

Bro. Joseph Meierdirks, S.M.

Eulogy – Fr. Tom Schroer

Joseph Meierdirks, Jr., was born July 31, 1920, in Covington, Ky. His father was Joseph, Sr., which I presume was the reason Joe was also known as Jay in the family. His mother was Camille (Grote) Meierdirks. He is survived by three sisters, Virginia Willett and Catherine Willett, both from Lexington, Ky., and Jean Nevitt from Minnesota.

Joe was definitely an exemplary member of Tom Brokaw's "Greatest Generation."

As Brokaw said of Joe's generation.....

They came of age in the great depression.....
Watched their parents lose their businesses
(in this case his father lost a job for a period of time)
And just as there was a glimmer of economic recovery,
War exploded across Europe and Asia....
This generation was summoned to the parade ground and told to train for war....
They answered the call to help save the world from the two most powerful and ruthless military machines ever.....
They faced great odds and a late start, but they did not protest....

And in Joe's case it was as an engineering student at the University of Cincinnati in May 1942, at the age of 22, that he volunteered for service in U.S. Army Air Force. He served in the Southwest Pacific Theatre during WWII, primarily in Australia, New Guinea, and the Admiralty Islands. 2nd Lt. Meierdirks flew 42 long range bombing missions as a navigator on a B-24. He received the Asiatic-Pacific Service Medal, the Air Medal, the Oak Leaf Cluster, the Battle Honor, as well as a Purple Heart.

In one case he was required to parachute to safety. No wonder that his sister said to me earlier in the week, "He was never the same after he came back from the war." But life must go on.....

In 1946 he graduated from Carnegie Tech in Pittsburgh with a degree in

metallurgy. After graduation, he worked as an engineer for General Electric, Crucible Steel Co., the Cannon-Muskegon Corp. and Austenal Laboratories.

On August 1, 1960, in Marcy, N.Y., he entered the Society of Mary at the age of 40 along with approximately 60 18-year-old kids (myself among them) and managed to keep up with them and make it through a year of novitiate. (I'm sure that it was no small task. I can now appreciate it a lot more...at times it must have seemed like a mid-life crisis for him.)

He persevered and professed first vows August 22, 1961, in Marcy and eventually perpetual vows on August 13, 1967, at Mount St. John. He obtained a master's degree in math education in 1970 from the University of Maine. Brother Joe taught at Purcell High School in Cincinnati, Covington Catholic High School in Covington, Ky., Moeller High School in Cincinnati and St. Joseph High School in Cleveland. He also spent several years on the staff of the Research Institute at the University of Dayton.

From 1984 to 1996 he entered into a third career as a pastoral minister at St. Vincent Parish, St. Peter Parish and Holy Family Parish in the Cincinnati area as well as St. Bartholomew Parish in Miramar, Fla. In 1996 he joined the Marianist retirement community at St. Leonard's in Dayton and later moved with the Marianist community to Mercy-Siena.

We thank the staff at Mercy-Siena Woods for their extraordinary compassion and care for Joe. We are blessed to be part of such a community. We thank Judy Moehl, our medical coordinator, and Kim Evans, her associate, for their care and support. We thank the Marianist community at Mercy-Siena, including Bro. Joe Mariscalco, for their support of Joe in his latter years. We thank Fr. Jim Fitz for coming from St. Louis to represent our Brothers throughout the Province of the United States.

May our Brother Rest in Peace.....

After our service we will proceed immediately to the Queen of Heaven Cemetery at the other end of the property for the interment. Everyone is invited to join us at the cemetery and return for a lunch/reception after the burial at the Marianist Family Center directly across the yard from this chapel.