This transcript is one of a series of interviews with American Indian people throughout much of the United States by S. I. Myers of the History Department of St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley, St. Louis, Missouri, 63135.

The purpose of these interviews is to bring the Indian peoples' own comments to students in classrooms, and to foster greater understanding among the peoples of the United States by providing Indians the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions to a wider audience.

This transcript has been edited for clarity and ease of reading, but every effort has been made to preserve the original feeling. Conversations and opinions were encouraged on any subject of interest to interviewees; questions and responses do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the interviewer, the National Endowment for the Humanities, or St. Louis Community College.

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BROTHER MAURICE WILSON
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Part II

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Sam Myers:

Today I am continuing our conversation with Brother Maurice Wilson, of the Alexian Brothers Order, about the take-over of the Alexian novitiate near Gresham, Wisconsin, by the Menominee Warrior Society. This take-over occurred in January, 1975. You were saying, Brother Maurice, that there were many conferences and prayers before you came to a decision there?

Brother Maurice Wilson:

Yes. And I know that Brother Florian, the Provincial, had this in mind when he told Governor Lucey that if the danger of loss of life or bloodshed was imminent, that the Alexian Brothers wanted to give the property to the Menominee Indian Tribe without the benefit of fair compensation. And Governor Lucey looked at one of his aides, and his aide said, "Brother Florian, I believe that that danger is imminent right now." And I remember him saying it so well, because it was about that same time Mr. Peterson was shot in the head by someone who was unidentified off of the novitiate property, some ways from it, but in that area. He was apparently shot in the head by someone who returned to the novitiate, as I understand, and it was at that very time when we were talking about this in the governor's office that this happened, unknownst to us, so that really the danger of bloodshed was imminent, I think, by the mere fact that that happened. We also knew that a couple days before that, one of the Indians had been shot in the leg, the upper thigh, when he was out in some type of reconnoitering or searching for food or something on the novitiate grounds, and that he had returned to the novitiate. There was some skepticism about the truth of this, but Mr. Ted Boyd assured me that he saw the wound--he was one of the Menominee Indians in the negotiating team, who was the chairman of the Menominee People's Committee, who had gone in and out of the novitiate with his committee a number of times, and he insisted that he see the wound, and he told me later he did this, and that he saw the wound and it was a gunshot wound. However, this man left the novitiate before anybody else.
SM: Any doctor or anything?

MW: There was a doctor there who is an osteopathic doctor from out West, his name skips my mind right now, I may think of it later, but he did verify too that this young man left and he was walking in this zero weather out of the novitiate for many, many hours. He really marvelled at the stamina that this young man had to leave the novitiate with this bullet wound and through the cold weather. I understand it was an Indian, as near as I could tell from the people in the novitiate. I was told that he was an Indian and that he's out West someplace now. Probably he was someone from out West someplace.

SM: This Mr. Peterson. Who was he?

MW: He's a resident of Gresham. He lives outside of the town of Gresham.

SM: A farmer there?

MW: Yes. He and his wife were snowmobiling, and they encountered these two gentlemen, two men, and somehow he was shot in the head.

SM: Did he recover?

MW: He went to St. Vincent's Hospital in Green Bay, and he did come back home, yes, but I understand he does have some consequences of this injury, and I haven't heard any medical evaluation of his condition, but from what I hear about it he does have some follow-up of this injury.

SM: Were there any other groups involved in the whole situation?

MW: Well, the Menominee People's Committee was very prominent in helping us. They met with us in Green Bay and several other times, and they
were really most active and I think most helpful in negotiating the peaceful evacuation of the novitiate. During this time also, toward the end of January, the Concerned Citizens of America were organized to reinforce the legal law enforcement.

SM: Who were these people?

MW: These were mostly white citizens in the Shawano-Gresham area.

SM: And were they somewhat anti-Indian then, or isn't that a fair statement?

MW: In my opinion I think they were, yes. They were very much law and order, very supportive of the legal system to a point where I would wonder if . . . it was too rigid, I think.

SM: Well, there were news accounts claiming that some of these people wanted to go in there and blast them out of there and all this sort of thing, you know, "Let's have a pitched battle," until then eventually you had some other famous personalities on the scene. You had the National Guard up there too?

MW: Well, I'm sorry if the sequence is not good, it's sort of fluid, I guess it's going back and forth. Still in the month of January. Your comment about "go in and shoot them out," I think this was probably somebody who was a member of the Concerned Citizens of America. This was sort of their position.

SM: This kind of thing came across in the press.

MW: That's the impression they left with me.

SM: Like two armed camps facing each other?
MW: Yes. And there were famous personalities involved, but I think they probably came later. Dennis Banks, the director of the American Indian Movement, met with us at about half of the negotiating sessions. While he was very quiet and didn't say anything, we really admired his presence and strength of character, and I again suspect that he probably had a lot of influence on the Menominee Warrior Society in counseling them and helping them to see what their legal status was.

SM: We must clarify that point now. The AIM movement itself did not start this take-over?

MW: No.

SM: It was the Warrior Society of the Menominee, and then Dennis Banks and Russell Means just came in?

MW: By invitation, I think so.

SM: By invitation later. And I heard Marlon Brando showed up.

MW: Father Grappi from Milwaukee also was at the novitiate.

SM: Did they help in any way, or add fuel to the fire or what?

MW: Well, they added to the national attention, and I think that they gave a lot of support to the Indian cause. I'm not so sure how helpful it was, and I think this was probably their intention in coming. I was impressed with what I understand was their intention for being there, but I don't know if they really helped much or not. I know they increased the publicity. We met with Marlon Brando--Brother Florian and I and some of the other Brothers--as well as Dennis Banks and some of the Indians. Met with Marlon Brando for
about three, four hours in the Atlanta airport during the month of January with the idea of trying to resolve this problem.

SM: How did you get way down there?

MH: Well, that seemed to be central. I came from Chicago, and Marlon Brando came from Hollywood, I guess, Dennis Banks came from Wisconsin, Brother Florian was at Signal Mountain, Tennessee, at the time. It seemed to be a central point.

SM: So they said, "C'mon let's talk it over down here?" Well, I've heard some less kind comments about these things. That, for example, Brando came for the publicity he could get for himself. Is that fair?

MH: I don't think it's fair to say that. The direct contact we had with Marlon Brando--and I would base it on the direct meeting we had with him--I thought he was not only a charming person, but a very sincere person. I don't think he's well-organized, and I don't think he's the most efficient person, but I certainly have no reason to doubt his sincerity, and I think he's very sincere and conscientious about his concern for the Indian cause. I was disappointed that he didn't follow through with some of the things that he suggested he could do, but I don't think that militates against his intention. It's more a question that he's just not well-organized, or maybe he has so many irons in the fire that he can't follow through with everything that he would like to and that he says he's going to sometimes.

SM: And you were impressed with Dennis Banks, and Russell Means was there too?

MH: Russell Means, I just saw him, I never even met him, but I recognized him. We did have some conferences and talks with Dennis Banks, who was very prominent at Gresham during January, but again, as soon as
the agreement was signed everybody fled the scene, so we had a whole new set of characters coming in—Marlon Brando wasn’t in the act after February 3rd, nor Dennis Banks, nor Russell Means, or a lot of people that I think could have helped, maybe, follow through with the resolution. We agreed to what they asked us to do, then they took off, and we were left there to try to do all this caretaking. From February 3rd until July 8th we maintained a peaceful, prayerful presence at the novitiate so there would be no further violence to human life or to property until we got the thing completely resolved.

SM: Taking care of it when you knew that you were going to offer to give it away, or had already offered it.

MW: That’s right, because we realized this was not a legal commitment; our lawyers advised us this is not a legal document, this February 3rd agreement, but we said, ”Yes, but we have a moral commitment,” we really intended to do what we promised to do.

SM: There was much in the press about this document—whether it was legal or not, and so on.

MW: We were never acting out of fear that legally we would be forced to do something, because even today why we take the position—I think most people do—that it was not a legal document because of the way it was signed, because of the wording of it, because . . . well, I’d just like to quote a letter from the United States Department of the Interior on April 22nd, at which time they described very aptly, I think, what we did that afternoon in the kitchen of Willis Lamberies’ farmhouse, when we signed the agreement, and agreed to do what we said we would if we all signed it. And Colonel Simonson, the commander of the National Guard, signed it also. It says,
The circumstances, terms and conditions relating to the transfer of the subject properties stem from a private transaction involving non-trust properties, not adjacent to an Indian reservation, and negotiated by parties lacking the authority or capacity to bind or represent the Menominee Indian Tribe as provided by the Menominee Restoration Act of December 22, 1973, 87 Statute 770.

I mention that only because I think they very well summarized the problem we had. We realized we didn't have the officials from the Menominee Indian Tribe around the kitchen table that evening, but we thought as long as we effected a peaceful evacuation we could settle these, what appeared to us to be details, across the conference table instead of across gunfire. And so that's what really prompted us to go ahead and sign this agreement, figuring that we could work out the agreement with the Menominee Indian Tribe later. So that's sort of where we were. I did want to comment one thing further, to back up a little bit, and I think it's important to see that it was about the first week that the law enforcement officers were under the command of Sheriff Sandy Montour, Robert Montour, the Sheriff of Shawano County. With the help of adjoining counties contributing manpower to him for one week he did this, until he was forced, I guess because of finances and other problems, to request the governor to send in the National Guard.

SM: Oh, he asked for the National Guard?

MW: Yes. Colonel Simonson took over command at the end of the first week of the occupation, and maintained it until the end of the occupation, which was around February 3rd.

SM: Some of the press accounts gave the National Guard credit for keeping the two armed camps from destroying each other.

MW: Well, it's very interesting, because again, it's a question of
opinion. In my opinion, I think Sheriff Montour was at one extreme, and Colonel Simonson probably was at the other extreme, of a continuum of no negotiations and negotiation. Sheriff Montour seemed not to have the patience to negotiate, and Colonel Simonson, I think, probably was the epitome of patience as far as negotiations went, and I think they were both extreme positions now as I look back on it. I think maybe if we could have hit a happy medium, that might have been the desirable thing, but if I have to choose between the two, I think I would choose Colonel Simonson, because his was more a position of respect for human beings involved. And I say that at the risk of being misunderstood, because I think Sheriff Montour did a fine job, but I don't think he had the patience to negotiate, as I recall some of the things that happened during the negotiating process, whereas Colonel Simonson pushed negotiations, Sheriff Montour seemed to do it reluctantly.

SM: So gradually the Guard moved in and sort of kept the peace, as it were?

MW: Yes.

SM: Then negotiations went on and on. I imagine it seemed interminably to you.

MW: It definitely did, and one other characteristic, I think, of the January period, which I think really was a negotiating period, was the first week there was a large exchange of gunshot between the county police and the Indians in the novitiate building. There was a large exchange of gunfire, and another group which probably were organized bands of citizens who had armed themselves, with the idea that they would sort of take a little independent action to resolve the law and order that they saw wasn't happening. So there was a lot of exchange of gunshots. This really concerned us very much.
SM: Apparently they weren't taking careful aim with skill in shooting at each other, because no one was actually killed?

MW: Well, no one was actually killed, that's right, and no one was wounded in this exchange, except the one Indian.

SM: The one Indian and then this Mr. Peterson.

MW: Well, really, he was out of the exchange. He was maybe a mile away from the novitiate, so he wasn't caught in this exchange of fire between the novitiate building and Willis Lamberies' farm and the woods adjoining the novitiate. That was the crossfire there, see?

SM: Looking back, it sort of seems like they were both shooting in the air almost, or at least not effectively shooting at each other.

MW: Well, I guess that's true, because no one really was hit, except the one Indian.

SM: If you'd had expert marksmen on either side taking careful aim, somebody would have been killed.

MW: Well, Willis Lamberies has marvelled at the fact that none of his cattle were hit, and his cattle were grazing around the barn. There was a lot of gunshot into the barn and the silo, but it was all high. But, see, the police had their post in the barn, so I don't understand why nobody was hit, because there seemed to be an awful lot of exchange of gunfire. There were a lot of scars of bullets in the front of our novitiate building. I counted 19 or 20 of these pockmarks in the stone of the main entrance of the novitiate.

SM: Were they high too?
MVJ: They were all different places, first, second and third floor.

SM: Some of them could have been low enough to hit somebody standing there?

MVJ: Yes. Oh absolutely. They came in the windows. Absolutely.

SM: That must have been kind of scary.

MVJ: Well, we were away from it, you know, but we surveyed the scene after it was all over, and of course we heard about it from the law officers and from the news reporters.

SM: And you had all these various meetings, in the trailer, in the farmhouse and in Atlanta, Georgia, and elsewhere too?

MVJ: That's right. It probably finally came down to being settled in the governor's office that Saturday evening about 6:00 o'clock. This was before February 3rd, or whatever that date was, probably the first of February; anyway, it was a Saturday afternoon, I remember, about 6:00 o'clock, and Governor Lucey contacted Mike Sturdevant and offered him the terms and Mike Sturdevant accepted them, with the idea that Mr. Bennett and myself would go up to Gresham and sign the thing in writing.

SM: This is the agreement you signed in the farmhouse?

MVJ: Yes, on February 3rd.

SM: Which your lawyer said wasn't binding, but you had a moral commitment?

MVJ: We did it against his legal advice. He did not advise us to do it.
SM: But you solved the problem?

MH: Yes, I think we did.

SM: And so then the Warrior Society people left, did they?

MH: They left in the middle of the night, under the supervision of Colonel Simonson, in National Guard busses, where they were taken to Shawano County jailhouse and turned over to the county law officers.

SM: They were taken to jail then?

MH: Yes.

SM: How many were there?

MH: I think there were around 30.

SM: All young men?

MH: I'm not sure. I think they were all men, because I think the women and children had been evacuated a few days before that.

SM: There had been some women and children there?

MH: Yes.

SM: That was quite a lot of people involved on the premises, as well as around the premises.

MH: Yes, and the number varied. I think one Indian quoted that there were 200, which I think was an exaggeration.
SM: Two hundred on the premises?

MW: Yes, in the building, but I think it was more like, in round figures, 50; 25 to 50 maybe. They were processed by the county law officials with the assistance, probably, of the National Guard.

SM: They were apprehensive, I suppose, of getting fair treatment after all that?

MW: Yes, they were.

SM: Did they get reasonable and fair treatment?

MW: Well, I guess it depends on who's giving the story. If they told you, they'd say "no," if the sheriff told you, he'd say "yes." I hesitate to answer that question, because I know there was a lot of hard feelings about it on the part of the law officers and on the part of the Indians.

SM: Against each other?

MW: Yes, in this process. Now how you ever get to the truth of that when so much emotions were involved, I think it's too early to say.

SM: Then, have these people been in jail ever since awaiting trial, or have they been out on some kind of bond?

MW: No, most of them were released very soon after this, with the exception of five defendants that were identified, and they're the ones that are going to be on trial January 20th.

SM: On the 20th of January, 1976?

MW: Yes. And at the present time these five are out on bail. I believe
it's something like $50,000 bail.

SM: Do you know the names of those five?

MW: Mike Sturdevant is one, and Melvin Chevalier, Jr., is another one, John Waubanascum is one, Dorene Dixon is the only lady, the only girl that's there, and there's another man, Perote, but they were only in jail just a few weeks at the most, not even that long. They were left out on bail.

SM: What are they accused of now? I suppose there are some specific accusations?

MW: Yes. It's kind of hard, it's all legal terminology. It has to do with entering unlawfully, trespassing, endangering human life, probably robbery too, because there was some damage of personal property.

SM: Well then, perhaps we'd best hold up these tapes until after that trial.

MW: Yes, I would appreciate it if you did, because in some cases what I'm saying is a matter of opinion. I couldn't document it. I think, like I told you, Channel 11 is planning a documentary, and this is their concern too, that they don't want to present this until after the trial, because of the danger that they will be accused of influencing the jury. And it will be a trial by jury, I think.

SM: So then, when you mention that Channel 11 in Chicago, that's the educational TV channel there, and Mr. Scott Simon has been working on a documentary, but it won't be aired until after the 20th for the same reason of the trial. O.K., you can count on it, we'll hold the tapes until after that too then. So then, the people, these five, are they going to be tried? The others are not apparently?
MH: That's right. It's only the five that are being charged by the state. And I guess there's some question about whether it's a federal or a state trial jurisdiction. The Indians maintain it's federal, whereas the state's position is it's state jurisdiction, so that was the reason it was postponed the last time, to get a legal opinion as to whether it was federal or state.

SM: I suppose there are defense funds and so on for these people that have been promoted by various interests around the country?

MH: Yes, I think so. I'm not too familiar with that. I have heard of an offense-defense fund that they are working on.

SM: And now you have made the commitment and you carried out the commitment and offered the property to the Menominee Tribe, right?

MH: Yes. We thought immediately we'd be able to get in touch with them and resolve it within a couple of days. Just like immediately after the phone call on January 1, I packed up three days supply of clothing, thinking that we could wind this up in three days, so it never moved as fast as we anticipated, the whole process, I guess.

SM: That must have been a very demanding month on you, and I can imagine on those people inside the novitiate, worrying about what was going to happen to them, and I can imagine the tempers of the law enforcement officers who felt their law was being flaunted. Well, anyway, it finally did get settled peaceably, to the extent at least that you made this offer in good faith to the tribe itself. What happened with that?

MH: If I could just reflect on three things that might be of interest to you. Number one, sometime in January, towards the end of January, John Adams, the man in the Washington office of the United Methodist
Church, who was the director of social action, or something like that for the National United Methodist Church, approached us and said, "Could I be of help?" And at first we didn't look at it very seriously, but then we began to think and feel that he could be of help to us, and we really appreciated the fact that he was willing to spend some time to try to help us resolve this thing. He spent a week with us, and in fact the week he was with us was during the time that the Indians peacefully evacuated the novitiate. He was very helpful in encouraging us. He also wrote the article, The Alexians Give an Abbey to the Indians. I think I sent you a copy of that, and I think he wrote it very accurately and we were real pleased with the way he handled it. I think it was objectively done, and it was good up until the time he wrote it, which was probably February 3rd.

SM: So now then, the tribe finally declined the offer to accept it?

MW: We waited until July 9th, and we did not receive an answer or any kind of official response from the Menominee Indian Tribe, which we recognized to be the Menominee Restoration Committee, of which Ada Deer is the chairman. We did not get a firm answer from them, neither yes or no or maybe or wait. We just got no answer, so we said we cannot continue to do this. "You were saying publicly, 'It's a white elephant,' you don't want it, you'd never accept it, but you're not telling us anything officially. We believe that what you're saying is true, that you really don't want to accept it because it's too much of a financial burden for you at this time when you're working on restoration; also you see that it's tainted by violence, being accepted by violence, and this seems to be just as sensitive to the Indians—even more so maybe—than to other nationalities. So, in the light of this, and in light of the fact that we have waited from February 3rd until July 9th, we cannot wait any longer. We feel that we have fulfilled, not only our legal commitment, but our moral commitment, and we say that the agreement is dissolved. Therefore, as of this time,
we have fulfilled our commitment."

SM: You advised Ada Deer of that?

MW: We advised the public of this and sent her a copy of it. But at the same time we said if this is not true, we are open to any offer from the Menominee Indian Tribe, and we will give them preference. If they tell us they are interested, we will come up and talk to them and turn over the deed or work out whatever they would like to do if they are interested, but we will not wait in silence. They'll have to commit themselves one way or the other, because we cannot afford it for many, many reasons longer than we have done it now. So this was our public statement. We advised Ada Deer verbally, and we sent an emissary to her, a friend, that went up and told her of this personally before we made the public announcement, to get her direction if she wanted us to do anything special. We left the door open after we made the public announcement, and this we did on July 9th. At the time we did it, there was quite a response from the press, from the governor's office, from Ada Deer's office, from other organized sections, because they said that for a number of reasons we were Indian givers and so forth. I think it took us about three or four weeks to really have our story heard. How can anyone call us "Indian givers" if we offer somebody something and they refuse to accept it? That's not Indian givers. Finally we got that message across, and even to the point of saying, "Now look, if we're wrong, let us know. We'll come right up and give it to you immediately." But there was still no response. So we did run into a lot of flack from political and military. Even Colonel Simonson was very critical of us, and I think he was misinformed, and it was at that point when he and I disagreed the most, I think, of all my relationships with him. Probably due to the fact that he had not been informed through the months after February 3rd that he said the things he said about us. But, during that period from February 3rd to July 9th, the Alexian Brothers
had really invested a lot of themselves to maintain a peaceful, prayerful presence, which received very little publicity, if any. We had one television station come up and interview and take pictures; we had a couple reporters come up and do a story, sort of an editorial story of what we were trying to accomplish, which was to be reconciling and healing, and try to get all the different factions to come together amidst this very emotional situation that still existed up there. And we were caught in the middle. Being a peacemaker, I think we got hit by everybody from all sides. And this was really what we intended to maintain until the tribe came and decided what they wanted to do. Well, we did this until July 9th, and during that time they burned the barn on the east farm—somebody did, it was arson—it burned clear to the ground with machinery inside it. They attempted to burn the east farmhouse also; there were threats during this time; there was much hard feeling; we were not physically harmed, but there was much threat of physical harm to us as well as physical damage to that property. But that was a very crucial time, I think, because we were able to buffer all these emotional feelings, and to be sort of a center of rumor control where people could call us and say, "Is this true" and we could say what it was. People came to visit us and find out how things looked; what we were doing and where we were at; we really very prayerfully and very carefully planned it so that we would try to do this, and we invited other religious denominations to come up and live with us. Protestant as well as Catholic groups came up, sisters as well as priests, and Brothers came and stayed with us. Bishop Wycislo came up and spent an afternoon with us, and offered the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. Abbot Killeen, the retired Abbot from St. Norbert's Abbey in Des Peres, spent several week-ends with us. Abbot Tremel, the Present Abbey at St. Norbert's came up also, as well as a number of prominent Protestant ministers and clergy came and spent some time, and even stayed overnight with us, under primitive conditions, where we had no central heating to speak of, and no running water, things like this.
SM: Was this during July?

MW: This was during February, from February 3rd until July 9th.

SM: Through that whole period, almost half a year.

MW: But it probably was most intense during February and March, and it sort of tapered off, because the activity sort of tapered off. Well, then, from July 9th, after that then we really looked very seriously at selecting a program that would serve the needs of all people up there, not just white, or not just Indian, but meet the needs of all people, figuring at this point this was the best resolution that we could come up with. I think we were right in finally selecting Crossroads Academy to best do this; and, as you know, we offered them 186 acres, along with the buildings, for their program for youth education, specialized education.

SM: Crossroads Academy?

MW: They're at Milwaukee, right.

SM: Is that a church group?

MW: No, it's non-denominational, and they serve all races, religions, youth. High school mostly, but also grade school, especially those that have behavior problems that are reflected by poor academic....

SM: Is it a place like a Boys Town?

MW: I suppose so, only it's probably less emphasis on institutional, more emphasis on the family. They try to get the whole family involved. It's very progressive. The more we learned about the program the more impressed we were, and pleased that we could offer it to them. And also, we gave 56 acres to Richmond Township for a public park for
all peoples. And we were real pleased with this suggestion and the fact that we could do this, because, first of all, it's a snowmobile trail, and the people up there are real enthusiasts for snowmobiles. But also, it runs along the Red River, which is a beautiful, uncontaminated river and forested area, so that it makes an ideal place for ecological preservation without any contamination, and things like this.

SM: So you've given some of the land to that, some to the Crossroads Academy, and the main buildings?

MW: Went to Crossroads Academy.

SM: They have those, so that's the way it stands now?

MW: That's right.

SM: Crossroads Academy is operating there now?

MW: They're not operating there now, but it's under their ownership, and they are maintaining it very minimally until spring, and I think in springtime they have planned to come out with programs. They're doing some public relation work with the people in the community to solicit their interest and support.

SM: To gain their cooperation, and some relaxing of tensions?

MW: I think so, yes.

SM: It's been kind of an overwhelming experience, hasn't it?

MW: Enriching. I'd like to think that it was an enriching experience. It's tough enough sometimes if you've got a job to do when you know
what you're supposed to be doing, and where you're going, but I think quite often we found ourselves here not knowing what we should really be doing, and where we should be going. Besides the fact that we wanted peace and reconciliation, we weren't sure where that was going to take us, but we did commit ourselves to it, and, I think with some very obvious assistance from Divine Providence, we were able to do as near as we could tell what Christ would want us to do. This was the question asked on television on Channel 11, before the peaceful evacuation. They said, "Well, what would Christ do?" And I remember being set back a little bit by the question, but I think it was a good question, because this was really what we were praying. We were trying to grope for what would Christ do in a situation like this. I think we came as near as we could. I can go to sleep at night thinking that the Brothers did the best they could do, and probably the best thing anybody can do in a situation like that. It was enriching too, from the point of view that we learned a lot about Indian culture; we learned about the sweat lodge that the Indians developed out in the back yard of the novitiate; we learned a lot about Indian values that we never knew about before; we learned about the politics, tribal politics involved; we became more aware of the historical experience that the Indian has suffered through; and also we were able to work side by side with a lot of Indians who were interested in trying to resolve this. I regret that I was unable to go to the funeral of Mr. Mel Chevalier, the father of one of the defendants in the trial, but who became a good friend of the Brothers, and was very helpful in responding to times when we really needed his input and understanding of, "What do they want here? What are they doing here? What should we do?" He was on our caretaking committee, so we could call him, and he'd always respond very well. We set up the caretaking committee in the governor's office, and on that committee there were three non-Indians, or three whites, and three Indians, selected by the Menominee Warrior Society. Well, this committee did a real good job in that caretaking phase, and it was
during that time when we got to know Mel Chevalier and Ted Boyd, Alex Askenette and Gordon Dickie, who were very active on the caretaker committee, as well as Dave Zimmerman and Dr. Kurtz.

SM: Do you think that most of the groups are now going to accept this settlement reasonably well, with a little time maybe to heal the wounds, the scars of tension?

MW: Yes, I think so, because we've heard very little repercussion—in fact we don't hear anything about it. The only thing we heard was a couple weeks ago that the number one news maker for Wisconsin during 1975 was the Gresham story.

SM: It certainly was that because you had the whole country concerned and anxious for a while there.

MW: I think we were really very concerned on October 11th, when apparently, someone set fire to the old building, and it was a fire of such magnitude that it just practically gutted the whole old section, and it's unfortunate because some of the workmanship is irreplaceable. Molded plaster, the beautiful hardwood floors and the other moldings and engravings and things. The fire was so intense that the metal melted, and the glass, of course, was deteriorated, and the front door, instead of being a shell of a frame or something, was just a stone archway—the wood and the glass and the metal were just entirely gutted by the fire.

SM: It must have been horribly hot.

MW: This was on October 11th, and several of the people who were interested in the novitiate building at that time, called and said, "We're still interested in spite of the fire. We're more interested now than we were before," which I think was a real interesting thing—
thought occurred to me, and I think it proved to a lot of us, that these people really are interested in doing something about the novitiate, if a fire, rather than make them run away from the situation, makes them more interested in it, and several of them really said, "Well, that doesn't make any difference. We are still interested in the novitiate."

SM: Are these people like the Crossroads?

MW: Crossroads Academy was one and Science Education was another one, and then Father Staudemier was another one, at Appleton. Now, also, I guess you're aware of the fact that we were able to turn this property over to Crossroads Academy and to the Richmond Township without the benefit of any fair remuneration to us, but we were glad to do this.

SM: So you have given the property to the Crossroads Organization and to the people for a park, these acres, and so that's how it's been settled now?

MW: Yes.

SM: Well, it's really a very tense story. I find myself kind of worn out from the suspense of it all, and finding a peaceful solution. I hope everyone can accept it as graciously as you have, because you were in the thick of it, and have spoken most kindly of all the people involved, although some of them must have irked you quite a bit.

MW: Well, I think they did, but I've really--thinking about it today when I was thinking about you coming over--golly, I was lucky to have the opportunity to be a part of this, you know, going through experiences I would never be able to experience again--meeting these people that were very interesting, very famous, in some cases very interesting
people with different backgrounds. It was just a wonderful opportunity that I thank God I was able to be a part of. I just wanted to mention one other thing, and that is, I told you that one of the most frightening times I felt was when we stepped out of the Winnebago Trailer, you know, in the farmyard, and I think another time that was very frightening was immediately after the evacuation, when the National Guard left the novitiate after they searched it for bombs and heaven knows what, they left, 800 men left; there were something like 800 National Guard there. They all left. The Army personnel carriers all left, then Sheriff Montour came in with his men and then he left, and nobody stayed there the first night after the evacuation, but then the second night Brother Jim Call, an Alexian Brother, and Brother Jim Gleason, a Capuchin Brother, and Father Ron Smith, a Capuchin Father, the four of us stayed overnight by ourselves in the novitiate, and that was really an experience. The second night John Adams joined us, and the third night John Johnson from the U. S. Department of Justice, joined us, because we impressed upon them the tremendously volatile danger that was there—the thing could explode any minute, you know. And then those first three days when we were staying in the novitiate there were at least 300 people curiously looking through the whole novitiate. We had no control, though, because the windows were open, the doors were wide open, we had no keys, no locks; the first day we just let them wander through the building if they wanted. There was no problem. There were only two tense situations that occurred, because we were there, I think we were able to calm everybody enough. There was no violence, but aside from that there was real little violence of any kind that we knew about. Then the next day we decided, "Well, we won't let them come in." And there were a great big group of people out in the back door, and they finally gave us the impression, they said, "If you don't let us come in we're gonna come in through the windows, and we're gonna push the door down," so Cubby Lamberies, who was watching at the back door, said, "Brother, I think we'd better let
them come in, because if we don't they're gonna break down the door." So we said, "Let them come in." And then we put a sign up saying, "Today is the last day for visitors. After today we won't allow any visitors," so we put that up, and then on the fourth day we were able to lock the doors. We had all the doors barred up, the windows boarded and everything, and we were able to lock the door and keep everybody out except those who we wanted to come in. The other thing I'd like to mention to you, too, is that although they thought that the building belonged to them at that time, I think we still have to give credit to the wives and the mothers and the friends of the Warrior Society, who came in and cleaned up the mess that was left in the building. And they really spent several days--I'll bet there were 15 or 20 people who were in the building cleaning it up immediately after the Warriors evacuated, and they left a lot of dirt and mess around on the floor. These women, and some men also, came in and cleaned it up, and they did this on their own, because I remember one lady called when we were there, and she said, "Can I come over and help you Brothers clean this up?" And I said, "Well, that was nice of her," but luckily enough I turned and asked some Indian ladies, I said, "Would you like for this lady to come over and help you?" And they looked at one another and then they very determinedly said, "I think we better take care of this." They wanted no part of anybody else coming in, they wanted to clean it up themselves. And they did clean it up.

SM: Do you think they were afraid of some sabotage or something, or just they didn't want this other person in there?

MW: I got the impression that they felt sort of a moral responsibility to clean up this building, and they didn't want to burden anybody else with it, they wanted to do it themselves.

SM: That's interesting, and it's to your credit that you would mention that. The newspapers didn't pick that up at all.
MW: No they didn't, because this was during the peaceful presence. We had a hard time getting . . . well, Ethel Ginstof from the Milwaukee Catholic Diocese paper came and did a telephone interview, and wrote a beautiful story on the peaceful presence that we were trying to maintain. Channel TVBAY in Green Bay came and actually did a camera story and everything on us, but aside from that they weren't interested, the press. It wasn't newsworthy. We had a fire in Peter's Hall, and we got national publicity, national attention again.

SM: It's too bad it has to be that way. Well, I want to thank you very much, Brother Maurice. It's been most interesting, and you've added a huge dimension to this whole story, so that we can understand it much better than we did before. We appreciate it very much.

The following appears in the *New York Times* Index for 1976:

Menominee Warriors Soc. [sic] leader Michael Sturdevant, who led 34-day armed occupation of vacant RC novitiate in northern Wis. during '75, is found guilty of 6 counts of false imprisonment, 2 of armed robbery and 1 of armed burglary; charges stem from Indians' seizure of caretaker's cottage and holding of 6 hostages until Alexian Bros religious order agreed to negotiate group's demand for order's 262-acre estate at Gresham (Wis)

(brackets ours)