

International Thomas Merton Society

NEWSLETTER

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Art: Jim Cantrell

• '95-'97 Officials Announced

The officers and Board of Directors of the ITMS for 1995-1997 were announced Thursday, June 15, 1995, by outgoing president **James Conner, OCSO** at the banquet of the Fourth General Meeting of the ITMS at St. Bonaventure University, Olean New York.

Officers are Patrick F. O'Connell, president; Monica Weis, SSJ, vice president; Erlinda Paguio, treasurer; and Harriet Hope, secretary. Members of the Board are Christine M. Bochen, Thomas Del Prete, Dewey Weiss Kramer, Rose Annette Liddell, SL, Elena Malits, CSC, and Paul Quenon, OCSO.

The new president, **Pat O'Connell**, is associate professor of English and Theology at Gannon University, Erie, PA. He holds Ph.D. degrees in literature from Yale University and in Theology from Fordham University. He was a member of the ITMS Board in 1991-1993, and served as vice president in 1993-1995; he was also site coordinator for the Fourth General Meeting of the ITMS. He delivered papers at the first three ITMS General Meetings, as well as at Merton conferences at The Mount Community Center, Atchison, KS; Nazareth College, Rochester, NY; and St. John's University, Jamaica, NY. His articles on Merton have appeared in *The Merton Seasonal*, *The Merton Annual*, *American Benedictine Review*, *Spiritual Life*, *Cithara* and *Living Prayer*, for which he is a contributing editor and regular columnist. His edition of Volume 5 of *The Journal of Henry D. Thoreau* is scheduled to be

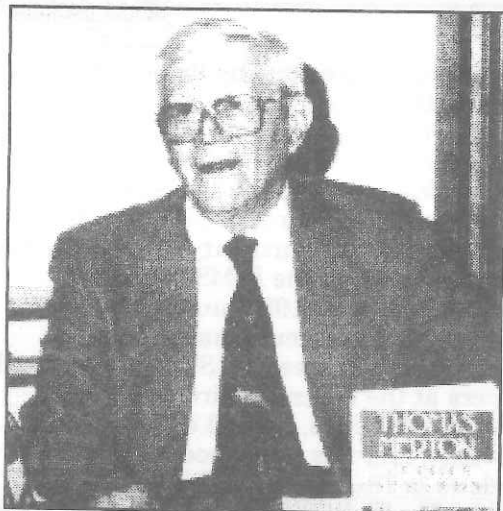
published in late 1995 by Princeton University Press.

The new vice president, **Monica Weis, SSJ**, is a member of the Sisters of St. Joseph and professor of English at Nazareth College, Rochester, NY. She received her Ph.D. in English from the University of Virginia. She was a member of the ITMS Board of Directors in 1993-1995, and served as the chair of the Program Committee for the Fourth General Meeting. She has delivered papers at the Second, Third and Fourth General Meetings, as well as moderating sessions, and has published articles and reviews in *The Merton Seasonal*, *The CEA Critic*, *The Walt Whitman Quarterly*, and in two collections of essays on composition theory, on which she is a nationally recognized authority. Most recently, she contributed to the women's studies anthology, *What We Know So Far* (St. Martin's Press, 1995).

The treasurer, **Erlinda Paguio**, will be serving her second term in that office, having been elected treasurer in 1993-1995. She received a master's degree in African Studies from the University of Illinois, Chicago, and works at the Ekstrom Library of the University of Louisville. She has delivered papers at the Second, Third and Fourth General Meetings of the ITMS, as well as at the First and Second Kansas Merton Conferences and at the Merton conference at St. John's University, Jamaica, NY., and is a frequent contributor to *The Merton Seasonal*.

Harriet Hope will be serving her second term as ITMS secretary, having been reelected to that office after serving as secretary in 1993-1995. She is the

coordinator of the Santa Sabina Center of Dominican College, San Rafael, CA, and a frequent speaker at retreats and study days there and elsewhere. She was a featured speaker at the Third Kansas Merton Conference. She is coordinating the ITMS retreats which will be given during the summer of 1996.



Monsignor William Shannon at editors' panel.
Photo: Don Sheehan

Christine M. Bochen returns to the ITMS Board, on which she served as Secretary from 1987-93. She received her Ph.D. from Catholic University of America, and is Professor of Religious Studies at Nazareth College, Rochester, NY. She was Site Coordinator for the Second ITMS General Meeting, and has spoken at all four General Meetings. She was editor of the fourth volume of Merton's Collected Letters, *The Courage for Truth: Thomas Merton's Letters to Writers*, and is editing the sixth volume of the complete edition of Merton's Journals.

Thomas Del Prete is serving his second term as a member of the ITMS Board. He received his Ph.D. in Education from Harvard University, and is Professor of Education at Clark University in Worcester, MA. He received the first "Louie" award in 1991 for his book *Thomas Merton and the*

Education of the Whole Person, and has delivered papers at the last three ITMS General Meetings and at Merton conferences in New York and Pennsylvania.

Dewey Weiss Kramer is Professor of German at DeKalb College in Decatur, Ga. and a former editor of *The Merton Annual*. With her husband Victor, she conducted workshops on Merton texts at the first three ITMS General Meetings, and has compiled an oral history of the Monastery of the Holy Spirit, Conyers, Ga. She is also former president of the Simone Weil Society.

Rose Annette Liddell, SL is a member of the Sisters of Loretto and Director of the Thomas Merton Center for Creative Exchange in Denver, CO. She served as a respondent to the Springboard Address and coordinated the Saturday worship service at the ITMS Third General Meeting.

Elena Malits, CSC is a former ITMS Board member and vice president. She received her Ph.D. in Theology from Fordham University and is Professor of Religious Studies at St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, IN. Her essays on Merton have appeared in *Cistercian Studies*, *Monastic Studies*, *Sisters Today*, *Spiritual Life* and in *The Message of Thomas Merton*. Her book *The Solitary Explorer* is a classic in Merton Studies.

Paul Quenon, OCSO, a monk of the Abbey of Gethsemani, is serving his second term on the ITMS Board. He has served as presider, speaker, and most recently as coordinator of the poetry session at ITMS General Meetings, and is a frequent writer and reviewer on Merton for *The Merton Seasonal* and elsewhere. A photographer and poet, his most recent publication is a collection of poetry, *Terrors of Paradise*.

• Bylaws Revised

The revised Bylaws of the International Thomas Merton Society were approved by a near-unanimous vote at the "Town Hall" on Saturday, June 17, during the Fourth General Meeting of the ITMS at St. Bonaventure University, Olean, New York.

The original Bylaws had been drawn up subsequent to the meeting in May, 1987 at which the ITMS was founded; as the Society evolved over the next several years, organizational structure and practice diverged in certain respects from the plan outlined in the Bylaws. At the ITMS Board Meeting in June, 1994, after considerable discussion, **President James Conner, OCSO** appointed a three-member committee to revise the Bylaws; the members of the committee were **Robert E. Daggy, Erlinda G. Paguio, and Jane Marie Richardson, SL**. Other members of the Board were encouraged to forward suggestions to the committee and to comment on successive drafts of the revisions which the committee produced. The proposed document was submitted to the membership at large by being published in *The Merton Seasonal*, 19:1 (Winter, 1995); it was this version which was voted on and passed by the members present at the Town Hall.

Highlights of the revised Bylaws include:

- The term *Advisory Board* has been dropped; the Board of Directors, consisting of officers and six additional members, constitutes the policy-making body of the ITMS.

- References to an *Executive Committee* of the ITMS and to *Heads of Standing Committees* have been dropped.

- The offices of Recording Secretary and Corresponding Secretary have been combined.

- References to annual meetings of the Society have been eliminated.

- Promoting the writing of books and articles on Merton has been added to the description of the purpose of the ITMS (Article 2, #3).

- The responsibility for determining the amount of annual dues has been assigned to the Board of Directors (Article 3, Section 3).

- The number of International Advisers has been fixed at six (Article 5, Section 3).

- A rule that the president may not serve two consecutive terms in office has been instituted (Article 5, Section 5.b).

- The duties of the president to "conduct and manage the business and affairs of the Society, exercising all such powers as are not prohibited by the Bylaws" have been made explicit (Article 6, Section 1.a).

- The immediate past president has been given a seat on the Board as an advisor during the two years following the term of office (Article 6, Section 1.j).

- The provision of having the secretary sign all ITMS contracts (along with the president) has been dropped (Article 6, Section 3).

- The three-person nominating committee has been specified as including at least one member of the Board of Directors and at least one member from the membership at large (Article 7, Section 1.a).



Brother Patrick Hart at editors' panel
Photo: Don Sheehan

- A system has been introduced for election of officers by members of the Board from a slate of two candidates for each office, followed by ratification by the membership at large. (Previously the nominating committee had prepared a single slate of officers proposed for ratification by the membership at large.) Provision for write-in votes for officers and Board members is still made (Article 7, Section 1.b).

- Provision for an outside auditor to tally election ballots (the procedure which has been followed for all previous elections) has been included in the Bylaws (Article 7,

Section 2.d).

- Arrangements for a central office and a resident secretary for the ITMS have been explicitly incorporated into the Bylaws (Article 8).

- ITMS Chapters are now distinguished from national affiliates (Article 9, Section 2).

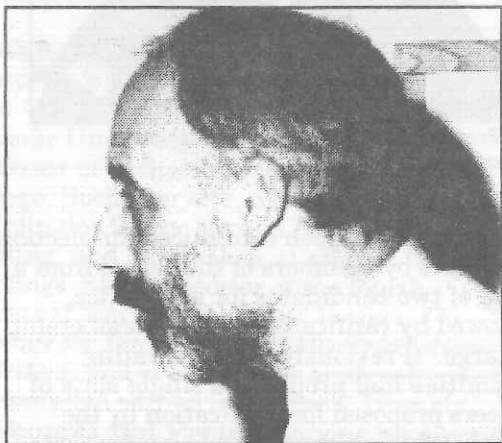
- The position of coordinator for chapters and affiliates is explicitly included in the Bylaws (Article 9, Section 4).

- Provisions for planning and holding General Meetings have been specified: sites to be selected at least two years in advance; meetings held biennially in odd-numbered years (Article 10, Section 1).

- Arrangements for holding a business meeting of the membership (the "Town Hall") have been specified (Article 10, Section 2).

- The process of amending the Bylaws has been changed to require a majority vote (rather than a two-thirds vote) of members present at the Town Hall of an ITMS General Meeting (Article 11).

• International Advisors



Miguel Grinberg, Latin American Poet
Photo: Don Sheehan

ITMS members from six countries on four continents have agreed to serve as **International Advisors of the Society for**

1995-1997. Continuing in this capacity are Finbarr Donovan, Co. Dublin, Ireland, and Paul M. Pearson, London, England; new advisors include Robert Faricy, SJ, Rome, Italy; Miguel Grinberg, Buenos Aires, Argentina; Ross Labrie, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; and John Wu, Jr., Taipei, Taiwan.

Finbarr Donovan is the Assistant Registrar of the National Council for Educational Awards, an Irish government accreditation body. His background is in computer science and his major interest is in medieval Irish Cistercian studies.

Robert Faricy, SJ is Professor of Spiritual Theology at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, where he teaches courses on prayer and on Christian social action. He is the author of more than a dozen books, including *Praying* (1980), *The Spirituality of Teilhard de Chardin* (1981), *Wind and Sea Obey Him* (1988), and *A Pilgrim's Journal* (1989). He was a presenter at the ITMS Fourth General Meeting.

Miguel Grinberg is a distinguished Latin American poet, editor and futurist thinker. He was a friend and correspondent of Thomas Merton, and recently edited a Spanish selection of Merton's works entitled *Thomas Merton: Hermana Americana* (1993). He was a featured speaker at the ITMS Fourth General Meeting, and received the International "Louie" Award at the meeting in recognition of his work in increasing appreciation for Merton's writings in Latin America.

Ross Labrie is Professor of English at the University of British Columbia. In addition to *The Art of Thomas Merton*, he is the author of *The Writings of Daniel Berrigan* and books on the poets James Merrill and Howard Nemerov. He was a presenter at the Second and Fourth ITMS General Meetings, as well as at other Merton conferences.

Paul Pearson is completing doctoral work on Thomas Merton at Heythrop College of the University of London. He serves as the secretary of the Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland, and has been a

presenter at the Second, Third and Fourth ITMS General Meetings and at other Merton conferences in the United States and in England.

John Wu, Jr. is a professor of English and of Philosophy at Chinese Culture University and at Soochow University, both in Taiwan. He is the son of Merton's friend and collaborator John Wu, and was himself a Merton correspondent, visitor and friend. He has been a presenter at the Second and Fourth ITMS General Meetings, and was the Keynote speaker at the Third General Meeting. He previously served as ITMS International Advisor in 1991-1993.

• Chapter News

The Lexington, KY Chapter of the ITMS meets weekly for discussion at Benziger House, the Newman Center of the University of Kentucky. The study group is focusing this semester on James Finley's *Merton's Palace of Nowhere* and *The Awakening Call*, and on Frank Tuoti's *Why Not Be a Mystic*. For information, contact **Tom Mullaney**, 1858 Bellefontaine Drive, Lexington, KY 40523.

The Auburn, NY Chapter of the ITMS sponsored a day-long program on October 21 entitled "Making Peace with God, Ourselves and Our Planet." The event was also attended by members of the Rochester, NY chapter. Featured presenters were **Msgr. William H. Shannon**, on "Merton and Nonviolence"; **Dr. Christine M. Bochen**, on "Merton and Spirituality"; and **Dr. Monica Weis, SSJ**, on "Merton and Ecology." Information on the Auburn chapter can be obtained from **Tom Fogarty**, 65 Walnut St., Auburn, NY 13021; for information on the Rochester chapter, contact **Kay Heininger**, 2048 Five Mile Line Road, Penfield, NY 14526.

The Albany, NY Chapter of the ITMS met on October 22 for a discussion of Merton's *The Seven Storey Mountain*. **Joe Nugent** served as facilitator for the meeting. Contact person for the Albany chapter is **Walt Chura**, 65 New Shaker Road, Albany,

NY 12205.

The Thomas Merton Center of Pittsburgh sponsored a retreat October 27-28 on "Contemplative Living: Mindfulness of the Sacred," led by **Sylvia Rosell OP**, director of the Still Point House of Prayer. The annual Merton Award of the Center was given to **Marian Kramer**, President of the National Welfare Rights Union, at a "Meager Meal" dinner on November 9. For information on the Merton Center, contact **Molly Rush**, Thomas Merton Center, 5125 Penn Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15224.

In place of their usual bimonthly meeting, the Massachusetts Chapter of the ITMS attended a talk on November 13 at Boston College by Merton friend and biographer **Jim Forest**. At the invitation of **Fr. Francis Sweeney SJ**, chapter members also had the opportunity to meet and speak with Jim at an afternoon reception preceding the talk. The next regularly scheduled meeting will be on January 21, 1996. For information, contact **Ed Farley**, 262 Wentworth Ave., Lowell MA 01852.

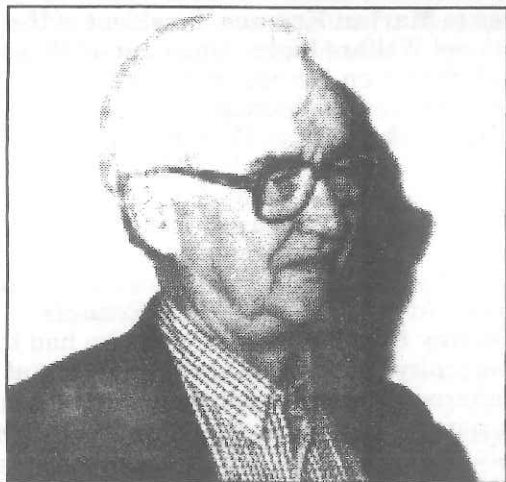


"Merton & Art" Roundtable Participants.

Photo: Don Sheehan

The San Rafael ITMS Chapter meets monthly for quiet and shared reflection on the life and writings of Merton, centering this year on **Lawrence Cunningham's** book, *Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master*. The next meeting will be on December 12 at 7 p.m. at the Santa Sabina Center. The center is also sponsoring an Advent Poustinia retreat on

December 15-17, led by **Abbot James Conner OCSO**, immediate past president of the ITMS. For information on these and other programs, contact **Harriet Hope**, Santa Sabina Center, 25 Magnolia, San Rafael, CA 94901.



Laurence Cunningham offered a Springboard Address on "Message to Poets."

Photo: Don Sheehan

The New Mexico Chapter of the ITMS sponsored a presentation by **Rev. Talitha J. Arnold**, pastor of the United Church of Santa Fe, entitled *Spiritual Autobiography: Thomas Merton and Frederick Buechner*, on October 29, 1995; the presentation included readings from the works of Merton and Buechner, as well as a reflection on the power—and the pitfalls—of using one's own story as a means to speak spiritual truths. The next meeting of the New Mexico Chapter is scheduled for Sunday, February 11, 1996. For information, contact coordinator **Peggy Jones**, 825 East Zia Road, Santa Fe, NM 87505.

• Upcoming Events

The first General Meeting of the **Thomas Merton Society of Great Britain and Ireland** will be held at La Sainte Union College, Southampton, England, May 17-19,

1996. The Theme is: *Your Heart is My Hermitage: Thomas Merton's Vision of Solitude and Community*. Featured speakers will be **Canon A. M. Allchin**, **Robert E. Daggy**, **Jim Forest** and **Mary Grey**. For further information contact **Sonia Kendall**, Department of Theology, La Sainte Union College, The Avenue, Southampton SO17-1BG, United Kingdom.

Wayne Simsic, author of *Praying with Thomas Merton*, will be directing a retreat on "Thomas Merton's Path of Solitude" January 12-14, 1996, at Maria Stein Center, 2365 St. Johns Rd., Maria Stein, OH 45860; for information, call 1-800-648-3220.

• Kansas Conference

The Third Kansas Merton Conference was held November 17-19, 1995, at the Mount Community Center, Atchison KS. The conference theme, *Summoned to Explore the Heart: Thomas Merton's Prophetic Challenge*, was borrowed from the ITMS Fourth General Meeting in order to allow those unable to attend the ITMS meeting the opportunity to reflect on similar topics, according to conference organizer **Sr. Noreen Hurter, OSB**. All of the presentations, however, were original to this conference. They included:

- *The Paschal Heart of Merton's Spirituality* (Keynote) by ITMS President Pat O'Connell, Gannon University, PA;
- *Knowing Silence: Knowing Merton's Heart*, by ITMS Secretary Harriet Hope, Santa Sabina Center, CA;
- *The Black Sheep: Thomas Merton's Challenge to Marginality*, by Merton Center Director Robert Daggy;
- *Summoned to Explore the Heart--Building a Core Merton Library to See, Hear and Study His Words of Prophetic Challenge*, by John King, University of Arkansas;
- *Merton and Earthly Bread*, by Fr. Gary Young, St. Catherine College, KY;
- *Thomas Merton and James Moffett: Complementary Visions of the Universal Schoolhouse*, by Gloria K. Lewis, Wayne State University, MI;

- *Buddhist Ethics, Christian Morality and Logocentrism*, by Jim Hartz, TN;
- *Reading Dante's **Commedia** in Merton's **Seven Storey Mountain***, by Sheila and Christian Hempstead, RI;
- *My Own Center is the Teeming Heart of Natural Families: Thomas Merton's Encounter with Modern Thought*, by William Koch, IA; and
- *Memories of Thomas Merton*, by Abbot James Conner, OCSO, Assumption Abbey, MO.

Tapes of these presentations and of talks from the two previous Kansas Merton Conferences can be obtained by writing to **Sr. Noreen Hurter, OSB**, The Mount Community Center, 751 South 8th Street, Atchison, KS 66002.

• Chapters Workshop

The ITMS Chapters Workshop was held on Thursday afternoon, June 15, 1995, as one of the opening events of the Fourth General Meeting of the ITMS at St. Bonaventure University, Olean, NY. The meeting was facilitated by Chapters Coordinator **Ed Farley** and attended by fifteen Chapter directors and a number of other ITMS Chapters members.

Following the introduction of Chapter directors, Ed Farley distributed a worksheet that covered some topics that directors often ask about. These topics, with suggested responses, included:

- Name of Chapter: "Your town or area" Chapter of ITMS;
- Number of members: any number is all right, but usually six to ten are needed for a discussion group;
- Location of meetings: homes, church halls, retreat centers, etc.;
- Time and frequency of meetings: two hours monthly, bi-monthly, occasionally; some meet weekly;
- Dues: a group decision. \$5 per year is common;
- Minutes: members' decision;
- Activities:

Discussion group—Merton writings such as *New Seeds of Contemplation*, *The Sign of Jonas*, *A Vow of Conversation*, *A Thomas Merton Reader*, and *Thomas Merton: Spiritual Master* have been successfully used by groups; discussion leaders should vary so that members have a sense of ownership; different leaders may suggest different texts to be discussed;

Audio/video tapes: Merton tapes by Credence Cassettes; *Merton: A Film Biography* by Paul Wilkes; *Winter Rain* by Anthony Padovano are some possibilities;

Speakers at events: some speakers at chapter events during the past year have included Christine Bochen, Fr. Jim Conner, Larry Cunningham, Bob Daggy, Jim Forest, Msgr. Bill Shannon, Sr. Mary Luke Tobin.



ITMS Pres. Pat O'Connell and Vice-Pres. Monica Weis SSJ. Photo: Don Sheehan

Individual Chapter directors reported on some of the activities of their Chapters over the past year, including the following:

- A Chapter meets monthly at a monastery and participates in evening prayer, silent prayer, and Eucharist, followed by a brown bag supper; after the meal the Chapter holds a meeting to review and discuss a book by or about Merton, or listens to an invited speaker talk about Merton;
- A Chapter director described how he was able to borrow multiple copies of Merton books from a retreat house on a regular basis and distribute them to Chapter members for review and discussion at

monthly meetings; some of the books he mentioned were *The Sign of Jonas*, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, and *No Man Is an Island*;

- A Chapter has a full social meeting once a month with a meal, followed by a discussion of Merton writings; once a week on the other three weeks of the month the Chapter meets for Centering Prayer;

- Each year a Chapter meets at a picnic in the courtyard of a pastoral center and shares their food and stories of their connection to Merton.



ITMS Fourth General Meeting Keynote speaker Michael Mott. Photo: Don Sheehan

Because the Chapters Workshop was limited to an hour, it was not possible to hear from each director. At the suggestion of one of the directors, two tables were set aside at lunch on Friday and Saturday of the General Meeting for directors to meet and continue the discussions. A table was also set up in the Registration Area for Chapters directors not already on the master list to sign up. Six more Chapters and directors were added to the list as a result.

• ITMS Brochure

The latest version of the ITMS brochure is now available. As in previous brochures, the new version includes the ITMS Statement of Purpose; Society Objectives; names and addresses of Officers, Board Members and International Advisors; and lists of winners of the ITMS "Louie" awards. The new version also includes a panel which may be filled out and mailed in by new members. To obtain copies of the new brochure for upcoming Merton events, write to Dr. Robert E. Daggy, Thomas Merton Center, Bellarmine College, 2001 Newburg Road, Louisville, KY 40205-0671.

• Change of Editor

The new editor of the ITMS Newsletter is Greg Ryan. It is planned that the newsletter will appear twice a year, in the Spring and Fall, as a supplement to *The Merton Seasonal*. All information concerning Merton events should be sent to the editor at 1619 Wight St., Wall, NJ 07719; Fax: 908-280-5999; Email: gjryan@aol.com. The ITMS would like to express its appreciation to the newsletter's founding editor, **Frank Tuoti**, for suggesting and initiating the project.

"Meditation is one of the ways in which the spiritual man keeps himself awake."

THOMAS MERTON
Thoughts in Solitude