

## **The Life of Brother Francis Aloysius Deibel, S.M.**

Francis Aloysius Deibel was born on August 13, 1908, the son of the late Joseph and Mary Herner Deibel.

To give us a little perspective: In August 1908, Theodore Roosevelt was president; a loaf of bread cost five cents, a gallon of gas was six cents; and the Dow Jones was at 86.15. For baseball fans, that was the last year the Chicago Cubs won the World Series, and in August 1908, Orville Wright of Dayton, Ohio, was preparing to demonstrate for the U.S. Army the potential that an aircraft had for military use.

Brother Frank was preceded in death by his half-brother, Urban Schmelzer, his brother Joseph Deibel and three sisters, Alma Simpson, Clara Randolph and Marie Woodruff, as well as one niece.

Brother Frank is survived by one niece, Patricia Wagner, and four nephews, Richard Deibel, John Simpson, John and Richard Randolph; 21 great nieces and nephews; 38 great-great nieces and nephews and six great-great-great nieces and nephews.

Welcome! Please stand up!

We learn about Frank's early vocation story from his 60<sup>th</sup> jubilee statement in 1976: In that statement Brother Frank says he was influenced by Brother Bernard Rechert's annual vocation talks at his grade school, St. John the Evangelist. (The Marianists had been in Columbus from 1872 to 1909 but were no longer in Columbus when Frank went to school.) Evidently his eighth grade teacher, a Franciscan Sister Lecocadia, also had quite an influence on this 13-year-old eighth grader.

"Since she preferred teaching boys rather than girls, she knew quite a bit about us, even the fact that Francis Deibel, who was thinking of becoming a Marianist, had a girlfriend, Mary. To keep the attraction from getting too strong, she cornered me one day and said, "Francis, that is not the way to become a Marianist." A little rough on the little tyke, I think, but Mary and I did part company." Chalk one up for sister, and isn't it interesting that the young girl's name was Mary!

Frank entered the postulate at Mount St. John, which was high school, on July 10, 1922. In Bro. Frank's 1995 retreat journal, we have a description of that first day: "I arrived for the postulate at Mount St. John about 3 o'clock on July 10, 1922 in time for molasses bread. In those days, July 10 was the feast of Our Lady of Good Counsel (the chapel at Mount St. John was dedicated to Our Lady Of Good Counsel), so there was Benediction that evening. That's when I thought I was in heaven. The chapel looked so beautiful with the sanctuary painted blue, with stars, angels, incense, music and hymns. I just felt like I was in heaven. Shucks! I haven't made it there! (But now we know he has!)"

Frank was also a good psychologist, I would say: This remembrance in his 1995 retreat journal of a day more than 70 years earlier was listed as number one under the heading of happy thoughts; number two was sailing on the lake when Elmer and Louie were along (that would be Brothers Elmer Lackner and Louie Rose).

Clearly he was listing memorable, positive experiences in his life that he could then recall as often as possible and give thanks for to lift his own spirits . . . and this experience on his first day as a Marianist was his number one positive experience which he could recall in 1995 and return to at any time to give thanks and lift his spirits and his faith.

In a sense, I think we can say that Brother Frank was a Marianist for more than 90 years – since he entered the postulate on July 10, 1922, and passed away over 90 years later on July 30, 2012.

Three years later, on August 14, 1925, Frank entered the novitiate (notice his high school was compressed into three years).

After the year of novitiate he professed first vows on August 15, 1926, at Mt. St. John in his beloved Our Lady of Good Counsel chapel.

He entered the scholasticate at Mt. St. John (college) the next day, August 16, 1926, and then graduated from the University of Dayton in 1929 (like high school, college was collapsed into three years for the brothers in formation – they were on the fast track). He professed final vows here at the Immaculate Conception Chapel on the University of Dayton campus on August 10, 1931. In 1929 he began his ministry as a Marianist – which would be primarily in education, beginning at Hamilton Catholic High School teaching Latin, religion, and general science. From 1930 to 1941 he taught at Cleveland's

Cathedral Latin High School; from 1941 to 1952 he was at Purcell High School in Cincinnati. In 1943 he received a degree in library science at Western Reserve in Cleveland (now Case Western Reserve).

He was at St. Joseph High School in Cleveland for one year before coming to the University of Dayton in 1954 to work at the old Albert Emmanuel Library (the admissions department is now there).

From that time, 1954, with the exception of one year in 1973 to 1974 when he was at St. Paul's College in Australia, Bro. Frank would be at the University of Dayton until 2002 (almost 50 years) in some capacity or other. He first served at Albert Emmanuel Library and later Roesch Library in several capacities, including as head of circulation and director of the student help.

Jack O'Gorman notes that he was a fine indexer, annotation writer, and bibliographer. He watched hundreds of movies and wrote summaries of them and indexed thousands of post cards of Catholic images. Bro. Frank also served for several years at the Marian Library on campus. He volunteered at both the Marianist Press and Marianist Mission when he retired.

We also should mention here that Brother Frank met his "wife" in 1990. All of us would refer to that meeting as learning to use a computer – especially email....but he routinely referred to his computer as his wife. He spent so much time with her and she definitely gave him a new lease on life at the age of 82 – like a second marriage, I suppose.

When I visited him at Good Samaritan Hospital a couple of weeks ago during his last illness. I hadn't seen him in over six months since I had been out of the country on my sabbatical. I asked him how he was doing and he momentarily surprised me when he said he was doing ok but he really missed his wife.

It was through his wife that he was able to be in contact with well over 100 people on a daily basis until his last days. Speaking of his "wife" I recall another time I was with Bro. Frank at Good Samaritan Hospital exactly three years ago, August 4, 2009, in the pre-op room before his stomach surgery, and less than 10 days before his 101<sup>st</sup> birthday. After being attended by two female nurses, they leave and another nurse comes in and checks him out and she leaves. He turns to me and says, "Those nurses, they are all good looking, aren't they?"

He was vital up to the end!

I think Bro. Frank would tell us that the secret to his longevity was: take a walk every day, love Jesus, Mary and Joseph, and live a good life. And he would certainly acknowledge that his longevity was a gift from the Almighty!

I would also add what Meredith Moss cited in her article on him last year in the Dayton paper: his total involvement and interest in those around him.....as she noted the walls and tabletops in his room were covered with treasures – including photos of friends and family, remembrances and holy cards of the deceased. He believed in the communion of saints and he faithfully visited the other residents at Mercy Siena on a regular basis, fellow Marianist religious and the other residents also.

I remember that he visited my mother when she was there in the nursing facility. Brother Frank also had a childlike quality, I believe, that attracted others to him.

He was always grateful. He had thanksgiving cards he would pass out to visitors and thanksgiving prayers were plentiful in his room.

Along those lines we thank the staff at Mercy Siena for their wonderful care of Brother Frank over the years. We thank all his loyal friends who visited him and supported him. Too numerous to mention names. We thank the Marianist support staff, including Judy Moehl and Kimberle Evans and Bro. Bob Wiethorn, the director of the Marianist Community at Mercy Siena.

Almost every time I would leave Bro. Frank, he would ask me for his blessing – when actually I felt like I should be asking him for his blessing.

So now as we take leave of our Brother Frank, I would ask all of you to join me in blessing him. If you are so inclined I invite you to raise your right hand and join me in this blessing:

*May almighty God bless you, Brother Frank, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. May you rest in peace.*

My name is Fr. Thomas Schroer. I was the director of the Marianist community at Mercy Siena until last December, so I lived with Bro. Frank for more than six years. I am honored and grateful to be able to share these reflections on his life. However, this may be a little longer than usual, but his life was a little longer than usual!