

May 21, 2007

Death Notice No. 14 (To all Unit Administrations):



The Province of the United States of America recommends to our fraternal prayers our dear brother, **JAMES ROBERTS**, who died in the service of the Blessed Virgin Mary on May 10, 2007, in Cupertino, California, in the 76th year of his age and the 52nd year of his religious profession.

Bro. Jim was born on June 15, 1931, in Hollywood, California, to Charles, a set designer for Warner Bros. Studios, and Lucille (Wilson) Roberts. He attended St. Bridgid's elementary school and Manual Arts High School in Los Angeles. After high school, Bro. Jim enlisted in the United States Pacific Fleet Air Force. While serving in the military, Bro. Jim discerned his call to religious life and a desire to teach. His former sixth grade teacher, Sr. Mary Raphael, who remained a close friend, suggested Bro. Jim contact the Society of Mary. He met the

Marianists while stationed in San Diego. In 1954, on the day after he was discharged from the Navy, he entered the Society of Mary as a novice in Santa Cruz, California.

Bro. Jim professed first vows in 1955 in Santa Cruz. He attended scholasticate at St. Mary's College in Moraga, California, and studied art. Bro. Jim professed perpetual vows in 1960. He received a bachelor's degree in fine arts from San Francisco State in 1961.

A prolific artist, Bro. Jim worked in ink, watercolor, pencil and paint, and in a range of styles, including abstract, pointillism, realism, portrait, landscape and still life. In addition, Bro. Jim created animation, sculpted and worked in serigraph. In later years he preferred painting oil on canvas. "I like to create something that is an illusion close up, where the subject takes form as you move farther away from the piece," said Bro. Jim.

Bro. Jim's 52 years of ministry centered around teaching and beautifying spaces. He began his career at Archbishop Riordan High School in San Francisco teaching art and designing costumes and set designs for plays (1957 to 1961 and 1973 to 1991). Bro. Gary Morris, who worked with Bro. Jim at Riordan, remembers his scenic designs and costumes as "stunningly beautiful works of art."

"He was a joy to work with because of his creative vision and inspiration to the students working with him on the sets," said Bro. Gary. "Jim's friendship enriched my life, and his artistic sensitivity influenced my roles as a theatre director, actor and designer."

In 1962, Bro. Jim established the art department at Chaminade University of Honolulu, starting with a basic drawing class. Many of his first students were Sisters of the Sacred Heart who lived nearby. Among Bro. Jim's most celebrated achievements was the design of the landmark Mystical Rose Oratory chapel on the Chaminade campus, erected in 1966. Adorned with abstract stained glass, the chapel features 13 columns representing Christ and his apostles. Bro. Jim oversaw the renovation of the chapel in 2000. He traveled to Italy to choose a new stone altar and lectern for the sanctuary.

In addition to bringing art to Chaminade, Bro. Jim and his friend, Chaminade English professor Albert Lum, were a creative force in many other ways on campus in the 1960s. The duo organized May celebrations to honor Mary complete with costumes, parades and music. They also created Shakespeare festivals, speech contests and drama events that brought in Hollywood stars such as Loretta Young, Natalie Wood and Julie Andrews.

Bro. Jim also shared his art ministry with students at Saint Louis School, a secondary school in Honolulu. He designed dual entrance signs for Chaminade University and Saint Louis School to welcome visitors.

After retiring from teaching at Archbishop Riordan in 1991, Bro. Jim maintained an art studio on the Chaminade University campus until 2005. He worked closely with noted Hawaiian artist Jean Charlot. In his later years, Bro. Jim continued to assist with designing theatre sets at Archbishop Riordan and in Hawaii. His most recent was a production of "Godspell" at Chaminade in 2005.

"He was a highly-gifted artist, who was both generous and gracious," said Chaminade President Sue Wesselkamper. "He donated a considerable amount of his time giving artistic suggestions and advice."

Bro. Jim once said his working aim was to create religious art that wouldn't detract from prayer but would give the mind a spark of imagination. According to Bro. Gary Morris, Bro. Jim viewed his artwork as a unique way of praying and expressing thanks for his artistic gifts. "Jim's religious works were some of his most admired and appreciated pieces," said Bro. Gary. "They were created from his spirit and his love for the Church and especially for Mary."

Bro. John Haster, Bro. Jim's community director in Cupertino, remembers him as a very kind and loving person. "The brothers enjoyed his creativity and his love for putting on parties and entertaining. He will be greatly missed," said Bro. John, noting that Bro. Jim had organized a community birthday celebration the evening of his death.

"We have many fond memories of his humanness and his sense of beauty," said friend, Fr. John Bolin. "He may have left us, but we have a legacy of paintings that will always keep him present."

May he rest in peace.