



BROTHER PHILIP AARON

Celebrating 70 years of profession

The grace of a long life is a privilege given only to a few, and, in recent years, I have cherished this grace because life has given me the time to appreciate aspects of life that are not related to job and pursuit of career goals, and the time to contemplate the meaning of life. This is a true grace, to have the time to discover your real self. This discovery of self comes in the time the grace of aging gives one to pursue writing, reading, art and prayer at one's own pace, for which I am very thankful.

My Marianist life has provided a variety of settings that have put me in touch with a broad spectrum of educational experiences. I personally have had great classroom and experiential opportunities that enabled me to work and travel in culturally rich and diverse circumstances.

After about 30 years serving as teacher and administrator in several secondary school positions, I "died and went heaven" when I started work at University of Dayton, where the concerns, confinements and commotion of high school were replaced by a higher degree of personal freedom.

In 1979, the effervescence of the 1960s and 1970s had been replaced by broad dialogue about social and religious issues. This, along with the large number of Marianists in the Dayton area and the professionalism of the campus, provided many, many opportunities to explore new insights and creative solutions to important questions of the day.

During this time, I had the opportunity to serve as the Dayton-area coordinator for the Marianist Voluntary Services Communities and had exposure to and experience with a large number of dedicated young people who were eager to serve in situations of poverty and injustice. This work provided me with experiences that broadened my understanding of justice issues and introduced me to the important role of the Marianists in promoting social justice and serving in situations of deprivation.

As principal of St. Joseph High School in the mid-1960s, with 2,000 boys in my charge at a relatively young age, I had a unique, never-to-be-repeated experience of having to balance an array of strong forces centered, at the time, in the Church, civil society and educational circles. The Vatican Council, the Vietnam War, the civil rights struggle and

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consequent educational reforms all came together to produce a climate which, to say the least, were, as the Chinese proverb says, "interesting times."

This era produced situations distinctive of the times: the Vietnam War, with men becoming teachers to avoid the draft; reforms in religious life, including the loss of men in droves; students and faculty praying in tongues; race riots in urban areas; "Hair," the musical, and all that went with it; university students gunned down by National Guard troops ... All of these forces were influencing educational decisions, which made for interesting times.

A couple years of graduate studies afterwards allowed me to find meaning and educational insight from what had been six hectic years.

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