

August 1, 2007

Death Notice No. 22 (To all Unit Administrations):



The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **CLARENCE CHEW**, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on July 23, 2007, in Honolulu, Hawai'i, in the 84th year of his age and the 64th year of his religious profession.

Bro. Clarence was born in Honolulu on October 27, 1924, one of nine children of Yuen and Shee (Young) Chew. His father was from Canton, China, and came to Hawai'i after winning prize money in a lottery. He opened a successful grocery store in Honolulu and returned to Canton to "claim" Clarence's mother in marriage. The Chews settled in the Palama section of Honolulu and their family grew to include seven girls and two boys. Clarence was the youngest child. When he was six months old, his mother took him to Canton, where he was completely immersed in Chinese culture for the first six years of his life.

In 1931, Clarence returned to Hawai'i speaking little English and ready to begin first grade at Kaiulani School. When he was in third grade, Clarence transferred to Cathedral School in Honolulu. His family was Buddhist, but they wanted the best education for their young son. At Cathedral School Clarence met Bro. Leo Mulry, a teacher and scoutmaster he greatly admired. By seventh grade, Clarence attended Mass regularly and joined a class to convert to Catholicism. His family, however, opposed his request to be baptized.

In an attempt to escape the religious indoctrination of the Marianist brothers, Clarence's parents enrolled him at Central Intermediate School for ninth grade. Unwavering in his faith, Clarence continued his struggle to become a Catholic. In 1939, his parents finally relented. He was baptized on December 23 and two days later made his first communion at Christmas midnight Mass.

In 1940, Bro. Clarence enrolled at Saint Louis School in Honolulu and was impressed by the family spirit and quality teaching of the Marianist brothers. High school was eventful for Clarence. As a sophomore, he witnessed the attack on Pearl Harbor. In 1943, as a junior, he prayed daily for a religious vocation. His prayers were answered with the arrival of his nephew, Cary Chew, ensuring the continuation of the Chew name and easing his family's objections to his religious calling.

That same year, Clarence was accepted into the novitiate at Beacon, New York. He left Hawai'i on a risky trip through enemy submarine-infested waters. Bro. Clarence professed first vows in 1944 in Beacon, New York, and final vows in 1949 in Honolulu. He was the first American of Chinese descent to join the Society of Mary.

In 1947, after receiving a bachelor's degree in education from the University of Dayton, Bro. Clarence began a teaching career that spanned over 40 years. His first assignment was teaching the freshmen class at St. Anthony Boys School in Wailuku, Maui. From 1948 to 1958, he served at Saint Louis School in Honolulu. He taught religion, English, algebra, business math, general science and typing. He also moderated sodality and intramural sports and managed the athletic department and gymnasium.

The next year, Bro. Clarence made a second novitiate at Marycliff in Glencoe, Missouri. In 1959, he was assigned to teach at Junipero Serra High School in Gardena, California, and then at Archbishop Riordan High School in San Francisco. In 1960, he returned to Saint Louis School and taught for three years.

In 1963, Bro. Clarence began a new ministry as a missionary in Mokpo, Korea, and helped build a Marianist middle school there. In 1964, he was asked to help at St. Joseph's College in Yokohama, Japan. His assignment coincided with the Tokyo Summer Olympics, and Bro. Clarence attended some of the events. Later that year, he returned to Mokpo and continued his missionary work until suffering a heart attack in 1967.

In 1968, Bro Clarence resumed his teaching career at St. Joseph's College and then at St. Anthony in Maui. From 1970 to 1973, he worked in the development office of Saint Louis School and assisted with construction projects at the school. He also took courses in carpentry and architectural design at Honolulu Community College.

For the last 20 years of his active career, Bro. Clarence worked in a variety of ministries. He served as a teacher at Holy Family School in Honolulu (1973-1975) and St. Joseph College (1986-1988). He also served in development at Archbishop Mitty High School in San Jose, California (1975-1977), and as principal of St. Anthony Grade School in Maui (1978-1983). From 1983 to 1986, he assisted in the business office of Junipero Serra High School and then served in the office and guidance department of Saint Louis School until 1994.

Bro. Clarence retired from active ministry in 1994 but continued to monitor the activities of Saint Louis School alumni. He frequently attended funerals and class reunions.

In 1987, Bro. Clarence travelled to China and was among 60,000 people admitted to the Imperial Palace in Japan to see Emperor Hirohito and the royal family. He also scaled Mount Fuji, the highest mountain in Japan.

Fr. Tim Kenney remembers Bro. Clarence as someone who loved learning about his roots and culture and who had many goals in life and adjusted them as a Marianist.

"Clarence made his life full and rich by taking a joyful attitude towards each day. I always enjoyed seeing a smile on his face," said Fr. Kenney. "He discovered joy in being with people and having fun. He exercised and took good care of himself spiritually and physically. He will be remembered by many family and friends."

Fr. John Bolin said Bro. Clarence's pride in being a Marianist was admirable and ever-present. "When he went to events, he often wore a badge that said 'Bro. Clarence Chew, SM, Marianist.'"

May he rest in peace.