

GREETINGS FROM CUPERTINO – SEPTEMBER 2007

After Honolulu, Dayton and Saint Louis, I returned to Cupertino on August 23 and quickly learned about some of the events that I had missed during my three weeks on the road. Many of our neighbors had come to the Open House in addition to family and friends – so we now have some new friends! Brother Elmer Dunsky had been hospitalized but returned promptly with a pacemaker and new life. A motorized cart helped others get around more easily. Many of the community and staff had attended the funeral of Sister John Marie Samaha, SHF (Brother John's sister). There was a grand celebration of the Feast of the Assumption and later a community celebration of the sacrament of the sick.

Brother Frank (Skip) Matthews was in town for more medical checkups. Brother Dave Betz from nearby Santa Cruz was a frequent visitor also. More and more final touches had been added to the buildings and property. We are now a gated community and there is a closed circuit camera in chapel for those who cannot come to chapel. Every Wednesday we now have aquatic exercises. Brother Tom Deasy, Brother Gene Frank and Father Larry Mann are the regulars, but Brother Bob Wade also makes a splash from time to time. The most popular activity continues to be the Friday afternoon ice cream social.

I was home for Hawaiian Day on August 25. This event was made possible because a friend of Grace Pancipanci, Father Tito Bonoan is Director of Campus Ministry at Moreau High School in Hayward. He brought a talented group of students who took us on a virtual tour of Hawaii, Samoa and Tahiti while Jesse and his crew prepared lunch by the swimming pool. On August 27 we honored our oldest Brother Charles Ehrenfeld on the 92nd anniversary of his birthday. Two days later, we celebrated with our youngest, Brother John Schlund, who entered this world 36 years after Brother Charles. In between these two, on August 28, was Genevieve Ibana's birthday. My friend Mr. Richard C. Brown, author of *When Ministry is Messy* was in town to give a talk at a diocesan catechetical meeting and stayed with us overnight on August 29. Thanks to Brother John Samaha, who continues to publish indefatigably, we remembered Father Emile Neubert, SM on the 40th anniversary of his death on August 29.

Whenever possible I walked before the heat of the day and was rewarded one day by coming face to face with the largest rattlesnake I have ever seen – and who refused to yield its place on the trail. Another day as I came to the parking lot at the end of a long walk I was surprised to see a bobcat strolling casually across as though it had all the time in the world. But knowing how fast they can scamper, I waited until it was out of sight. There was also a group of wild turkeys in one of the fields, but they are not a danger. We have lots of quail, too – although the sign “Quail Crossing” has disappeared. On September 1 Brother Leo Slay arrived to follow up the overview of the kitchen. In my next letter I will report on other September events beginning with our Labor Day celebration.

In this letter I want to add a few notes about my August travel which was part of my service to the community and to the Province. My unexpected visit to Honolulu was my first assignment as a member of the new Provincial Council. A member of the Provincial Council attends every funeral of one of the deceased members of the Province if possible and I was asked to represent the Province at Brother Clarence Chew’s funeral. In 1943 I met Brother Clarence in the novitiate and we became lifelong friends. Prior to the Mass there was an inspiring sharing of remembrances. These live reports complemented the remarkable display of photos of Brother Clarence at various stages of his life.

The next day he was laid to rest along with the other Marianist Ancestors of Courage who had served the Church in Hawaii since 1883. Father Dave Schuyler was in town to assist the diocesan office in special projects so the two of us kept in touch with the Marianists in Cupertino. While I was in Hawaii I was a guest of the Marianist Hall community where I always feel very much at home. The community chapel is one of my favorites as I look out across the way to Diamond Head crater and enjoy sunrises and sunsets coinciding with our morning and evening prayer.

The community now numbers ten, only two of whom were members of the former Province of the Pacific. Marianist Hall is filled with paintings by the late Brother James Roberts and his mark on the gardens around the building is also impressive. Over the years I have kept in contact with many former students. Many years ago I had blessed Pat Chu’s marriage with Michael Ho so when Pat learned that I was in town, she invited me to

preside at her mother's funeral, a wonderful lady who would have been 91 on August 4.

Father Jose Maria Salaverri had sent me a copy of his biography of the four Marianists (Miguel, Joaquin, Sabino and Florencio) who will be beatified in October, so on this trip I eagerly began reading this history, which included an introduction by Father Enrique Torres in which he shared his experience of promoting this Cause at the Vatican over so many years. The four Marianist Martyrs of Madrid and the three Marianist Martyrs of Ciudad Real (Blessed Carlos, Fidel and Jesus) gave their lives for the faith during the violent persecution of the Church in Spain eighty years ago.

On August 6, feast of the Transfiguration, I flew to Dayton where I was a guest of the Meyer Hall community at Mount Saint John. Despite the six hour jump in time I was able to join the community for the peaceful afternoon mass and lively dinner which featured home grown corn and tomatoes. It took me a while, however, to adjust to the time change and the heat. It was so hot that the public schools had closed down and shelters were provided for the elderly to help them cope with the suffocating weather. But the next day, before the heat of the day kicked in, I set out on my familiar walk immediately after morning prayer. Then I went to Miami Valley hospital to check on Father Bob Backherms who was in ICU. From there I went to Mercy Siena where we have almost as many men as we have in Cupertino. I had some great visits there and then drove over to Saint Leonard's where my cousin Gen Sakotnik is now living. She was remarkably alert and amazingly energetic – at 96! I then returned to Meyer Hall for the afternoon mass, dinner and a quiet night.

On August 11 I assisted at the jubilee mass and dinner honoring a great group of men including two with whom I was living at Meyer Hall, Brother Joseph Barrish and Brother Joseph Mariscalco, both celebrating sixty years of Marianist life and service. We also celebrated the feasts of Blessed Jakob Gapp and Saint Maximilian Kolbe. The big feast, of course, was that of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, the oldest of the Marian feasts. In the USA it has been the traditional day for the first professions of vows in the Society of Mary.

This year 22 of our fellow Brothers celebrated jubilees on the 15th. At Mercy Siena, the highlight was Brother Frank Deibel's 99th birthday. All in all it was a great visit. I saw many people in a short time. As I looked back on

the visit, I noted that the only thing missing was a Miami Valley thunderstorm! But early Thursday morning, as I was preparing to go to the airport, we had thunder and lightning – and for a brief moment, no electricity! Thanks to Brother Joe Barrish who took me to the Dayton airport very early in the morning of August 16 and Brother Ken Straubinger who met me in Saint Louis and brought me to the Maryland Avenue residence, I was able to participate in morning prayer there and then begin a busy day of preparing for the meeting of the Provincial Council.

A packet of papers awaited me and I had many official e-mails to process. But all went smoothly. It was hot and humid outside, but the house was quite pleasant and quiet. Later that morning I made my way over to the Provincial Offices and visited with many. Brother Tom Payne also helped me use my laptop more effectively. To and from the provincial office I passed the headquarters of Optimist International and thought that was an encouraging sign. In the afternoon I visited with Mrs. Nancy Davies. When her daughter Linda came home from work at a retirement home she drove us back through the congested traffic (one freeway had been closed for bridge construction). Back at Maryland Avenue I joined the community for a Friday evening gathering and a welcome home to the Provincial who had been on the road all week.

On Saturday morning I encountered a procession of people carrying a banner of Our Lady of Guadalupe and protected by two police cruisers as they walked slowly and reflectively praying the rosary...and then as I turned the corner I discovered a big building identified as a Planned Parenthood Center and I saw more protesters. The meeting of the Provincial Council moved along smoothly with the three from the previous council giving the six new members of the council background information on various issues. We began with a lively dinner together and then worked our way through a challenging agenda. At our first meeting we reported on recent events.

I mentioned the signs of hope I experienced during the retreats with the Marianists in Eastern Africa, the Conference on Marianist Boards in Dallas and the recent Province Assembly in Tucson. I acknowledged my particular concern for the mission of senior Marianists and the ongoing promotion of social justice. At Maryland Avenue, the Director, Father Tim Kenney, had set up a special celebration on August 22, feast of the

Queenship of Mary, because that day was the anniversary of first or final profession for several members of the community. After the meeting of the Provincial Council I met with Mr. Myles McCabe, who heads the Province office of Peace and Justice, and Brother Joe Markel who is responsible for this work in the province. The next day I packed up and Myles drove me to the airport after morning prayer as I began my return to Cupertino.

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