



Father Joseph Reade of St. Mary's Hospital tells of his early interest and work in the theater.

After long absence from acting, local priest returns to MC stage

By GINGER DEISHER
Sentinel Staff Writer

The Rev. Joseph Reade, a priest in the Grand Junction area for almost six years, will be returning to the stage tonight after an absence of 23 years.

Father Reade will portray Rupert in the Mesa College Summer Player's production of "Rope," by Patrick Hamilton. Under the direction of William Robinson, the play is being given at 8:30 p.m. tonight, Friday and Saturday at Walter Walker Little Theater.

The responsibilities of the priesthood have not given Father Reade too much time to continue with his theatrical interests, so he feels he may have been a bit rusty during first rehearsals. "I've gotten back into the swing of things, however," he said.

Father Reade's adjustment was not too surprising, considering he was a professional actor in Ireland and Hollywood a number of years before becoming a priest.

Among his numerous roles during the span of his acting was the same character he is now portraying in "Ropes." In fact, Father Reade estimates he has been in more than 150 performances of the play and recalls the variety of characters which he has played.

"At one time I acted the role of the young man. But that was many years ago," he laughed. "Now I shall use paint and a bit of gold spray for my hair and try to get away with looking age 30. Do you think I can do it?"

The priest's interest in acting began when he was growing up in Cork City,

Ireland, the place of his birth. At the age of 14 he entered the Shakespearean School of Acting and continued his dramatics work throughout college. He earned a master's degree in music from National University of Ireland.

Upon graduation from the university, Father Reade joined the Dublin Gate Theatre Co., a renowned group which boasts such actors as James Mason and Orson Welles, as former players.

During World War II, Father Reade was a member of the Entertainments National Service Assn., the British equivalent to USO. He acted the lead for "Why Not Tonight?" while touring Northern Ireland, France, Scotland and England for nine months.

In 1947 Father Reade went to Hollywood where he dabbled in various acting jobs and had a role in a movie. The Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer production, entitled "If Winter Ever Comes," starred Walter Pidgeon, Deborah Kerr and Janet Leigh. "It was lousy," he said. "Absolutely the worst movie ever made." Father Reade portrayed Miss Leigh's boyfriend.

A year later he made what he considered to be his last public performance in a playhouse at Pasadena, Calif. Shortly after, he entered the seminary.

"Since that time I've never actually done any theatre acting," said the priest. "My work in this play came about in rather an unusual manner. 'Twas my bishop who encouraged me to resume my work. Can you imagine? Why, years ago a bishop wouldn't have had such a thought. But of course, our bishop is quite liberal. Anyway, he has always egged me on a bit. 'couldn't you do something... just a little something?' he says."

Father Reade has taken a week's vacation from his duties as chaplain

director at St. Mary's Hospital to dedicate most of his time and energy to the play. He hopes to continue in local productions and indicated his pleasure at working with the directors and the young dramatists.

"These young people are so talented... and everyone is such a joy to work with."

Father Reade admits he has enjoyed his return to the stage but believes he has never really been far from acting. "As a priest I must use my acting abilities often. I act as I go through the Liturgy, also."