

Forty-Nine Years and Counting...

By Paul Harris

Publisher

In 1955 Eisenhower was still in his first term as president, Ernest Borgnine won the Oscar for best actor in the best picture of that year, *Marty*, man had yet to go into space and Steve Allen had only just started as the first host of *The Tonight Show* the year before and Johnny Carson was still seven years from making the show his own. It was also the year when two 18-year-olds, Richard Nolan and Bob Pingpank, meet at Trinity College in Hartford, Connecticut and begin a relationship that has endured for 49 years.

Before retiring, Pingpank had taught Math for 35 years — 33 of them at the same school in Thomaston, Connecticut, the town where Seth Thomas clocks come from.

Although Nolan and Pingpank were in a committed relationship, it was not until 1967 that they started to live together. Nolan explains that in 1967

it was impossible to get property insurance in Connecticut for two men sharing the same house. To get around this situation, “Bob designed a two-household house with two kitchens but one front door,” Nolan says.



Richard Nolan (above) and Robert Pingpank (below) circa 1955.



After spending one year in a seminary after attending Trinity and teaching at a preparatory school in Hertford much of Nolan’s career has been spent teaching in community colleges. He received his masters from Yale and his doctorate from New York University. For a time he was deacon at the famous St. John the Divine in Upper Manhattan.

Nolan and Pingpank emphasised how very different the days were when they met and started their relationship. “Some teachers were fired for doing ‘the twist’ (a dance) in public places in Connecticut,” Nolan says. “Regarding the recent disappointments we are not crushed, we’re more disappointed.”

The issue of gay marriage

doesn’t really affect them. “We’ve never exchanged vows or promises with each other,” Nolan says. “As far as we are concerned, God has already blessed our relationship. I just want legal things changed to our benefit.”

He urges and has counseled couples — gay and straight — to work out the dynamics of their relationships between themselves. “People incorrectly think that having some sort of liturgy will make their relationship work,” he says. As far as he knows, only one couple he has guided towards marriage has divorced.

Outspoken about the future of the Anglican Church, he thinks it may be 20-25 years before the next gay bishop is ordained. He believes the current Archbishop of Canterbury is trying to do an impossible job mixing oil and water. “I think we need to say to the millions of supposedly Christian Anglicans in Africa ‘I think you’d be very much happier as Baptists.’ That would leave you with a much smaller but more authentic Anglican communion. Once you cease to ‘agree to differ’ you cease to be good Anglicans,” Nolan says.

Today Nolan is active in Integrity — the organization for gay Epis-



Richard Nolan (sitting) and Robert Pingpank (standing) today.

copalians — leading their services at Saint Andrew’s Church at 100 North Palmway, Lake Worth where he is attached to the staff as “retired priest in residence.” On the second Saturday of each month there is a communion service at 6pm to 6:45pm followed by an informal supper and a 20 minute program.

To find out more about the Palm Beach chapter of Integrity go to IntegrityPalmBeach.org.