

Bro. Fred Halwe
50 years professed



I was born in north St. Louis, Nativity Parish, four years after my sister. As a child, I decided to become a city bus driver when I grew up and assiduously practiced steering at a circular piano stool. My sister thought I might be mentally challenged! However, I also played priest, requiring my non-Catholic grandmother to serve “Mass” with the help of my instructions. This came to an end when I was seven, and my family

moved to San Antonio, putt-putting southwest for three days down Highway 66. I looked forward to riding the movie-like range on my own horse—only to find that urban Texas and St. Ann’s Grade School had no place to tie up a quadruped! I soon changed my career goals in the direction of major league baseball—until a \$75, full-tuition scholarship to Central Catholic High School enabled the Brothers to get their hooks into me!

There I met a group of men—old and young, teachers both brilliant and not-so-much—working at a shared mission that subordinated their individuality in the symbol of a common habit. They taught, they cooked, they coached, they prayed, and they laughed easily. I wondered haltingly if I might give their lifestyle a shot. The equally skinny kid who stood next to me in ROTC, it turned out, had the same idea. His name was Harry Cornell.

So in June 1958, we boarded the Union Pacific Eagle heading north for some hick town called Galesville, Wis. My mother had packed me a winter parka, though I wasn’t sure I’d last that long. Luckily we met an all-star Marianist staff consisting of Fr. Charles Neumann, Fr. John Dockter, Bro. Joe Barrett, and Bro. Kenny Jung, who patiently steered us towards first profession. From there, it was a shortened year trading illnesses in the common dorm of Maryhurst, then two years at St. Mary’s Charles Francis Hall— and abruptly we found ourselves to be 22-year-old high school teachers (English, in my case)!

I've been doing that, uninterrupted, for 47 years. Along the way, I enjoyed four wonderful years teaching postulants, 13 years as an assistant principal, a number of summers running woodcraft at TECABOCA, and finally my current 10-year stint as a "college professor" of sorts, back here at St. Mary's. I even fulfilled my childhood dream of driving a bus—though just yellow, public-school hand-me-downs!

God takes care of children and old fools, and I've been both, but thanks to my growing family of former students, my natural family of loving parents, sister and brother-in-law, their kids and kids' kids, and my Marianist family of heroes, models, and friends, I've been blessed with a life I'd choose all over again—with even more confidence and integrity—if 1958 rolled around again. It seems like yesterday.