



## CrossRoads: Bulletin of the Passionist Alumni Association

July 2021



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**Did a friend forward this  
bulletin to you?**

**[Click here to register.](#)**

# Thinking of forwarding this?

Please forward this bulletin to a former classmate or friend who attended school in Passionist formation. The Passionist Alumni Association relies on you to build our membership. Every day we hear stories of renewed friendships and new friendships. Did a friend forward this bulletin to you because you once studied with the Passionists? If so, please **CLICK ON THIS LINK:** <https://passionistorderalumni.org/> to register with the Passionist Alumni Association to stay in touch. Thank you.

Louisville, Kentucky is the location of our 2021 Reunion.

## WANT PAST ISSUES?

To read past issues of CrossRoads, click this link: <https://passionist.org/crossroads-bulletin/>

# It's on! 2021 Alumni "All Classes" Reunion

## The Alumni All-Class Reunion is A GO! October 8-10, 2021

We shall unite in Louisville like once we did in Passionist formation in Louisville, Normandy, Warrenton, St. Paul, Detroit, Chicago, St. Gabriel's in Iowa, or St. Meinrad in Indiana.

This will be a celebration for the record books. Out of lockdown. Back in the world again...alive and, yes, REALLY ALIVE. Everybody is welcome. And so are people you know whom we have lost track of. If you can find THEM, make darn sure to call them up to get them onboard.

If you don't know already, the City of Louisville itself is one bold, entertaining, and surprising destination.

We have not run out of stories to tell or new friendships to make. Life is g-o-o-o-o-d among the hundreds of folks who studied, lived, and interacted with the Passionists at one time or another.

Let's get down to the facts...

**DATES:** October 8-10, 2021

**LOCATION:** Sacred Heart Community, 1924 Newburg Road, Louisville, KY 40205.

All activities will take place in Aloysius Hall below St. Agnes Church.

**LODGING:** The official hotel with special rates is the Wingate by Wyndham at 3200 Kemmons Dr., Louisville, KY 40218. Call them at 502-473-0000 to reserve. Group rate is \$75/night plus \$16.07% tax. Cut-off date to reserve is September 17. Driving distance from St. Agnes is about 7 mins./2.6 miles. Shuttling by alumni volunteers will be available.

**ALL-INCLUSIVE REUNION FEE:** \$100. Send the registration form and check by mail to:

Mike Moll  
864 Woodside Trails Dr.  
Ballwin, MO 63021

Call Mike at 636-751-0167 for answers. Look for a registration form in the regular post office mail or go to the following link to download and print the form: <https://passionist.org/alumni/2021reunion/>

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE:** Full fees must be received by Wednesday, **September 29.**

# Adventures Around Louisville, Kentucky

Louisville will startle and entertain you beyond the confines of Aloysius Hall.

The whiskey and bourbon culture is hard to ignore. Alumnus Jim Byrne has offered to organize and lead a custom Bourbon Trail for all takers. If you are smart, you will come to Louisville days early or stay days late to explore. In advance, consider contacting Jim at [jamesbyrneclu@gmail.com](mailto:jamesbyrneclu@gmail.com).

More importantly, Jim asks us all to check out the 2021 Louisville Visitor Guide. Here is the link: <https://www.gotolouisville.com/travel-tools/visitor-guide>. Most venues are only a 15-30 minute drive from the reunion location.

## NO-FAIL HIGHLIGHTS IN LOUISVILLE

- Kentucky Derby Museum at Churchill Downs at <https://www.derbymuseum.org/>
- Louisville Slugger Museum and Factory at <https://www.sluggermuseum.com>
- The Muhammad Ali Center at <https://alicenter.org/>
- Evan Williams Bourbon Experience at <https://evanwilliams.com/plan-your-trip.php>
- The Belle of Louisville Steamboat at <https://belleoflouisville.org>
- Bernheim Arboretum and Research (rejuvenating nature walks) <https://bernheim.org>
- Speed Art Museum at <https://www.speedmuseum.org>
- Big Four Bridge (soul-cleansing walk) at <https://ourwaterfront.org>
- \*The Thomas Merton Center at Bellarmine University (by appointment only, 502-272-8177/8099, Mon-Fri) at <https://www.thomasmertoncenter.org>

**\*Note on the Thomas Merton Center:** The Center is across the street from the Passionist Monastery. A Bellarmine University alumnus, he was Father Louis, a priest with the Trappists at Gethsemane Abbey in Kentucky. He is known the world over as a mystic, prose writer and, above all, a poet. Seven Storey Mountain is the title of his autobiography. He died at age 53 in 1968 in an accident.



# Adventures, *cont'd*

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# Passionist Alumni Lay Association

## Kicking Off the Passionist Alumni Lay Association

A Pilot Program, by Mark Brockman and Carl Middleton

### ***Background***

Some of you might be familiar with the 1979 tune “We are Family” an R & B gold record hit by the female group Sister Sledge. We have great news: Passionist Alumni are family. At the original inception of the Passionist Alumni Council Alumni, members proposed a committee to research and explore the feasibility of some form of a Lay Association. These past two years we have explored lay association websites of a number of religious congregations as well as interviewed persons that have been involved in other lay associations. At the most recent reunion in Detroit 2019, we heard many alumni express their interest in being part of the Passionist Family and also stating their desire to engage in Passionist ministries and other activities.

### ***Passionist Alumni Vocation***

As Passionist Alumni, we find an invitation to accept the call to witness to the memory of the Passion of Christ. “Our charism is a great gift. Our vocation to keep alive the memory of the Passion of Jesus does not only belong to our Congregation or to our communities; it is open to all those human beings that are moved by the action of the Holy Spirit. We accept the call to live in communion with so many men and women who witness to its relevance and vitality.” (Passionist General Chapter of 1994)

Paul Waddell, Passionist Alumni and professor of theology, in his inspiring presentation proclaims: “One is a Passionist because he or she feels a compelling affinity or deep resonance with the charism of the Passionist, so much that they “take it to heart.”

### ***Passionist Alumni Pilot***

After much research, consultation, discussion, and collaboration with alumni, vowed Passionists and members of the Passionist Provincial Visioning commission, we are ready to launch the Passionist Alumni Pilot.

The purpose of the pilot is to form faith-sharing communities that meet virtually each month to pray together, to share, to study the spiritual life and the Passionist Charism as well as an opportunity for socializing and participating in Passionist ministries.

### ***Who is invited?***

The Passionist Alumni Pilot is open to all and would begin with alumni., spouses/partners and family members of current Passionist Alumni. If what we have described inspires and excites you, then we invite and encourage you to participate and assist us in creating a Passionist Alumni Family Pilot Program that is inclusive and flexible and will eventually be developed for others throughout the Passionist Family.

### ***How do I learn more about the pilot?***

Mark and Carl will be leading an information program on Saturday afternoon, October 9th during our 2021 alumni reunion in Louisville. All alumni are invited to attend whether you just want more information or are considering joining the pilot.

Please let us know of your interest by emailing Mark or Carl below:

Mark Brockman  
[mark.brockman3@gmail.com](mailto:mark.brockman3@gmail.com)  
(512) 925-8008

Carl Middleton  
[carlmiddletonconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:carlmiddletonconsulting@gmail.com)  
(303) 579-1609

# News from the Passionist Alumni Council



Mike Owens

**2021 Alumni Reunion.** Yes, our October reunion is a “Go”! All the details are available throughout this issue of CrossRoads. However, I want to recognize and thank **Carl DeLage, Ray Alonzo, Jim Byrne, and Mike Moll** for all their work since last fall to plan another memorable reunion weekend.

***Watch for your registration brochure which should be arriving very soon in your mailbox!***

**Haiti Fundraiser Update.** The final tally of donations to support Fr. Hugo’s mission to feed the hungry in Haiti is an amazing \$20,010.64. This greatly exceeds our initial goal of \$6,000, which feeds 100 families for two full months. Thank you for your generosity, and thanks, again, to **Jack Dermody and Mike Kruger** for organizing the fundraiser and leading us on our ride across Haiti! Please keep Frs. Hugo and Rick in your prayers during this time of unrest and political crisis in Haiti.

**Alumni Membership.** **Paul Schulte** and **Don Noltemeyer** are meeting this month to review our membership participation and plan their recruitment activity. A key goal is to reach 200 registered members this year. When talking with your classmates and friends, please encourage them to register with the alumni association if they have not already done so.

**Alumni Gatherings.** You don’t have to wait for our All-Classes reunions to connect with your fellow alumni. Everyone is invited to participate in one or both Zoom get-togethers:

- Coffee with Bro. John Monzyk, CP
- Passionist Alumni Family of Illinois, Indiana and Wisconsin

**Phil Jackson** coordinates both sessions, so email him at [pjackson@passionistmonastery.org](mailto:pjackson@passionistmonastery.org) for the Zoom invitation and details.

The Louisville area alumni are once again meeting on Monday mornings for breakfast. Whether you live in the area or are just passing through, you are welcome to join the group at 9:15 a.m. at Frisch’s Restaurant on Shelbyville Road.

**Lay Association.** **Mark Brockman** and **Carl Middleton** have completed their research and consultations and are ready to introduce their pilot program for the Lay Association. Be sure to read their article in this issue.

**Contacting me.** As always, if you have any questions, suggestions or comments, please email me at: [mtowens2368@icloud.com](mailto:mtowens2368@icloud.com).

## Alumni Council Members

Ray Alonzo: *Chair, Spiritual Formation*

Mark Brockman: *Co-Chair, Lay Association; Technology*

Carl DeLage: *Chair, Family Events*

Jack Dermody: *Chair, Communications: Website and Newsletter*

Phil Jackson: *Spiritual Formation*

Carl Middleton: *Co-Chair, Lay Association*

Don Noltemeyer: *Co-Chair, Alumni Profile and Recruitment*

Mike Owens: *Coordinator*

Richard Padilla: *Co-Chair, Administration/Province Liaison*

Paul Schulte: *Co-Chair, Alumni Profile and Recruitment*

John Schork, CP: *Province Liaison*

Claire Smith: *Communications*

# SignPosts

In SignPosts we welcome our newest members, report the passing of all those who at some time participated in Passionist formation, and announce life changes of others.

The title of this regular feature, “SignPosts,” is a nod to the original monthly feature “Sign Post” contained in *Sign Magazine*, the substantial Passionist Catholic magazine that many of us grew up with. It was published from 1921 to 1982. Check out a little history here:

<https://passionistarchives.org/category/publications/sign-magazine/>

## Welcome New Members!

Fr. Fred Licciardi (Warrenton Class of ‘68)

Phil Robertson (Warrenton Class of ‘69)

John Hogan

## Those we mourn...

Fr. Alan Phillip, CP (3/4/21, Warrenton Class of ‘57) <https://passionist.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Phillip-CP-Alan.pdf>

Dennis Schneider (4/11/21, Warrenton Class of ‘64)  
<https://passionist.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Schneider-Dennis.pdf>

Gary Gaydos (4/17/21, Warrenton Class of ‘68) <https://passionist.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Gaydos-Gary-2.pdf>

Robert “Dale” Totten (6/15/21, Normandy Class of c. ‘39) <https://passionist.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Totten-Robert.pdf>

Casper Grathwohl (6/17/21, Warrenton College Class of ‘59) <https://brownfuneralhomeniles.com/tribute/details/3222/Honorable-Casper-Grathwohl/obituary.html>

Fr. Ronald “Richard” Corl, CP (7/3/21) <https://www.bossefh.com/obituary/rev-ronald-corl-cp>

**BREAKING NEWS:** Alumnus Steve George has taken great care to add “Necrology” to his “People” link inside his online masterwork Moments in Time. There, many Passionist priests and brothers you may have known for over a hundred years are listed with their basic data plus a link to their biographies: <http://cp.aznetwork.com/people/necrology/index.html>

## Those with big life changes...

Fr. Nicholas Divine, C.P. (newly ordained 3/7/21)

Fr. Frank Keenan, C.P. (celebrating 60 years as a Passionist priest on 5/27/21)

Philip Donlan, C.P. (student professed final vows 7/11/21)

Fr. Blaise Czaja, C.P. to move to the community in Houston, Texas, from the community in Citrus Heights, California.

Terry McDevitt (Warrenton ‘67) and his wife Mary Rita to move to old hometown of Louisville from Thomaston, Maine.



# Steve George's Alumni Website

**Steve George's alumni website has been revitalized and upgraded.**

Thanks to extra lonely hours offered by the pandemic, Steve George (MGC Class of 1964) reintroduces us to his original website that he calls *InFormation*, *Moments in Time*, now re-edited and fun to click around like never before.

Here is the link: <http://cp.aznetwork.com>. (And, yes, you can still use the old link if needed: <http://aznetwork.com/cp>.)



*Moments in Time* is no mere gold mine. Indeed, it's a mine loaded with platinum. Enjoy our caricatures in panels in the *Mural in the Barn*, profiles of dozens of us, photos and descriptions of the places we studied, extensive and labeled collections of photos, hours of painstakingly created follow-along, note-for-note videos--and audios--of Gregorian chant that 'the older guys' got to learn and sing themselves, links to alumni events past and present, as well as a scroll bar that offers up historic surprises and emotionally charged commentary.

Here are some quotes from the homepage of *Moments in Time*:

"This site began in 2004 as a means of capturing pictures, memories, and events of an era, 1965-1970, in the lives of many men who attended Mother of Good Counsel Preparatory Seminary (Normandy and Warrenton), the Passionist Novitiates in St. Paul, Kansas, and Detroit, Michigan, Sacred Heart Retreat in Louisville, Kentucky, St. Meinrad's in Indiana, and Catholic Theological Union in Chicago.

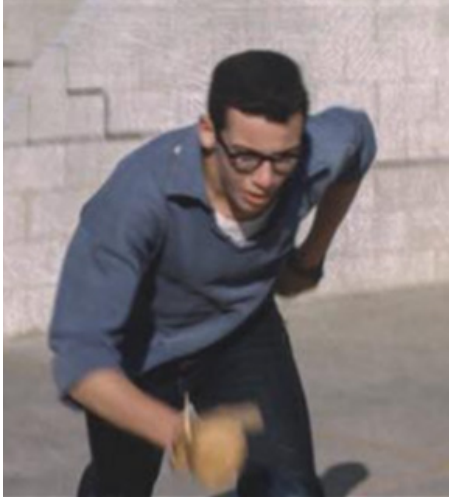
"And now it's June of 2021. Many reunions have taken place since 2004. Among the Passionist Alumni of the 1960s, there has been a renewal of interest in our shared past. The original website had gotten "long in the tooth" so I decided to upgrade some of it to reflect the almost two decades that have passed. Perhaps it takes this long to recognize the superior education we received, the strong bonds of mentorship (harsh at times), and the long-lasting friendships that developed.

"Be stimulated. Be thoughtful. Be amazed. If you wish to contribute your stories, please do. Your memories enrich all of us who lived this time of formation and growth. There are many ways to make your contribution. You will find them as you peruse these pages. Don't hesitate to add your own Moment in Time."

Come on. Check it out. You'll like it. Here again is the link: <http://cp.aznetwork.com>.



# Forest Fire!



By: Jerry Crimmins

In May 1961, sixty years ago, seven high school juniors from Mother of Good Seminary set off for “the cliffs” on a Thursday afternoon or Sunday afternoon hike. We were all 16.

A group of seven 16-year-old boys was dangerous enough. Plus in our seminary where most boys, despite minor and recurring mischief, were reasonably well behaved, this junior class was notorious for matters beyond the scope of this story.

## Forest Fire Background

*Many of us in the seminary often, over the years, hiked for long distances in the woods to enjoy the forest and the creeks and the great variety and intensity of hills, and sometimes we went to see the clay pits, which were then just naked, pulverized clay, pebbles and rocks — altogether the consistency of very heavy sand — and the pits were deep and steep with deep water in the bottom, so that you might creep down the sides a bit to see how far you could get, but soon, the sides would not support you, and you would start to slide involuntarily and slide and slide down, and it was like an ant lion pit, with the ant lion waiting for you at the bottom, and only with much effort could you struggle, struggle and scramble back to the rim of the clay pit and climb out, winded, and you would respect the clay pit from there on.*

*Sometimes we seminary hikers, whoever was interested, would go to see the old, fallen down whiskey still, the tall mash tower fallen over years earlier and never righted. Sometimes we would go to see the waterfall that was harder to find. If we found it, on a hot day we’d stand under it.*

*To reach these places, we followed the main creek and tributaries. Sometimes we went straight overland, up and down steep hills. To follow the creek, you had to walk in the water a lot because there was no consistent trail on the banks.*

*On rare, rare occasions when we went away from the creek and over hills for the hell of it we would get to see very deep in the woods the truly abandoned farm, much more lost than the one we wrecked in sophomore year. This other farmhouse and attached barn was ghostly and had been vacant so long the jungle had grown right up to and into the walls. To discover the place, you had to be lost in the woods and literally bump nose-first into the abandoned farmhouse. The woods were so thick and dark there, almost no sunlight, that you thought the farmhouse wall was another shadow until, bonk, you hit that wall with your face. Not a centimeter stood between the trees and this farmhouse. The woods had reclaimed the entire place. It was much ghostlier than the other farmhouse. The attached barn, equally reclaimed by the jungle, contained one or more horse collars and odd tools or parts of tools for primitive farming uses.*

*Then when we had sufficiently annoyed or entertained the spirits of this farmhouse, we would, lost as we were, wander and stumble on until we somehow regained the creek. Then we kept south, downstream, and if very lucky, happened on the spring, a true spring that sprung out from the dirt of the creek from the west or right bank of the creek, perhaps 6 feet above the creek, a spring of fresh water that just poured out like a bathtub faucet, twice the width, and in an arc perhaps 6 to 8 inches from the earth. I always drank directly from it as it was water from the earth, an endless spring.*

*But I digress.*

# Forest Fire *cont'd*

"The Cliffs" were about as far out as we went on our hikes in the woods. To reach them required a five-mile trek through rough country, and five miles back, enough for an afternoon for high school kids.

A half mile or less before the creek reached the cliffs, the creek, which had been going mostly south, curved right and flowed west for a good distance.

Beyond this turn, the right bank of the creek became the north bank and the left bank became the south bank. The cliffs were on the north bank.

## **North and south are important in what follows.**

The cliffs were only perhaps 70 feet high, or even 60, but they offered a nice view from the top, and they were the most formidable terrain we saw or heard of within walking distance of Warrenton. The cliffs were too difficult for us to climb up their face, and I never heard of anybody who achieved this or even got very far.

But to the right side of the vertical cliffs, as you faced them straight on, was a highly steep hill that ran to the top of the cliffs, perhaps a 45 to 50 percent incline. Extending almost to the bottom of this incline was a giant vine, four inches in diameter that hung down from above. By pulling oneself hand over hand up the vine, one could get halfway to the top. The other halfway depended on next pulling oneself from one tree or sapling and one strong bush to another, hand over hand again, while climbing with your feet, until you got to the top. Because we were strong boys and 16 years old, each of us could do this, in a climb for each boy of no more than 5 or 10 minutes. I doubt we could do it today, and the vine is gone, or was the last time I was there.

At the top, the cliffs had a two-step edge. The first precipice, which faced south, when you got to it had another edge just below it, also facing south, about 3 feet below. So you had to lower yourself to the second edge to actually stand at the rim of the cliff.

A tree had somehow planted itself about halfway up the cliff, and when we looked out, the top of that tree was just below the view. This view directly over the tree top added to the feeling that we were up high and looked far out. The view itself was southward, over the creek and over the woods in the distance. The view was nice but not spectacular, a view of more of the world way over there.

Back of the dual cliff edge in 1961 was a grassy spot the size of a home dining room or dining room and a half. The grass in May 1961 was the previous year's grass, dried and flaxen, 10 inches tall. It waved easily in the wind. A little back from that flat surface of long grass, farther away from the cliff edge, a hill began that ran upwards to the north. The hill face rose maybe a hundred yards or perhaps even 200 yards to the top of that hill. Beyond that hill was a large grove of pine trees, Christmas trees, an extensive spread of these.

The surface of the hill between the grass near the cliff edge to the top of the hill was what I recognize now as an old growth forest, or a forest nearing the old growth stage. By contrast, the forest along the creek far below was virgin forest, dense with many, many trees both saplings and some medium size trees, all close together, but few if any really wide trees.

The forest at the top of the cliffs was older with fewer trees, and the trees were larger size. There were few if any saplings, very few bushes. Thus that old growth forest at the top of the cliffs had wide spaces between the old trees.

A deep blanket of dried leaves filled the entire surface of that hill under the old trees and filled every space between them. The blanket of dead leaves was 6 inches deep.

# Forest Fire *cont'd*

Paul O'Neil got the idea to make a small campfire on the most convenient spot, the flat spot between the cliff edge and the rise of the hill back of the cliffs. Paul had occasionally made small campfires on other hikes to toast hot dog chunks or marshmallows.

Paul built a fairly elaborate, small fireplace out of rocks. It seemed safely away from grass or dry leaves, and the fire in this fireplace was small.



*Larry Kazmerski, Bill Toner, and Ed Schum definitely extracurricular.*

We sat around for a while on top of the cliff, Ed Schum, O'Neil, Larry Kazmerski, Rich Rose, Bill Toner, Don Gladbach, and I, and we ate our snacks, probably just cookies, oranges and apples. We had nothing to cook. Then Gladbach decided to try to climb up the cliff face from the bottom, something I believe no one in the seminary had ever achieved. I went down to watch him, and I left behind my sweatshirt on the top of the cliff. Gladbach at the base of the cliffs slowly, cautiously tried to climb, and he got up perhaps 15 feet.

## **THE FIRE**

All of a sudden from far above, someone shouted. Perhaps they screamed. This was an effort to reach us, and I could hear the urgency in the voice, but I don't believe I understood the message. That person shouted again. I believe Don told me, "They said there's a forest fire up there."

Apparently, a spark had flown out of the campfire at the top of the cliffs in heavy wind when no one was watching. The guys up there noticed a clump of leaves burning ten or fifteen feet away. Then, as they rushed to the first clump, they spotted a second clump burning further up the hill. After that, it looked like there might be no way to stop the fire.

Down below, Gladbach and I couldn't see any fire or smoke. The wind was from the south and blew the flames directly away from the cliff edge toward the hill behind the cliffs. Don scrambled down the cliff face, and we got ready to climb the steep hill to the right of the cliff face to answer the call from above.

New surprise. Two guys came at a run down this steep hill, which one could just barely climb down slowly. Ed Schum and Paul O'Neil, both fine athletes, somehow managed to run down the steep hill right by us. They repeated the forest fire shout and said they were going for help.

# Forest Fire *cont'd*

I understood right away that they were both from California where forest fires were an extraordinary danger, and that California knowledge drove them.

Neither Paul nor Ed was sure he knew the way back. They decided to split up to make sure one of them got back as quickly as possible. Off they went fast.

When Don Gladbach and I got to the top of the cliff, we saw that the grass had burned and the fire had started to climb up the hill racing through the blanket of leaves like a fuse to dynamite. I also saw a sweatshirt half burned, soon to be all gone, and realized it was mine. I guessed somebody had used it to try to beat out the flames, but the fire ate my sweatshirt.

The line of flames at this point climbed up the hill at the pace of a fast walk. Up the hill was north. The flames also spread west horizontally across the face of the hill.

Don and I ran to join our companions up the hill ahead of the flames. They had dug a fire break with their hands by pulling the leaves away ahead of the flames to a depth of about six inches, to expose the wet earth beneath. This sort of worked and did stop the flames where the firebreak was created. But the firebreak was not long enough east-to-west to stop the frontal advance of the blaze. So the fire went around the fire break to the west, to our right as we faced downhill, and then came back toward us and continued rapidly up the hill both toward us and beyond us to our right. Don and I joined in and we again built these fire breaks several times with our hands. We worked fast and hard. But each time, the fire ran around our fire break to our right and then came back at us and kept going up the hill.

The wind was brisk from the south, and some burning leaves also jumped right over our fire breaks to push the fire up the hill.

We worked extraordinarily well together, Kazmerski, Rose, Gladbach and I — Bill Toner was missing — and we shouted to each other about what to do. It was a lot of boy-shouting. Noisy. After several attempts, and once again, with no obvious leader, we realized what we had to do.



*CrossRoads* editor John “Jack” Dermody and Paul O’Neil in the study hall



*Richard Rose high up in the air.*



*Larry Kazmerski fast and in the air.*



## Forest Fire *cont'd*

We had to start our firebreak far ahead of the flames, 30 or 40 yards up the hill or more from the front of the fire, so that we could make a firebreak that stretched to the right or west far enough to corral the fast-moving flames before they got to us. We also seemed at that point to realize without saying it that the fire break needed to be 6 to 8 feet wide to keep the burning leaves from jumping over.

The old growth forest was key here. The forest fire was almost entirely in the six-inch-deep blanket of leaves. The trees were well spaced, big in diameter, and in the style of an old growth forest, had few, low hanging branches. The high canopy above blotted out the sun enough so that low hanging branches had no purpose. The fire burned and moved so fast through the blanket of leaves that it consumed each foot of leaves and moved on in well under a minute, insufficient time to ignite the bark of the healthy, big trees.

As we got near the top of the hill and we got ready to build our latest fire break -- hopefully to extend across the width of the hill -- I could see beyond the hill the large pine grove. The pine trees' branches extended to the ground. Pine trees burn like matches, and a floor of pine needles plus low hanging pine branches would burst into a powerful, massive forest fire in seconds.

By this time, we had tried to contain this fire perhaps for 10 to 15 minutes. Then we started our latest fire break, well ahead of the fire up the hill. We extended this latest fire break line perhaps a hundred yards east to west to cover the width of this hill, all this with bare hands. By that time, we had been at it from the start a half an hour or more — a fast half hour — and we saw that we were corralling the blaze at least so it couldn't get further to the north up the hill.

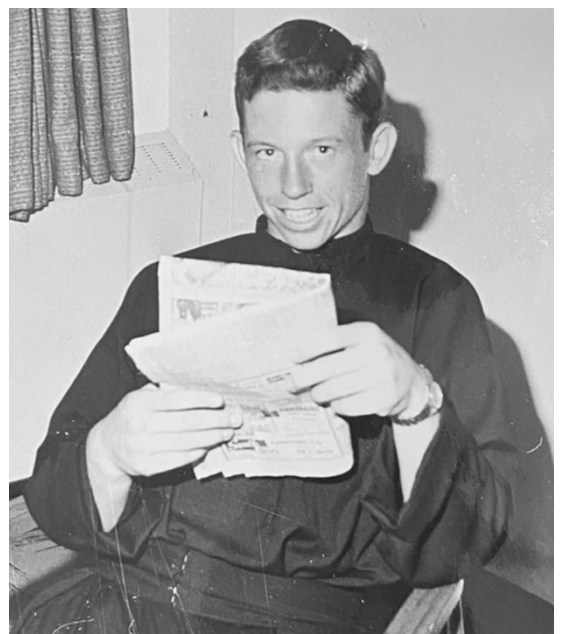
The smoke was massive all across the fire and the burnt zone. Perhaps the wind had changed or calmed down because the smoke seemed now to rise straight up into the air to create a giant smoke cloud.

Then we heard the plane. A single engine aircraft, high up, began to circle the fire. We guessed this was some kind of forestry service, or if not, a private pilot who would surely alert the authorities to the forest fire.

Meanwhile, O'Neil and Schum on their run neared the seminary grounds. Paul had run along the creek and then along the old wire fence that ended up near the football fields. This was the longest dead run Paul ever made. Ed took a more overland route — trailblazing for the most part. Ed got to the monastery, the back door of the seminary, first while Paul was still staggering past the swimming pool. Ed got the immediate attention of Brother Bob.

Back on top of the cliffs, the fire continued to burn in the leaves here, there, and everywhere, but it had no place to go to the north. After a while, as we stood and viewed what we had done, Bill Toner appeared. Toner had somehow deduced early on that the fire also had to be contained to the west. Fortunately, the fire had not moved toward the east. To the east of this burned hill was the extremely steep drop off where the long vine hung down. This drop off, perhaps due to wind and gravity, had no leaf blanket and was exposed earth. (To the south was the cliff edge and the creek, no place for the fire to go.)

Toner, we now learned, had gone to the west by himself and built a fire break the same as ours, although his took a much longer time as he had to do it by himself. He had one advantage, that the wind blew north, not west, so the fire did not advance so fast to the west. Toner was tired and smokey-faced as he explained to us what he had done. Perhaps we were smoky-faced, too. I don't recall. Also, on Toner, the strain was more significant as he had to work alone and had not known what happened elsewhere.



*Bill Toner with a Cheshire cat's smile.*

# Forest Fire *cont'd*

Meanwhile, O'Neil and Schum had stirred up action in the monastery.

Brother Bob and Brother Tim along with Ed and Paul took off at breakneck speed in the old jeep. Surprisingly, the brothers knew the way through the woods. They headed south on the dirt road that extended from the monastery and got to the cliffs amazingly quickly – especially considering how hard the run back had been. By the time they got to the cliffs, however, the fire had been largely contained by the small but valiant crew of seminarian-firefighters. All that was left was mop-up and tending to a few hotspots.

It seemed like an hour or an hour and a half after the fire began — pretty darn fast — that the two Passionist brothers arrived, muscular fellows with tools, along with Paul and Ed. They had driven all the way, perhaps partly down the creek bed, in the seminary's Second World War jeep. The two brothers began with axes and sledges to knock down a relatively few, big, dead trees that had caught on fire. It seemed those trees were so long dead they were hollow. After knocking them over, the brothers broke apart those hollow, dead trees to expose the fire and sparks within and beat them out with shovels. There weren't any tools for us, and we were tired, so we watched. Amazingly, no live trees that I saw caught fire. The ground was black all around. The brothers pronounced that seven or eight acres had burned.

During the mop-up, a couple of forest rangers or firefighting officials of some sort showed up. Paul showed one of them the little campfire we had built and described how the fire had sparked nearby. This official suggested that at least we had tried to be careful. The attitude of the fire officials seemed to be, "Well, fires happen." A small crew of firefighters, probably volunteers, took over the final mop-up of the scene.

When it was over, we cleaned ourselves up in the creek down below, then hiked back to the seminary and I believe arrived somewhat late. We did manage to get there in time to eat supper. I kept waiting for the other shoe to drop, an announcement of some discipline imposed on us for this latest act of the junior class. I was surprised that nothing was ever said to us about it. Or at least no one in the administration ever mentioned it to me, and I never heard that any negative words were expressed to any of the rest of us.

The only comment I recall was that very night at recreation in the high school rec room, one of the lower classmen approached me — I do not recall his name, but a fine fellow — and he said:

"Boy, you guys do all the cool stuff."

Epilogue: Ed Schum, our quarterback and pitcher who could throw a ball farther than anybody, died in July 1999, short of his 55th birthday. Don Gladbach, our farmer who could and did catch a greased pig, died in 2019.

Re The Cliffs themselves:

Forest fires release tremendous energy from the earth. When Paul and I returned to the seminary in 1995, on my own I hiked to the cliffs and climbed up. The extremely steep route to the top just to the right of the cliffs was still the same, except the great vine was gone. It was a hard climb, yet I was still able to do that then at age 51. On the top, the cliff precipice still had its two-step edge, first edge, then down 3 feet to the second edge, the actual rim of the cliff. The location on the creek was naturally the same. But the flora on top of the cliffs was drastically changed by the fire. From an old growth forest, it was now, due to the energy released from the earth by the fire, a new growth forest. The face of the hill that runs north from the cliff edge, where most of the fire took place, was in 1995 an almost impenetrable field of new growth, mostly hard brush and trees only 5 feet and 6 feet tall, each tree no thicker than a finger, and jammed together into a thicket so difficult even a man with a machete would find it tough to get through. I forced my way up the hill as best I could about 20 yards, but it would have taken an hour and a half to get to the summit of the hill (near where we stopped the fire) because the new growth thicket was nearly impenetrable.

# Forest Fire *cont'd*

The tree that had long ago planted itself halfway up the cliff and which topped out just below the cliff edge in 1961 had now grown above the cliff edge and thus partially obscured the view. As Thomas Wolfe said in his novel published in 1940, "You can't go home again."

Jerry C.

*Below: That same class of 1961 three years earlier and larger of course.  
Find Don Gladbach in the upper photo. Ed Schum didn't join the class until sophomore year.*

Left to Right, Sitting: Leonard LaBelle,  
Michael O'Brien, John Dermody, Robert  
De La Zerda, Lawrence Kazmerski.

Standing: Arthur Eckert, William Toner,  
Donald Gladbach, Lawrence Chapp.



## FRESHMEN



Left to Right, Front Row: Bernard Carroll, Michael  
Fountain, Gerald Crimmins, Lawrence Elder,  
Thomas Bozzo.

Back Row: Gerald Will, Richard Rose, Steven Wal-  
bert, Robert Besse.

Left to Right, Standing: Robert Marra,  
William Naumann, John Shobe, John  
Glewark, Paul O'Neil, Jan Sattler,  
William Beck.

Sitting: John Miller, David Koch.



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