Frank Riedinger was born in 1915 in a small village near Baden-Baden, Germany. Threatened by Hitler, the Riedinger family emigrated to Chicago in 1927. Because Frank was observed to be mechanically inclined, his parents enrolled him in a technical school. Radio-electronics grabbed his attention, and so he took a year-long course at the RCA Institute to obtain both the FCC Radiotelegraph and Radiotelephone commercial licenses. By 1941 Frank was employed in New Orleans.

Frank applied to be a Brother in the Southern Province in 1946. During his novitiate, he met Frank Benedetto, SJ, who was then being assigned to Loyola. Together they discovered that Frank would be an excellent fit for Loyola because of his radio-electronics skills and his machine shop experience. In 1958 he joined Tony Maurillo, the machinist of Loyola’s Physics Department, where low-temperature research was getting under way. Father Ben asked Frank to learn as much as he could about cryogenics, because he wanted the lab to liquify helium. So Frank made a tour of all the companies and universities which made liquified helium. With a trunk load of knowledge, Frank returned to Loyola to join with an new machinist. Together they designed and built a helium liquifier. Their older machine, donated to the department in 1953, was itself donated to the Smithsonian Museum. Although only 16 years old, that liquefier was considered as significant in its field as the McCormack reaper and the Wright Brothers’ airplane.

Frank’s machine worked with such success that Loyola could supply surplus liquid helium to others. But expanding commercial producers reduced the demand for liquid helium, thus the project at Loyola softened. Another Jesuit Brother, Terry Todd, SJ, learned from Frank how to manage the helium machine. Frank himself saw an advertisement for a man to repair a small island-hopping ship in the Jesuit missions in
the Caroline Islands. He indeed made the ship functional for years. Later Frank volunteered to work in a Jesuit-operated warehouse in Fremont CA, where another Jesuit had stored radio equipment for use in the missions in the Pacific. Frank began to repair this equipment and even to develop it for specific uses in the missions.

The last months of Frank were marked by an inability to rest; a state of confusion found him trying to communicate with his care givers in German. Near Frank was Terry Todd, SJ, a long time friend of Frank as co-worker at Loyola and fellow missionary in the Pacific. It was fitting that Francis J. Riedinger, SJ dies in Terry’s arms on Sept 16, 2004. He was ninety-one years old and a Jesuit for nearly sixty years. Terry described Frank as of gentle and kind nature; he noted Frank’s quiet and extremely profitable habit of converting every scrap of leftover metal into funds for the missions.