sort of like the Hallmark thing, and people get into the hobby of collecting these things, well these folks up in Vandalia collected them over a period of years, probably decades, and they have probably almost every Fontanini setting, the wise man, the stables, the caves, all sorts of stuff, they had all this stuff, well her husband passed, and she couldn't deal with it any more, so she gave them to us, the University of Dayton, and Harry predominantly, and Phil with electrical stuff I think, built the setting, a lot of the settings were already there for the Fontanini, but you had to put them together.

00:45:30 [Harry Mushenheim]
Yeah, the buildings were all there, we didn't have anything, all the figures were there we just had to build the scenery.

00:45:35 [Mike Foley]
But it comes in three or more, maybe it's six sections I forget, but big sections and you have to take it all apart, and you have to be careful and all that stuff, we got all the boxes from those
people who left it to us, I can't remember their names, so they all go back into their boxes, and the tables were in storage over there, but they ought to be taken back and put together.

00:46:00 [Harry Mushenheim]
The day that we went up to get it, the lady was already taken to the hospital, she had some illness or need of attention, so she wasn't even there when we picked it up.

00:46:12 [Kayla Harris]
Was that the donor?

00:46:13 [Mike Foley]
The donor, yeah. Harry and Father and I went up in my car.

00:46:16 [Harry Mushenheim]
But she came through that, and then we had her and her family view it, and she was extremely pleased, the family was extremely pleased, so she was glad that someone got a benefit from that collection.

00:46:33 [Phil Powers]
And that set was as delivered to us, wired for 110 volt AC, and it's just kind of our position that we don't want 110 volt AC in anything that we're putting on display that somebody can get into. Plus it's harder to maintain, the wires bigger, so we rewired everything for LED lighting, and then it was all powered by a 12 volt power supply so there was no chance of anybody getting electrocuted or starting a fire or anything with that system. We had to figure out how to convert 110 volt light sockets into LED sockets. So yeah that was something.

00:47:34 [Mike Foley]
There were some good ones.

00:47:35 [Phil Powers]
And Mike was one of our travelers, he'd go off to--

00:47:41
[Mike Foley] Yeah so recently--
[Phil Powers] Like Columbus.

00:47:42 [Mike Foley]
Well you almost had to, the one disaster that came back from Rochester, I feel really bad, because I could have gone there and supervised it, but there's all sorts of stuff going on I don't know at university and so forth, I don't think they want the volunteers traveling.

00:47:59 [Phil Powers]
Not any more.

00:48:01 [Mike Foley]
To me it's a vacation, I'm not gonna claim insurance for them or anything like that, Harry and I both went to Hartford, New Haven several times for the Knights of Columbus, because they would receive a lot of our things, and I went to Rochester a couple of times, we went to, well my best friend, we were on a trip and we came back through Pennsylvania and we stopped at the Baker house, and he had his van, and we filled his van up with the odd rows, and the Bames, which are manufacturers of beautiful ceramic Nativities, and they donated those to us, we went and picked them up, and he was a nervous Mr Baker was, okay, we're good, and fortunately we didn't get in a wreck or anything, thank you Lord, on the way home, so there's been lots of travel, and it's always been fun, one year we took, with my friend also, we took Nativity's to the glass museum, and Massachusetts along Long Island, not Long Island, what's the other one, Cape Cod out there, I forget the name of the town, but that was an interesting trip, then of course we dovetail that into a road trip for ourselves, and it was fun, it was good.

00:49:33 [Harry Mushenheim]
On this point of not wanting the volunteers to do certain things, at present we're not actually allowed to have a ladder.

00:49:41 [Mike Foley]
Don't tell anybody.

00:49:43 [Harry Mushenheim]
(laughs) They don't want us getting hurt I don't think, but the things that we have to stand on are worse than going up a ladder.

00:49:51 [Mike Foley]
Exactly.

00:49:52 [Harry Mushenheim]
I would rather go up the ladder and stand on a chair for example, but apparently they don't know that we stand on chairs and tables.
00:50:00 [Phil Powers]
They do now.

00:50:02 [Harry Mushenheim]
So maybe if they find out about that they'll take our chairs away.

00:50:08 [Mike Foley]
I understand, but it's kind of frustrating sometimes that.

00:50:15 [Kayla Harris]
How does that make you guys feel? Some of the changes I guess that have happened?

00:50:26 [Mike Foley]
Well we understand the legal aspects, if I got hurt seriously on the job here, and we could, I'm surprised they let us use table saws and stuff, but yeah you can get hurt, are we gonna sue them, I don't know, I hope not, I wouldn't, not unless it was somehow or other their fault, but other people don't, like Blue Cross and Blue Shield or Premier Health, they may not feel that way, how did you get this, well I was working blah, blah, blah.

00:51:05 [Phil Powers]
Well that's part of the problem, because whenever you have an injury, the insurance company wants to know was that really due to volunteer work, or was that something you did yourself, it's just the--

00:51:22 [Mike Foley]
It is a worry.

00:51:23 [Phil Powers]
It's a worry, they worry more than we do.

00:51:28 [Mike Foley]
But it is a concern.

00:51:31 [Harry Mushenheim]
Another consideration too that the volunteers have is the issue of parking, and since I have a perk that allows me to park, I get a free parking pass every year, but the volunteers don't have that, and so they end up, if they wanted a full year's parking, they would be paying I think currently about $280 or something like that, which is a good chunk of change, because they don't come in every day for one thing, and many volunteer outfits, for example my wife volunteers at the
Miami Valley, and she gets a parking pass, and she only goes down once a week, but university, they run their operation a little bit more--

00:52:22 [Phil Powers]
Well someone explained to me that they have hundreds of volunteers when it comes to the athletic department, and if they started providing passes for us they'd have to provide passes for the hundreds of people that work on the football program or the basketball program, that only come in once every two weeks or something like that, but every other place that has volunteers, like Air Force Museum, they provide preferred parking for their volunteers.

00:52:57 [Kayla Harris]
So what do some of the volunteers do them, do they purchase parking passes, or do they part elsewhere?

00:53:03 [Phil Powers]
Well they let us have three passes a month before they start complaining, then after your third pass in a month, then parking office says you have to buy a pass. So basically what they're doing, unless the University, or the Marian Library decides to buy a pass for us, they're telling you you can't volunteer any more, you have to park. Some of the people part two or three blocks away and walk, and do street parking two or three blocks away, and that's not conducive to volunteers.

00:53:46 [Harry Mushenheim]
Well Brown Street has changed in that regard because--

00:53:49 [Phil Powers]
I used to park on Brown Street.

00:53:50 [Harry Mushenheim]
You were able to park on Brown Street, but you couldn't park beyond three o'clock was it?

00:53:55 [Phil Powers]
You couldn't park before nine or after three.

00:53:59 [Harry Mushenheim]
So people will be watching their wristwatch to make sure we could run out and move the car.

00:54:07 [Phil Powers]
On Brown Street and the other street that runs--

00:54:11 [Harry Mushenheim]
Caldwell.

00:54:11 [Mike Foley]
Caldwell, yeah, Caldwell. Used to park in Sister Jean's driveway.

00:54:19 [Phil Powers]
Yeah, another one of our volunteers lives two or three blocks away, and she said you can come over and park in her driveway in front of her house, so that's okay, but it's not the way to do it.

00:54:33 [Mike Foley]
I did find something out, I had a friend that was very sick, and he was in Miami Valley for a long time, so I would go over there, for 10 bucks you can get 10 passes at Miami Valley, they are 10 little coins, so I was using those, and I still have about eight of those left, so I'm thinking well if the worst comes to the worst I can always park over there and walked over, it's just a couple of blocks, it's not that far.

00:54:55 [Kayla Harris]
This is Miami Valley Hospital?

00:54:57 [Mike Foley]
Hospital, yeah, so there's an idea.

00:54:59 [Phil Powers]
Yeah, it's cheaper than buying a pass for the University, isn't that terrible, to say that University parking is more expensive than Miami Valley Hospital?

00:55:11 [Kayla Harris]
So what keeps you guys coming back?

00:55:16 [Phil Powers]
Well.

00:55:18 [Mike Foley]
It's a good question.
00:55:19 [Phil Powers]
I enjoy the work, I enjoy the people who are here, Harry and Mike, and Michelle and all the other ladies. My wife volunteers too, so she comes down or she works from home a lot, and it's just better than sitting home all the time.

00:55:42 [Mike Foley]
Something to do, that's part of it, but it is fun too, and it's a challenge, you never know exactly what you're gonna run into, I'll come in and my little repair table, it's all cluttered up, but we get my repair table, and wow okay, that wasn't there yesterday.

00:55:58 [Phil Powers]
There's are five things on the table.

00:56:00 [Mike Foley]
Yeah stuff like that, we've gotta have that really quick, that's fine, but it's a challenge and its fun. One of the things I keep telling people, you gotta keep moving, you can't stop, we worked hard all our lives, we did all this stuff and now it's a point, yeah we could sit back and watch Gunsmoke every afternoon, can't do it, you've got to keep active the best you can, this is one of those things, then you like it, of course you just enjoy it, and it's a valuable thing, these things are precious, it's a precious story that's trying to be told, and that's part of it too.

00:56:42 [Phil Powers]
Fritz volunteers, but he does his work at home, and I have taken work home, there is another set that we have that's made out of, it's called a poor man's Nativity, it's all printed figures and cities in there attached to real thin pieces of wood, and they were in terrible disrepair, and Father Hamlin reset three different ones, maybe there were four, and he said what can we do with that, well I did a lot of that work at home, I just took it home and worked on it, but we didn't have the tools here.

00:57:26 [Harry Mushenheim]
One thing you worked on was the Cathedral for the courtyard because--

00:57:30 [Phil Powers]
Well I did a lot of that one.

00:57:32 [Harry Mushenheim]
I remember drawing the plans, but at that time I don't think we had a bandsaw, a good accurate cutting tool.
00:57:41 [Phil Powers]
So I took a lot of that home and work on it, and brought it back assembled. It's something that we do, and we enjoy doing.

00:57:54 [Harry Mushenheim]
One thing with regard to what I do, is that when Michael Floris didn't come any more and I was left on my own so to speak, not being trained as an artist as he was, I never felt very confident in turning out something worthwhile, so I depended on Father Roten, who has pretty good artistic tastes and so on, so I would do something and then wait for his okay to move it further, but the trouble was he wasn't readily available most of the time, he was still the director of the Marian Library, so it would be four or five days or a week or so before I would get the go-ahead with the project. And then when Michelle was hired after Sister Jean left, Michelle is an artist, she taught art in Dayton and different schools and so on, was trained artistically, so I found that a lot nicer arrangement, because she was always on the scene, so if I wanted to know does that color work or that color, I would leave the decision up to her and go-ahead.

00:59:14 [Phil Powers]
And she'd fence that with Father Roten. And she'd fence that with Father Roten.

00:59:19 [Harry Mushenheim]
Oh yeah, well I think they had their differences of opinion, but I think as time went on, I said do you think Father Roten will like it, and she says don't worry too much about it, or I'm sure he will or something like that, so it took the pressure off me to get his say so.

00:59:42 [Mike Foley]
He belittles himself, he's quite an artist, he really is.

00:59:46 [Harry Mushenheim]
Well I've learned a lot from working, in fact that's one of the things I like, because Phil, I kid him, and I say that between him and his brother-in-law they own every tool in the world. I get to use different tools but I don't have access to at home or never would by myself, so he's gonna bring in a little gadget to make pocket screws.

01:00:11 [Mike Foley]
Oh yeah.

01:00:12 [Phil Powers]
We are taking on a new project now, we have to build, what does it cost to build a base?
I think he'll build a base for about $250, just a simple base, anything extraordinary, this is the case crafters up in Tipp City.

This is exclusive in plexi.

The plexi's themselves cost 250 or $300, and that's by another company.

So we can't build those.

But we are gonna try building one base ourselves and see how it goes.

You'll do great.

I mean we had to purchase the wood, but we're not paying for someone to do it, and that's I would say a majority of the cost anyway probably.

It probably is.

I guess I Wanna also ask, what would you like to see for the future of the collection?

More space, I'd like to see a permanent museum that's considerably larger than the seventh floor of the library.

With a good workshop.
With a workshop, but the idea is, instead of having 300 or more cases standing around in our storage area nine months of the year, we'd have at least half of those on display all the time, and be able to rotate them in and out as new things occur, things like the village.

01:01:56
[Mike Foley] And the trains.
[Phil Powers] And the trains could be up, when it's up for a year, it means it's really up for a year, or two years or three years, you wouldn't expect a museum like the Air Force Museum to get rid of the B-52 after a year and a half, it's gonna be there for 20 years.

01:02:18 [Mike Foley]
Or longer. That's a good analogy.

01:02:25 [Phil Powers]
That's how it is at the Knights of Columbus Museum, they have a full-time display up there.

01:02:34 [Mike Foley]
I guess I haven't thought a whole lot about this, but these two said it, more space, better workshop, a way of showing this stuff off, and maybe even diversifying somewhat into getting into things other than nativities, we have a wonderful collection of Marian statues, we have a tremendous collection of fine art, which is sitting in cabinets, that nobody sees, ever, and some of this goes back to the 17th century and 16th century art, some of it is really quite valuable, and it needs to be seen, not all of it is nativities, so here we are in a Marian quote unquote, Library, and I could see more maybe diversifying a little bit, we are in a way, but there could be more.

01:03:26 [Phil Powers]
I'd like to see that. We had a rumor, probably a couple of years ago, about someone considering endowing the library with enough funds to build a stand-alone museum, but that never came--

01:03:44
[Mike Foley] Hasn't happened.
[Phil Powers] That hasn't happened, so if you know somebody with several million dollars that doesn't know what to do with it.

01:03:52 [Mike Foley]
Let us know.
01:03:54 [Kayla Harris]
For the next 75 years, right?

01:03:55 [Phil Powers]
We are ready for the next 75 years, that's right. And it would be nice if anything like that was close to the campus, they had talked about, there's a church down the road here that--

01:04:10 [Mike Foley]
They bought, there's pews from that church I think are in the--

01:04:16 [Harry Mushenheim]
Redesigned chapel.

01:04:18 [Mike Foley]
The chapel, yeah.

01:04:19 [Phil Powers]
The problem with that is it's detached from the University, and having the student body being able to participate in it is valuable.

01:04:30 [Harry Mushenheim]
Well the building was not in very good shape, and it would have had considerable refurbishing, and in addition besides to do what they wanted for the Marian Library, so I remember Mike and Phil and I and several other people went over to kind of just get a sense of the building, and I think we all turned thumbs down, because I think it's even now in more need of repair than it would have been then, I think it would have been a poor investment for use of the building. Better to wait and have something better than that.

01:05:20 [Kayla Harris]
Is there anything else that I didn't ask that you? If not that's okay too. Thank you, thank you all so much, for recording this important part of the Marian Library's history.

01:05:37 [Mike Foley]
Well thank you for having us.

01:05:39 [Phil Powers]
Thank you.

01:05:40 [Mike Foley]
I think we are important, the three of us and all the other folks that work over there, not that you don't have the arrogance to say they couldn't live without you, I joked around one time about that, I said well you got along without us before you met us, you can get along without us now, they can, but I'm glad that they don't, I'm glad we are here.

01:06:01 [Harry Mushenheim]
There is part of the concern for the future is where the volunteers, where are the volunteers are coming from, because we are not getting younger. Several volunteers they don't come regularly, we mentioned Fritz, he has some health problems, so if he does whatever he does, he does it at home, so we may have to put out another invitation in the church pews.

01:06:37 [Mike Foley]
Yeah I had a couple of guys, and it just didn't fit, there was the guy came over here, and it just wasn't a fit.

01:06:46 [Phil Powers]
We had a gentleman that volunteered for one Christmas season. Well he built the tables, that fellow built the tables--

01:06:54 [Harry Mushenheim]
Oh yeah he was excellent at woodwork.

01:06:56 [Mike Foley]
And he had a baseball player's name, I can't think of it now.

01:06:58 [Phil Powers]
And he hasn't come back since.

01:06:59 [Mike Foley]
No, he built all the tables.

01:07:06 [Phil Powers]
Mike scared him off.

01:07:03 [Mike Foley]
I did, but he built all the tables for the Provence.

01:07:11 [Harry Mushenheim]
Well one fellow I remember, when the first call for volunteers went out came in, I don't know if Mike or Phil was there then, and I remember talking to him, and he had spent some time walking around, maybe with Sister Jean or somebody, I didn't spend that much time, but he decided not to come, and the reason that I got from him was, I guess he was expecting more of a volunteer work, which would be more related to working with people, and spreading the gospel message, or doing some charitable work directly with people, and he thought that working in the Marian Library shop, was not the sort of thing that resulted in any good for anybody, he didn't think that was quite--

01:08:10 [Mike Foley]
Yeah, that's the fellow that I think I brought over from Saint Luke's, he was a nice man--

01:08:14 [Harry Mushenheim]
Yeah he was a very nice fellow, but he just didn't have the--

01:08:17 [Mike Foley]
That sounds like a similar--

01:08:18 [Harry Mushenheim]
His expectations were different.

01:08:20 [Mike Foley]
Yeah he wanted more hands-on in helping folks, and that's great.

01:08:25 [Harry Mushenheim]
I hope he found a good place.

01:08:26 [Mike Foley]
I hope he has, I do, I truly do.

01:08:30 [Kayla Harris]
We all have callings.

01:08:32 [Mike Foley]
We all, this hall, it all goes together. One of these days they're gonna have to get some younger retirees or something, that will have to happen. It was a while, but it will have to happen.

01:08:48 [Kayla Harris]
Thank you guys again.