



## CrossRoads: Bulletin of the Passionist Alumni Association

July 2023

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

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

# October 2023 Virtual Alumni Reunion

Get ready for an electrifying experience! Circle **SATURDAY, OCTOBER 21**, on your calendar and highlight 1:45 p.m. ET because you won't want to miss our 2nd Virtual Alumni Reunion on Zoom!

In 2023, we're bringing the reunion straight to your screen. Plan to stick around for about two hours. Reconnect with classmates, make a few new friends, and get a taste of what's to come at our epic physical reunion later in 2024.

Connect directly with the people who matter most to you. Brace yourself for CHAT ROOMS where you'll dive into vibrant discussions with like-minded individuals in small, intimate groups. If you are wondering if you can move easily from one group to another, the answer is YES.

We've heard your feedback and taken it to heart! This year, we've revamped the program to focus on more engaging small-group conversations. Say goodbye to pesky technical glitches that have hindered past interactions - we've exterminated them all!

So, grab your pens and mark Saturday, October 21 at 1:45 p.m. ET in bold on your calendar. This is an event you won't want to miss!

Are you uncomfortable with computers? Do you hate Zoom? Well, get over it. Call any grandchild who will be more than happy to get you properly online for this reunion.

Have questions or brilliant ideas? Reach out to Carl DeLage at [cdelage0852@gmail.com](mailto:cdelage0852@gmail.com).

Get ready to unleash your exhilaration and make unforgettable memories at our Virtual Alumni Reunion. Wishing you an absolutely sensational summer of 2023!



*2002 Reunion Group.*

# SignPosts

## Welcome New Members

### Richard M. Holt

*From Richard:* “Since the early 1970s, post leaving the Passionists, I worked as a nurse for 10 years in the civilian community before getting married and entering the USAF at the age of 30 as a 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant. I served as a military officer for 23 years, and earned Bachelor’s and Master’s Degrees in Nursing while in the military. After the military, I worked in the Veterans Administration as a Nurse Executive for 14 years in various parts of the USA. After retiring, I was invited to Hanoi, Viet Nam, by their nursing leadership, to lecture and provide consultation at the University of Nam Dang and National Pediatric Hospital. Now I do volunteer work near home and mentor men. After 53 years of nursing, I shall retire fully this year.



“I have traveled to all 50 States and all over the world. I have one son, from my first marriage and two grandchildren. My son is a military officer. I have since remarried and reside in the Dallas/Fort Worth area.”

### Prayer Intentions

Louis Smith, rehabilitating from surgery.

Mike Moll, completing chemotherapy soon.

Mark Brockman, recovering from an accident.

Glenn Wieczorek, continuing cancer treatment.

Tom Mugavin, recovering in hospital.

### THOSE WE MOURN

- Gerard J. Steckel <https://passionist.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Steckel-Gerald.pdf>
- Francis “Frank” Mullally <https://passionist.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Mullally-Frank.pdf>
- James Robert Smith <https://passionist.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/Smith-James.pdf>
- \*James “Jim” Mueller (\*See photos) <https://passionist.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Mueller-James.pdf>
- Terry McDevitt’s sister, Catherine “Candy” Ann McDevitt.
- Steve Westenhofer’s mother, Romilda Elizabeth Westenhofer.
- Robert Colhour, father of Fr. David Colhour, CP, Provincial Superior

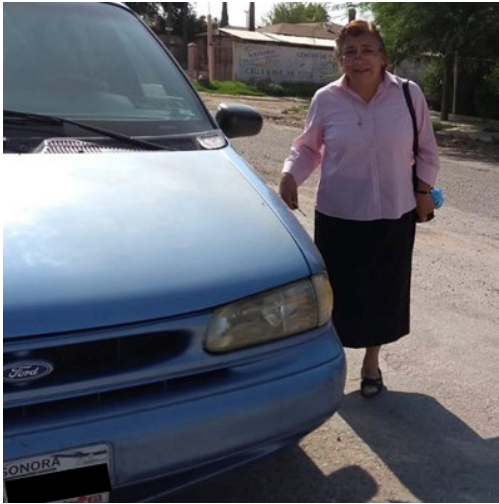
### Those with Big Life Changes

Richard Padilla and Carol Campbell are getting married on September 23.

Father David Colhour, CP Provincial Superior; Fr. John Schork CP; Father Bruno D’Souza, CP; Fr. Febin Barose, CP; Fr. Jim Strommer, CP are the newly elected Provincial Council.

Fr. Joe Moons, CP, has completed two terms as Provincial Superior.

# Interactive Opportunities



## Surefire Ideas to Help the Sisters Find a Donated Van

Yes, we continue to scour America for a used van for the Passionist Sisters in Agua Prieta. Here are ideas that scream the word success!

Today, we come to you with an unwavering determination to make a difference for the Passionist Sisters in Agua Prieta. Together, with our collective efforts, we can find a used van for them and create a lasting impact.

**First, forget fundraising.** Let's explore America for a used, dusty van hidden away. Imagine the joy we could bring if we stumble upon this hidden gem. No fundraisers are needed, just resourcefulness and a little luck.

**Next, think 'scavenger hunt.'** Let's revive the spirit of scavenger hunts. Utilize social media platforms like Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, or Twitter to spread the word. Share our mission, ask everyone to join the hunt, and involve their own social circles. Together, we can cast a wide net and increase our chances of success.

**How about your email?** Tap into the power of email by reaching out to friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. Share our story and invite them to be part of the scavenger hunt. The more people involved, the greater our chances of finding the van.

**What parish and clubs do you belong to?** Leverage the platforms of organizations and clubs you belong to. Make your own pleas for the van in Sunday bulletins, club newsletters, or alumni groups. By spreading our message through these channels, we expand our reach and increase the likelihood of success.

This mission is about making a positive impact on those who need it most. Let's embrace these ideas, work together, and show the world the power of our collective efforts. We already know how much faith we have in each other, and together, we can achieve the extraordinary.

With gratitude and determination,  
The "Share Our Gifts" Committee of the Passionist Alumni Association



# Interactive Opportunities, *cont'd*

## Update Yourself on Our Website

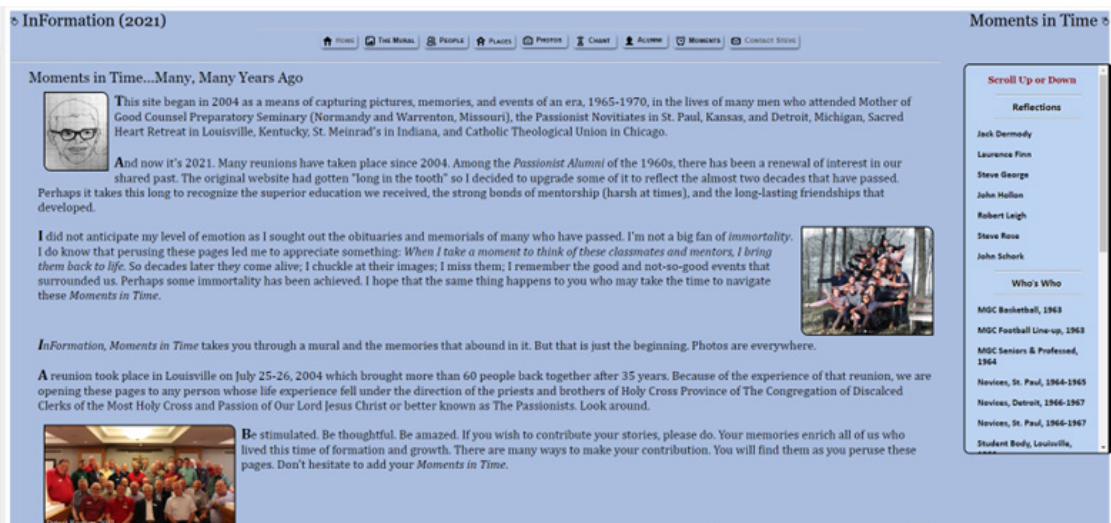
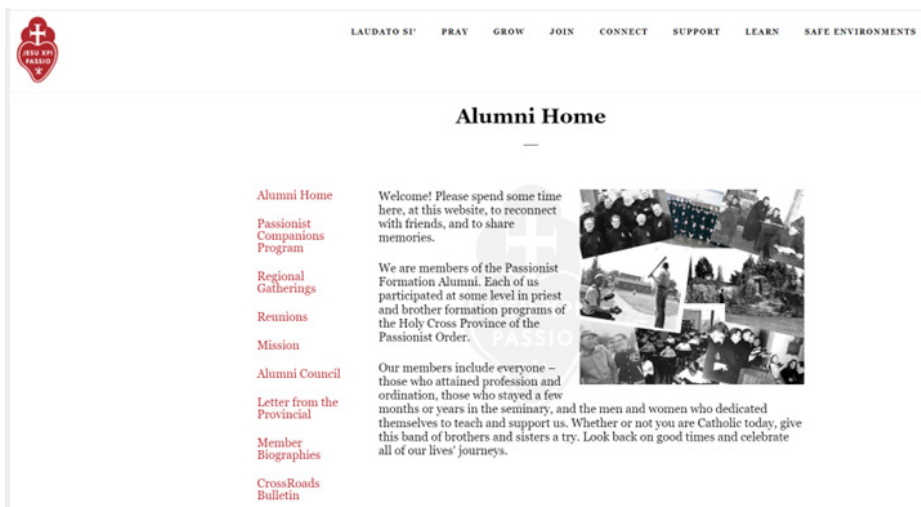
When was the last time you updated your biography on our website? If it's time to do so, contact Bob Duffield at [bdlinwood1@cox.net](mailto:bdlinwood1@cox.net).

Want to check out the biographies? Click here: <https://passionist.org/alumni/memberbios/>. Obtain the password with an email to Bob (see above.)

## Contribute to Steve George's *Moments in Time* Website

On the Home Page of *Moments In Time*, Steve urges us to contribute stories and other information: 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 moments in time.

Contact Steve at: <http://cp.aznetwork.com./contact/index.html>



# A Very Special Video from Way Back

## A Very Special Video from Way Back

Marty Thommes (Ordination Class of 1960) sent us this moving, heart-tugging YouTube link and letter. Find a quiet room, put a Do-Not-Disturb sign on the door, and enjoy the music and photos passing before you. Marty and his schoolmates show up in photos from Normandy to many reunion locations. They are us. We are them.

Brethren,

I am sharing a link to a YouTube video compiled in 2016, featuring scenes from some Holy Cross Passionist Alumni reunions that took place before the Warrenton Reunions. You might have seen it before.

Here is the link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BWvO3nb31qw>

Our groups originated in the mid-sixties, even before many of us had set aside our vows. One of the earliest reunions was held at Houghton Lake in Michigan. This occurred prior to a Provincial election, and the older monks were wary, perceiving it as a “young turks” uprising and aiming to bring in younger members for Provincial decision making. Paul Boyle attended to reassure the older monks. Many of us recall his canon law objection regarding the percentage of beeswax in the candles during the informal Mass setting!

The pursuit of a vibrant community life under a non-adaptive apostolate led younger priests to experiment with alternative forms of community, such as the Stonebridge Seven, the Evanston Group, and the St. Louis Communication Center. These endeavors served as bonding experiences, and eventually, we initiated our own alumni reunions.

Even in the minor seminary, the Monastery tradition was to maintain a wall of silence regarding departing members. They would vanish in the dead of night, and no mention would be made of them. If they reappeared later, some older monks would view them as traitors and shun them. In my opinion, this changed when Roger Mercurio and Sebastian MacDonald took charge.

Our early reunions were held in Lake Tahoe, California; Galena, Illinois; Oregon; Michigan; Sacramento; Sierra Madre, California; and often in Hawaii, where Pat O'Malley managed several beach houses. Eventually, Rian Clancy and Paul Boyle even joined us, and various retreat houses opened their doors to us.

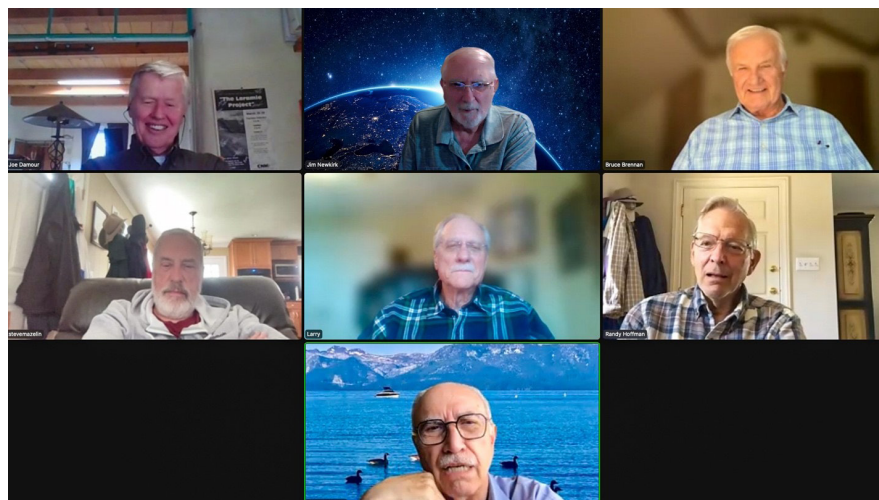
For the best viewing experience, the YouTube video is recommended to be watched first with the music, and then without it, allowing pauses at various scenes for identification. Ideally, we could gather on Zoom to watch it together.

Enjoy bringing back memories,  
Marty Thommes (Ordination Class of 1960.)



# The Class of 1963 - Gone All-Virtual

By: Jim Newkirk



The screenshot you see here is taken from a monthly Zoom gathering of the Class of 1963.

In April, they discussed Larry Goodwin's book **"Testament"** – On the table were God, Jesus, and the meaning of Christ's command to love all including your enemies with Empathy and by seeking good for the loved and, if necessary, through justice. Beyond that, we were exposed to the thoughts of Peter Singer in "The Life You Can Save".

We also created the infamous, "Novitiate Dust Chute Incident and Prostration of '63" in St. Paul, Kansas."

Have you wondered where these '63 dudes spent their lives?  
Below is a list of highlights:

Joe Damour  
In Albuquerque, New Mexico  
President, Damour International Travel  
Consulting & Guide Service

Jim Newkirk\*  
Georgetown, Texas  
University of Notre Dame  
US Navy Jet Engine Mech  
President, Fluid Ink Technology  
President, Sun City Photo Club  
Wife: Gayle, 3 Daughters  
\*I am responsible for any errors  
or omissions in this report.

Bruce Brennan  
Keller, Texas  
President, Money for Nothin'  
President, Financial Consulting

Steve Mazelin  
Monticello, Indiana  
President, Asperges Me Investigations

Larry Goodwin  
Knife River, Minnesota  
US Army  
University of Chicago, Theology  
President, College of St. Scholastica  
Best Selling Author, "Testament"

Randy Hoffman  
Redwood City, California  
Pres. Hoffman, Hoffman & Hoffman

Ron Reneau  
AKA Ronaldo of the Four Winds  
San Francisco, California (of course)  
President, Reneau Leadership  
Team Effectiveness Consultant  
Coach Sports Line & Consulting





# Alumni Council Update



Mike Owens

The first half of 2023 has been a busy time for the Council. Here are the highlights:

**Super Bowl Pool for Colegio Guadalupe:** Jack Dermody captained another successful initiative in support of the sisters and students at Colegio Guadalupe. A total of \$5,400 was raised, thanks to the generosity of all participants plus the winners donating 100% of their winnings!

**Mission/Vision/Values:** We revised the mission statement to make it more inclusive, included our vision statement, and added a fifth value to recognize the alumni commitment to sharing time, talent, and treasures in support of Passionist ministries and missions. [Click here](#) to read the revised statement.

**Alumni Council Report to the 2023 Provincial Chapter:** In case you missed it in the April 2023 issue of CrossRoads, it is repeated in the following article.

**Alumni Website:** Claire Smith and Bob Duffield updated several sections in the Alumni page of the Holy Cross Province website. [Click here](#) to visit the Alumni home page.

**Share Our Gifts:** This new initiative will formalize our support of the Passionist missions and ministries. The work group, under the leadership of Jack Dermody, is making good progress and will present a report to the alumni in a future issue of CrossRoads.

**2023 Alumni Virtual Reunion:** Carl DeLage, and Jim Byrne and their planning team are preparing for our October 21<sup>st</sup> virtual reunion. More information, including a registration form, will be available soon.

**Holy Cross Province Migration Commission:** Bob Yeargin, Jack Dermody and Mike Owens were appointed in February to this newly formed commission. The full commission, including 8 additional members of the Passionist family, presented two pre-Chapter informational programs along with a general assembly session during the recent Provincial Chapter.

**2023 Provincial Chapter:** Congratulations to Fr. John Schork, CP, our Provincial liaison, on being elected as a consultor on the new Provincial Council! His wisdom, experience, and positivity will be important additions to the Council. Five additional Alumni Council members had the privilege of participating in the Chapter: Claire Smith, Phil Jackson, Bob Yeargin, Jack Dermody and Mike Owens. Along with the vowed alumni, lay alumni Bill Berger, Dan O'Donnell and Deacon Manuel Valencia participated in the Chapter.

**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*

Jim Byrne: *Co-Chair, Family Events*

Carl DeLage: *Co-Chair, Family Events*

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

Bob Duffield: *Chair, Website Biographies and Technology*

Phil Jackson: *Spiritual Formation*

Carl Middleton: *Chair, Lay Association*

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

Mike Owens: *Coordinator*

Richard Padilla: *Chair, Administration/Province Liaison*

John Schork, CP: *Province Liaison*

Claire Smith: *Communications*

Bob Yeargin: *Co-Chair, Alumni Profile and Recruitment*



# 2023 Alumni Report to Holy Cross Province

## **A.    *A basic description of the Alumni Council and its purpose.***

Who are the Passionist formation alumni? We have attended one or more phases of Passionist formation including high school, novitiate, college, and theology. Currently we have 190 registered lay and vowed members. Our mission is to celebrate the camaraderie of the shared charism and experience and be enriched by the diversity of our lives as they have unfolded since, through interactive opportunities, shared family and community experiences and renewed relationships with the men and women of Holy Cross Province.

The Alumni Council works on behalf of the alumni and includes 11 alumni, one of whom is a vowed liaison to the Province, plus two provincial office representatives. The Council has four working committees: Family Events, Alumni Profile and Recruitment, Passionist Companions, and CrossRoads Newsletter/Alumni Website. We meet every other month via Zoom.

## **B.    *Areas of achievement/success for the Alumni Council and the alumni.***

### **Family Events**

- Conducted two in-person reunions and one virtual reunion:
  - 2019 Detroit-St. Paul of the Cross Retreat Center. 100 alumni and guests attended.
  - 2021 Virtual Reunion via Zoom. 63 alumni participated.
  - 2022 Louisville-Sacred Heart Community/St. Agnes Parish. 93 alumni and guests attended.
- Supported multiple regional gatherings:
  - St. Louis ArchAngels bi-monthly dining group.
  - Louisville Monday breakfast group.
  - Regular Zoom gatherings for the Indiana-Illinois-Wisconsin alumni.
  - Regular Zoom gatherings with Bro. John Monzyk at Sacred Heart Community.

### **Alumni Profile and Recruitment**

- Maintained and increased the membership database including contact information and formation history.
- Maintained a professionally designed and ongoing information management system of surveys and feedback modules to encourage and develop consensus among alumni.

### **Passionist Companions**

After four years of planning, the pilot version of the Passionist Companions initiative was introduced during the 2022 reunion. The purpose of the Passionist Companions is to form faith sharing communities that meet virtually each month to pray together, to share, to study the spiritual life, and to participate in on-going formation with special emphasis on the spirit of the Passionist Charism. Participants will have opportunities for socializing and celebrating Passionist feast days, as well as volunteering to serve at Passionist retreat centers, Passionist parishes, schools, and its Mission Outreach.

### **CrossRoads Newsletter/Alumni Website**

- Published 10 issues of CrossRoads, the alumni association's periodic newsletter, to build community and share the energy and the charism with each other.
- Updated various pages in the alumni section of the Province website.
- Created and maintained a directory of biographies of living and deceased, vowed and lay Passionist alumni on the alumni website.

# 2023 Alumni Report, *cont'd.*

## **Mission Advancement**

### **Conducted two mission advancement projects:**

- 2021 Fr. Hugo's Food Ministry in Haiti. Financial gifts were made via a virtual bike tour of Haiti. A total of \$20,010 was sent to Fr. Hugo to support families in desperate need of food.
- 2022 Colegio Guadalupe in Mexico. Financial gifts, refurbished computers plus school desks and chairs were donated by the alumni to assist the Passionist sisters in repairing hurricane damage to their grade school in Agua Prieta, Mexico. A total of \$19,730 was shared for the sisters' ministry to educate and protect young children from the dangers on the US/Mexican border. Initiatives included a virtual bike tour from San Diego, CA to Agua Prieta and a Super Bowl 'split-the-pot' pool.
- Gifted a total of \$8,613 to the local Passionist communities and selected initiatives from the surplus registration income and additional gifts from our in-person reunions.
- A current working group is close to proposing a systemic mission advancement community as an "action-oriented community of Passionist alumni and companions supporting specific Passionist mission programs serving the poor of Jesus."

## **Relationship with Holy Cross Province**

### **Support of Province initiatives:**

- Contributed articles for the OME plus interviews and articles for the Province magazine.
- Provided ongoing contributions to the Daily Scripture Reflections on the Province website.
- Participated in the Passionist Way committee, the Laudato Si committee and contributed to the Inclusion and Diversity efforts in the Province.
- Led the 2022 Advent Evening of Recollection.
- Contributed reflections for Advent and Lent meditations.
- Participated in Province assemblies, e-learning sessions, and committee meetings.
- Provided financial support of Province life and ministries.
- Some alumni directly work with the Province Vocation Director.
- Involvement and leadership in local Community of Passionist Partners groups.

### **Support from the Provincial Office:**

- Awarded Honorary Alumni designations to Claire Smith and Phil Jackson in appreciation of their ongoing contributions to the association.
- Design and implementation of alumni pages on the Province website.
- Graphics support including CrossRoads newsletter design plus reunion registration and photography.
- Use of Jotform event registration and survey software.
- Access to Province facilities for gatherings.
- Use of a Zoom account for the Passionist Companions meetings.

## **C. *What are the challenges the Alumni Council is facing?***

- Our primary challenges are that we are an aging group (2022 reunion attendees averaged 74 years) and, given the few students in formation, our membership will decrease (absent adding as members those who never were in formation.)
- A related concern is that as the needs of our members change, how should we evolve to meet those needs.
- We encourage more participation of vowed alumni members (who are enthusiastically welcomed), especially at our reunions. There is enormous goodwill for them.

## 2023 Alumni Report, *cont'd.*

### **D.    *What are the future hopes for the Alumni Council?***

- We are very excited for the future of the Passionist Companions and hope that this initiative grows into a vibrant element within the Passionist family.
- We want to maintain current relationships and discover new connections within the Passionist family of Holy Cross Province.
- We are planning to sponsor periodic alumni retreats at the Province retreat centers.
- We want to complete our 3-year planning process to assure that we are being relevant to our alumni membership and meeting their social and spiritual needs.

We, the formation alumni of Holy Cross Province, are proud to be contributing members of the Passionist Family. May God abundantly bless the 2023 Provincial Chapter.

## News from the 36<sup>th</sup> Provincial Chapter

This year, the Provincial Chapter was held at Mater Dolorosa Passionist Retreat Center in Sierra Madre, California. It was the first time the Province held an in-person meeting since the last Chapter in 2019. In many ways it was a family reunion, reconnecting with colleagues and friends, and meeting new people in person for the first time.

During the Chapter, the new Provincial Superior and his Consultors were elected to lead the Province for the next four years. We also extend a very warm thank you to Fr. Joe Moons, CP, and his two Provincial Councils for their leadership over the last eight years.

**[Click here](#)** to visit our website to see more photos from the Chapter gathering.

Please join us in congratulating our new Provincial and his Consultors!

|                          |                     |
|--------------------------|---------------------|
| Father David Colhour, CP | Provincial Superior |
| Father Jim Strommer, CP  | First Consultor     |
| Father Febin Barose, CP  | Second Consultor    |
| Father Bruno D'Souza, CP | Third Consultor     |
| Father John Schork, CP   | Fourth Consultor    |



(l-r): Father Bruno D'Souza, CP; Father Febin Barose, CP;  
Father David Colhour, C.P.; Father John Schork, C.P.; and Father Jim Strommer, CP.

# Remembering Gerard Steckel

## **Gerard Steckel (1930-2022)**

Fr. Gerard Steckel was only twenty-nine years old when he arrived at the Prep in 1959.

[Click here](#) to read Gerard's obituary.

## **From Ray Alonzo (Class of 1969)**

Gerry was terrifying! He was compact and all muscle. I think he felt the best way to lead students was to speak loudly, carry a big stick, and try to never have to use it. Freshman year was difficult for me. I pretty much made a pest of myself, at least the first half of it. So it was with a fear so strong that it made me brave enough to knock on Fr. Director's door just before the end of the '65-66 school year. I was so fearful of having to return to the terrible situation in my old man's house that not even the fear of Gerard could stop me from bursting in and blurting out "Are you going to blackball me?"

He looked at me for a second and said, "Yes I am." My heart fell into my stomach. I couldn't speak. He let me stand there frozen for the longest 15 seconds of my life, then brushed me off like a gnat in the ear.... "No, I am not "blackballing" you. Now get out of here and go to bed".

What relief washed over me! I think I said, "Thank you, Father," but I can't swear to it. I scrambled out the door, closing it very softly, then headed for bed and the most peaceful night I had experienced in a very long time.

Eventually he agreed to be my spiritual advisor during my Senior Year. He guided me with kindness and gave me a standard I could never achieve but I could strive to become my best self my whole life by following his advice and counsel.

I always hoped to meet him again to say, "Thank you Gerry. You were the father I never had. You led me to self-assurance, a strong moral conscience, and the importance of true empathy for others."

So, thanks, Gerry. Really, thanks.

## **From Marty Thommes (Normandy Class of 1950)**

Gerard was a couple years ahead of me, and so I looked up to him, and felt him to be a very solid stable guy, and one of the best shortstops we had. Great athlete.

## **From Paul Waddell (Class of 1969)**

I don't have any particular stories about Fr. Gerard except that I remember so well, like I'm sure everyone at the Prep has, his beautiful and powerful tenor voice. During my first three years at the Prep, Gerard sang in the harmony choir right beside Tom McGee, a student from Louisville, who also had a powerful and beautiful tenor voice. In the same pew sat Al Maryan whose voice completed that amazing trio. Tom McGee and Al Maryan were in the class ahead of me that graduated in 1968. At the end of the 1968 school year, Gerard was transferred from the Prep to Cincinnati. Their three voices were sorely missed during that last year the Prep existed.



# Remembering Gerard Steckel, *cont'd*

## From Dan Stehly (Class of 1968)

Three short 'stories' regarding Fr. Gerard: (1) In my second year, a classmate and I were really late for chapel. We knew if we walked into the chapel, Fr. Gerard would see us. So we had this great idea to wait outside of Fr. Randall's office, in the room where all of the cassocks were hanging. There, we figured, we'd blend in with the students as they left the chapel for dinner. Unfortunately for us, Fr. Gerard was the first one out of the chapel. Yes, we had a little chat in his office after dinner. (2) In my second year, another classmate and I were running in the hall, made a sharp turn by the gym, then literally slammed into Fr. Gerard. We had to walk on our knees from Fr. Gerard's office to the refectory. I don't know how far that was, but it felt like five miles. (3) When I was a senior, Fr. Gerard helped me with a personal situation. He was understanding and helpful and I was very grateful he was available at that time in my life. I have always remembered him with respect and admiration. I am sorry to hear about his passing and will miss him.

## From Joe Turek (Class of 1966)

He was one in a million. I never wanted to disappoint him.

*(Photo at right: Personal photo of Fr. Gerard in his office, submitted by Joe Turek).*

## From Jerry Crimmins (Class of 1962)

1. For some months, one of my weekday work assignments was to clean Father Gerard's bathroom, which was next to his office near the first floor of the high school dorm. The most noteworthy thing about this was that I learned, every day, that Father Gerard's hair was falling out. There would always be a bunch of his blond in the sink after he combed his hair. I used to think, "Gee, is this going to happen to me?"

2. We were notorious as a high school junior class in Warrenton, notorious to the point that one night after night recreation in the rec hall, a regular time we all knelt down on the floor and listened to a few words of wisdom from Father Gerard before we went to Compline, Father Gerard's advice for that night was approximately: "Do not imitate the junior class. They are not cool. Their conduct is not worthy of imitation. Set your standards higher and imitate other boys and young men who are worthy of your imitation." We juniors all got a kick out of that.

3. Father Gerard was a fairly good athlete, and I imagine he had been a guard (who today would be called a point guard) on one of the seminary basketball teams in his minor seminary days. As was probably fine in his years, he could dribble comfortably only with his right hand, and he was good that way. However, when we were juniors or seniors, I believe seniors, the students played the professed in the standard annual basketball game, and this led to a curious problem. Father Gerard was the point guard who brought the ball down for the professed. Facing him was our own Eddie Schum, a notoriously aggressive defensive guard for the student team. Eddie instantly recognized that Father Gerard could dribble only with his right hand, so once Father Gerard crossed the half-court line, Eddie would not allow Father Gerard to go right, left, or forward. Eddie was a tremendous athlete and very tenacious. Thus, we all had to watch this same scene repeatedly. I thought, and perhaps we all thought, "What is Eddie Schum doing now? Good golly. Eddie, what the heck are you doing? Just let him go by you one way or another, at least sometimes."

4. Although you wouldn't know it from my three stories above, Father Gerard was very kind to me. He listened to me cry privately in his office once or twice about my problems. He was calm and cool when handling a teenage boy crying. He was so calm and cool that, when I left, I thought, "Eh, I guess everything will be okay."



# Remembering Gerard Steckel, *cont'd*

**From Richard Womack (Class of 1968)**

The Womack family goes way back with the Passionist Order, starting with my grandfather's brother who was a priest by the name of Canisius. He was stationed in the Ensley community in Birmingham from the '50's until the early '60's and served the African-American community. He died around the time I entered the Prep, and is buried at St. Paul, Kansas.

Another brother of my grandfather had fourteen kids, two of whom became Passionist priests. There was Warren, who spent most of his career working with the people of Tijuana, Mexico and, later (believe it or not), with the Spanish-speaking people living in Sweden toward the end of his career. And then there was his brother, Fr. Emil Womack, whom many of you will remember as the Vicar at the Prep. He was rumored to be able to speak around seven languages. He was the guy who paid the bills and was second in command to the Rector.

When I arrived at the Prep in Warrenton, we were assigned our "Office," our daily job. Since I weighed only sixty-five pounds in my freshman year, I couldn't do the "cool jobs," like handling the buffing machines that weighed about as much as me. I was assigned the task of keeping track of the tuition billings as they went out and came in. I did this during Fr. Gerard's and Fr. Marion's tenure from Freshman through Junior year, working out of their office.

It was during this time that Fr. Gerard (who had a great singing voice) came up with a ditty called "Little Emil" (pronounced EE-mill !). The words were: "Little Emil, Little Emil suffered from ulcers, I understand. Swallowed a cake of Grandma's lye soap, and now he's got the cleanest ulcers in the land." Repeat a second time. I still see him walking down the hallways and singing it.

Speaking of jobs, Saturday assignments involved work that were supposed to take longer than a half-hour to complete, so while bigger jobs were being done across the campus, Fr. Gerard assigned me two jobs that I think I kept for most of my seminary experience: Troubleshooter and Caterer. As a troubleshooter, I visited every commode in the Junior and Senior wings, as well as the Monastery. I scrubbed them out with hydrochloric acid with a swabbing brush. When that was done, it was time for me to bring out, as Caterer, the cart of cookies and milk for all the guys who were doing the "heavy lifting jobs." I swear to you today that I washed my hands between jobs, well, most of the time.

I was looking forward to seeing him at previous Prep reunions, but didn't manage to time my attendance at the same ones he attended. I'm so sorry to have missed him. I still have very fond memories of this really "cool guy" who helped shape me growing up.

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Fr. Gerard had been a priest only two years when he got assigned all those teenagers in Warrenton.

*(Photo from Passionist celebration of Michael Joseph Stengel, C.P.'s celebration of life in 2010.)*



MJ Stengel, H Whitechurch, P Berendt, R Rogalski, G Steckel, L Doherty at ordination 1957.

# Remembering Gerard Steckel, *cont'd*

## From Jack Dermody (Class of 1962)

At age twelve, I picked the Passionist Seminary for the community it offered, which I desperately needed. Providence delivered Fr. Gerard and Fr. Randall as the correct leaders for that era's teenage students. Fr. Gerard was a young and caring director who, for example, drove me many miles to get my wrist set twice after I broke it. He was like a loving parent, always kind, and forgiving for my mistakes, as when a school-mate ratted me out for repeatedly stealing cookies from his office. After three years, Father Randall asked him to tell me to leave because I "wasn't considered Passionist material." No surprise there. I had been using Father Randall more as a New York psychiatrist than a spiritual director. My unfiltered thoughts, dreams, and actions had to be scary. "Californian" open-mindedness from someone my age must have alarmed his natural sense of order. Oh yes, I was hopping mad at Fr. Gerard for many years after that ousting, but I never lost my sense of belonging at the Prep. It had been a God-gifted Eden I got to live in for three years, and I knew it would always be an anchor in my personal world order.

## From Carl DeLage (Class of 1970)

Do you remember the 'Orders' scene in the original "Top Gun" movie? After graduation, the pilots were at a party celebrating and, there, they received an envelope with their Orders, their next assignment.

In 2020, I was driving Fr. Peter from Detroit to the Alumni Reunion in Louisville. I asked him how he came to teach Latin at the Prep in Warrenton. He remembered that he and Fr. Gerard had been celebrating their first assignment as professed Passionists when, like the 'Orders' scene in "Top Gun," each received an envelope with their next assignments. Before that, Fr. Peter had wanted to be an Itinerant Preacher. Fr. Gerard had wanted to teach at the Prep. So what happened? Fr. Peter was given a teaching assignment that required him to spend two more years at the University of Michigan. Fr. Gerard was assigned to itinerant preaching. I asked Fr Peter how he handled this reversal of his dreams. He simply said they took a vow of obedience. If that is where the two of them were assigned, that is what they would do.



Fr. Gerard, later on, became the high school director at the Prep and taught. By the time I got to Warrenton in 1967, Fr. Gerard directed the Senior Section. Fr. Peter taught Latin.

These Passionists modeled their vows. Both men were amazing in their duties.

Finally, I remember we had a Talent Contest at the Prep. Fr. Gerard sang "Love is Blue" (or at least as my 70-year-old memory seems to recall that song). His voice was amazing. I believe he could have been a professional singer.

Gerard, the shortstop, firing a bullet to first base at Normandy seminary in 1947.

*Photo courtesy of Steve George.*

# Remembering Gerard Steckel, *cont'd*

## From Don Noltemeyer (Class of 1970)

I had very little interaction with Fr. Gerard, but found in an old email (June 2013). The excerpt below is from an email exchange with John Filiatreau (Warrenton '67) who is deceased, and who was part of my efforts to get attendees for the October 2014 reunion in Louisville (I've edited to delete info not on point.)

"I'd really like to see Fr. Randal again," wrote John, "to say thanks and give him a hug; and Gerard, to say thanks and apologize for so often being a burr under his saddle, and, if he'll have it, give him a hug too. Those two, and Gus Wilhelmy, whom I also have often wished to see again, turned me away from a hazardous path and put my feet on a happier one. Good, kind, honorable men on an impossible mission, like 18-year-olds on burned down 12th Street in Detroit in 1968. I'm not very religious these days, but I think it would be very, very cool to chant the Lamentations of Jeremiah again in beautiful St. Agnes Church in Louisville, the Passionists' parish, as we used to do in Warrenton, Missouri, during Holy Week.

"I have to admit that I'd love to see one more time the clay pits and the bluffs over the Missouri, Mississippi, whatever, without having to walk 20 miles to get there. I'd also want to see again Fr. Germain hiking along Newburg Road in Louisville at his usual swift and steady pace, with his walking stick, looking like Moses in a hurry.

"Is anyone else amazed how stubbornly those years stick to us?"

## From Mike "Boots" Miller (Class of 1970)

As a Warrenton prepper, I was scared to death of Fr Gerard. He reminded me of my father who was unapproachable and ran things with an iron fist. To my dismay, I found myself in the middle of a controversy that he was called to decide.

I was from the farm and had been farming and driving tractors since eight years old. Brother Norbert ran the Prep's farm and was in need of farm hands. I had proven to him I was capable. The problem ... I was a freshman, and there were several seniors who wanted the duty. On the school farm, you got to drive various vehicles and it was better duty than say, buffing hallways!!

The seniors made a big enough stink that it got to Fr Gerard for resolution. Oh, noooo!!! And, all we freshmen knew better than to cross the seniors. Actually, I was unaware of the problem until called into Fr Gerard's office one Saturday morning! When I arrived, there was Brother Norbert and several seniors whose farm duty I was interfering with, standing around his desk. Brother Norbert proceeded to ask a series of detailed farm questions, first to the seniors, then to me. It soon became obvious I had deep knowledge and previous experience in handling all sorts of farming duties, safety considerations, and the skills to go along with them. In the end, Fr Gerard asked the seniors if any of them had any concerns with me working on the farm, to which each reluctantly said no. And so Fr Gerard announced, "Ok, then Miller will be assigned permanent farm duty, and you seniors will rotate through. I expect each of you to respect Miller's experience and try to learn from him. Miller, I expect you to be respectful of your upperclassmen, and help Brother Norbert in every way you can. Now all of you, this is the end of it. I don't expect to ever hear another word about this. Now get back to work."



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