



BROTHER HARRY CORNELL

60 years of profession

I have lived in San Antonio since 1945 when my family moved there from Memphis, Tennessee. My parish church was San Jose Mission. My mother was very active in the altar society at San Jose, and she frequently invited the Franciscan priest and brothers who worked there to dine with us at Christmas, New Year's Day, Easter, Thanksgiving and other occasions throughout the year. All of my teachers from grades one to seven were nuns, so, at that time in my life, I never considered teaching as a possible vocation, but I did think of becoming a Franciscan brother. Although it was a time in San Antonio when racial tensions were high — there were separate water fountains for blacks and whites, and signs on the buses that blacks had to sit in the back of the bus — my mother always taught us that all people are equal and should be treated with the same respect.

When I began at Central Catholic in eighth grade, all of my teachers were men, and I joined the Sodality. We were required to participate in ROTC for three years, during which I learned a lot of leadership skills. For Christmas, each homeroom would adopt a family, go to their home and visit with them, and ask the parents or parent what their needs were for Christmas. That was the first time in my life that I found out there were people in San Antonio who lived in houses that had only dirt floors and no toilet or water available to them.

Throughout our entire time at Central, we always were told that each of us had a gift, and we were given that gift to help make the world a better place to live. It was then that I figured educating people was definitely the solution to improving their lives and giving them the courage to speak out for what is right. One particular young, shy boy would get on the bus each day and sit in the back with the blacks. When those seats were full, he would get up and offer his seat to the next black student who came to the back. If he was sitting in the middle of the bus, and there were no seats in the back, he would get up and give his seat to that person.

In the 1980s, the Marianists developed a description of what they called the Characteristics of a Marianist Education. I can honestly say that in my five years at school there, I never once heard of any of these characteristics. But with equal honesty, I can say that they are an accurate description of the education I experienced at C.C.H.S., and what every student experiences at every Marianist school.