

November 2011



## St Bernards College Old Boys Association Newsletter

**Any contributions welcome....send The Secretary 2/46 Toowoon Bay Rd Toowoon Bay  
2261**

At the 2011 Reunion the group passed a motion to renew the donation the Association has made in the past to assist with the work of the De la Salle Brothers and their helpers in Balgo Hills, Western Australia, where they run a school for Aboriginal children.

The postal address is Halls Creek, 6770, which might help those trying to find it on a map!

After the Reunion, the Association sent a donation of \$1,000 to help the Brothers and the school with their work for the children and indigenous folk of the area.

This message came by email from Br Michael, the Director of the Brothers' community:

**FROM THE BROTHERS AT BALGO HILLS,  
W.A.**

Hello John,

Things are taking a bit longer than I anticipated. We have put the donation towards some general sporting equipment for the children, and some pool playthings.

Equipment ordered has not yet arrived - freight deliveries can take many weeks (8 -10 is common.)

It is a fact of life here that the most popular items are footballs and basketballs. But looking after them, returning them and using them in appropriate play areas is not a priority. So they are damaged or lost at a great rate!

The swimming pool is undergoing repairs and an upgrade to current standards. It is used only during school time by the students and is much enjoyed.

They are desert kids - but love playing in the water and most learn to swim quite well. Items for water games will be a great help to make pool time even more enjoyable.

I am leaving for Orange tomorrow to spend a couple of weeks with my parents. While there I will try to put on disc a compilation of photos of Balgo Hills and send to you.

Thanks again,

Br Michael.

In a letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> July Brother wrote to the members of the Association

Dear Members,

I am writing a more formal letter of appreciation for your recent donation to the Brothers at Balgo Hills for use in the local community.

We decided to put the money towards two areas that always have need of replacement equipment.

First, the swimming pool that has undergone some extensive repairs and upgrading.

Various items of play and learning equipment are of great benefit.

The children love the water and use the pool even in the colder weather.

Also it seems there is good evidence that Aboriginal Communities that have pools see a marked reduction in the incidence of eye and ear infections.

Secondly:

The children also love their football and basketball. Other games are encouraged for variety but do not seem to take on. However there is a constant need for replacement balls (in particular) as the balls wear out very quickly on the rough surfaces—this despite our sparse grass cover and cemented court.

I have enclosed a copy of our magazine for 2010 which gives an outline of the school and its people and its workings.

So thank you for your generosity and we pray for blessings on you all

Sincerely in St John Baptist de la Salle

Br Michael, Director

Brother also enclosed a CD that gave views of the school grounds some of the facilities and the local area.

It is hoped some of these may find their way on to the website to give all an idea of the locality in which the work is done.

## **CONTACTS WITH OLD BOYS**

John McGrath whose address is Sunshine Avenue (what a wonderful concept that is! To live always in Sunshine would have to be the way to go as would be married to a person called Joy, so you're always living with Joy) was in touch with a donation and to say he enjoyed the newsletter that he has to receive by snail mail.

He regrets not being able to attend the reunions, but there always seem to be family concerns that prevent his coming.

Vince Murphy also sent a donation with a note saying how glad he was to get news of the reunion and to say he was sorry to have missed it

as he too and his brother Terence were amongst the original pupils of the school.

In their first year at the school, he says, they were taught in the basement of St Canice's before moving to Merriwa Street.

He hopes to get to the reunion next year with Gerry Mergan always on his back to be there.

Norm Robinson was another to be in touch with a handsome donation.

Many thanks, Norm.

His sister also gets the newsletter, being a past student of Mt Sts. They have so many friends who attended St Bernard's and Mt Saint Mary's.

Others to be in touch with welcome donations were Victor Byrne from Orange, Ron O'Keefe from Queensland and Dr Piet van Vliet. Many thanks to them all for their generosity.

Harry Shiell also sent some photos that the widow of Charles Munster had discovered. Chas died recently after a long battle with leukaemia and many Old Boys were able to attend the funeral. Harry also sent a donation to assist with getting the photos on to the website. Many thanks Harry and it will be a constant reminder of your friend.

Father Barry Kirby was also in touch. He is not enjoying the best of health at present but was kind enough to send his email address and a donation to help things along.

For a long time he was based at Kedron in Queensland but is now at Waverley in the Franciscan monastery there.

Many thanks and we all hope your health worries will soon be a thing of the past.

## **OBITUARY**

It is with sadness that we note the passing of yet another of our pioneers.

Joy Bailey was in touch on June 17 to say that her husband, Trevor, had passed away and had been buried in Caboolture, Queensland.

Trevor was at the school in 1942 and in 1944 when he was only in the Intermediate class he was a member of the First XIII football team and also in the First XI cricket team.

Before moving to Queensland Trevor and Joy lived on the Central Coast of NSW.

Our thoughts go out to Joy and family and he earnestly hope Trevor may rest in peace

John Grant sent us some sad news in July:

*I am sure that you would remember the Birrells from Blackheath - Mick and John. Unfortunately Mick passed away last Monday---his funeral was held on Friday morning. Although I occasionally run into Mick's younger brother, David, I only remember seeing Mick once since leaving school. Strangely enough that was about a month ago in the local shopping centre.*

*Mick was at St Bernard's from around 1959 through to 1962/63. He was a Vietnam veteran.*

*May he rest in peace.*

The brothers at Malvern sent this note about the passing of **Br Mark Murphy**

Brother Mark Murphy...a staff member of St Bernard's in the 1950's. He taught mathematics and science to the senior classes. .

He was then changed to another community and his place at St Bernard's in teaching mathematics and science to the senior classes was taken by Br Mark Mahon

***Brother Mark Murphy fsc*** died Monday 26th Sept, 2011 after a relatively short period of illness. He was 87 years. He was suffering from Parkinsons but went down hill very quickly in the past week and passed away at Kingston Medical Centre, Cheltenham Vic where he was awaiting transfer to Bethlehem hospice in Caulfield South.

*Brother Mark will be laid to rest at the Brothers cemetery at Oakhill*

*The Brothers invite all who knew, worked with, were taught by, or served with Bro Mark to join us in a celebration of Mark's life at St Joseph's on Thursday evening. Mark taught in De La for more than 30 years having been posted to the College in 1964 on the demise of Brother Denis Crowe.*

*Every student who studied Physics in De La Salle between 1964 - 1980's was taught by Bro Mark. He was a legend. It is highly likely that a good cricket player was also coached by him in the*

*First X1 for which he was also responsible for many years.*

*He lived a full life in the service of God and young people as a faithful member of the La Salle Brothers. We celebrate his life and give thanks to God for all that he was and did for so many young people during the course of his life.*

*Brother Paul Rogers, Principal - De La Salle, Malvern.*

Brother Mark was buried at "Oakhill" Castle Hill on Sat 2ndy October. The Brothers' cemetery is at that location

Mike Yeo was able to attend the service and represent the Association

Unfortunately, he said, he was unable to remain afterwards to meet some of the Brothers especially Br Mark Mahon and Br Kilian but he did catch up with a Brother Michael Johnson who told him that at the opening of St Bernard's he had been present, since he was a member of the cadet corps of De la Salle Ashfield.

Quite a number of school cadets from Brothers' schools in Sydney were sent up to the Mountains on that day to be present at the opening ceremony and form a guard of honour

Several people commented on the bond that St Bernard's had and continues to have on past students. There is much admiration for the OBA that is stronger than most - and those schools are still going!

Vince Krijgsman sent the following message from the U.K. on hearing the news

***Hello, Cathi.***

***Thanks for the news, albeit VERY SAD. Yes ... I was taught Maths, Physics and Chemistry by Brother Mark at St. Bernard's when I was there in '51 and '52.***

***He was a champion, very well liked and highly respected by all he taught in Katoomba. The last time I saw him was when he was in London with Brother Leo enroute to Rome.***

***May he rest in peace.***

## RIP Br Leo Scollen

The following was sent from Br Ed Becker to Cathi. I was able to make the Funeral at Oakhill and catch up with Br Mark Mahon, Br Killian Ryan, Br John Mitchell, Br Ed himself, and all of the other who we get to see only on these sad occasions.

It was a very moving service and very enlightening about the man. His early work on Balgo Hills that we support is a living monument to a man who gave so much to the Aboriginal Community.

I'm not sure if it is covered in the two reports following but he learned the local language that made him able to communicate so well with the locals.

He was at Clairvaux while I was at St Bernard's – can't remember a lot about him but I'm sure there will be oldboys who will be able to fill the gaps of those years. - Mike Yeo

*Hi Cathi ! Hope all goes well with you. You have probably had several reports on the funeral at Castle Hill of Brother Leo Scollen. Brother John knew him much better than I did but he earned the admiration of everyone - an absolutely outstanding guy. Mike Yeo was there as large as life and, of course, there was a large attendance.*

*Even his doctor was there, I heard. A remarkable thing about him was that, at one time it was considered he wouldn't be able to go into the classroom because of his bad stutter.*

*Actually, when he was expected to give an address or was in class or, as it were, on display, he spoke without any hesitation or difficulty. This was not the most remarkable thing about him, of course.*

*The big thing was his integrity, his concern for the poor student, the families doing it tough, the disadvantaged, such as the Australian aboriginals (he kicked off our involvement in Luurnpa Catholic School at Balgo Hills somewhere between the Great Sandy Desert and the Tanami Desert in WA), and, when he died, was heading up Hohola Youth Development Centre in Port Moresby - an educational facility for indigenous Papua New Guineans.*

*The Centre is for those who are poor and who are not able to be fitted into the regular school system. These*

*can now obtain educational qualifications fully recognised by the PNG Education Department by following the courses offered them at the Centre.*

*There is a lot more that could be said and I am not really writing this as a full report -since, as I have mentioned above, I think others have already submitted something more appropriate.*

*I have this moment received a copy of "In the Loop" and I see a paragraph on Leo there. I've written this now and might as well send it... Anyhow, all the best Cathi. Keep up the great work. God bless. Ed*

Thursday, 27 October 2011

Dear Friends of Brother Leo Scollen,

I have just returned yesterday from Br Leo's Funeral Mass and Burial at the Brothers, chapel and later in their cemetery at Oakhill College, Castle Hill.

Some of us drove up from Melbourne safely on Monday from a cool Melbourne morning just in time to experience the "tail end" of a 34 degrees Celsius Sydney day.

However the Tuesday was showery and unsettled, The wind and the rain at the cemetery tested out our umbrellas but we were so glad to have remembered to bring them along.

Before the Mass Br Ambrose, our Brother Visitor for ANZPPNG, made mention of the numerous letters and emails of sympathy and support that had been sent to our provincial Office.

As mentioned on the booklet cover the main Mass celebrant was Father Tieman Doherty CP who had celebrated their jubilee Mass four years ago.

After Tieman related the chosen scripture readings to Leo's life, he invited his concelebrant, Monsignor Paul Boyers to preach as well. Paul has a number of roles in the Diocese of Broome.

He is its current Vicar General and the parish priest of the town of Derby and its surrounding Communities?

However Paul's sharing with us went back to the time of his first appointment as a younger priest to the Aboriginal Community of Balgo Hills and of Leo's friendship then and the support of the entire Brothers' Community in this challenging environment.

He recalled with gratitude how in generosity Leo arranged for Paul's run down presbytery quarters to be made more homely and comforting.

He gave instances of Leo's readiness to be available to children and adults in the Community when there was a local crisis or a personal need.

Probably the most significant tribute to Br Leo was the large crowd who assembled in Castle Hill for his farewell, despite his never being appointed to a Sydney school during his fifty-four year as a Brother.

Apart from the many members of Leo's extended family and a large number of brothers' from all over and of Passionist priest-friends from Marrickville, there were sizeable representations of mourners from Central Australia, Papua-New Guinea, and Melbourne, all of whom had a story to share of pride in achievement, gratitude for friendship or help and respect for someone who was quite special in their estimation.

In recent days two moving tributes to Br Leo were placed in the Victorian Herald Sun newspaper.

The staff and student community of Saint John's Regional College Dandenong concluded their tribute with "He was a gentle giant, a beloved teacher and administrator, who led by example, nurturing and inspiring those in his care.

His leadership and dedication remain lasting legacies here at St John's. A True Lasallian"

After a brief overview of Br Leo's "tour of duty" the Brothers printed tribute concluded " A truly dedicated teacher with a great love for the disadvantaged. "

May he rest in peace.  
Br John Mitchell

### **Eulogy for Brother Leo Scollen Given by Brother Malachy Yates**

#### **Chapel of St. John Baptist de La Salle, 25 October 2011**

Brother Leo Scollen and I began our formation as Brothers here in this building on Sunday 27th January 1957. We were two out of twelve young men who entered that day. I have no memory of my first encounter with Leo.

There were no ice-breaking exercises or getting-to-

know you processes that we might expect these days if we were meeting a group of people for the first time. Certainly the idea of "team bonding" or "team building" was a concept twenty years further down the track.

We arrived on the 27th of January fresh from secondary school. On that first Monday morning we were allowed to sleep-in until 6.30 AM and the regimen of 5.30 AM rising began on Tuesday morning to the shout of "Live Jesus in our hearts" and this routine continued well into the 1960s.

Nine of us received the Habit on Sunday May 12 1957 and Leo and four others made first profession on Monday 26th January 1960 – the Feast of the "Translation of the Relics" of Saint De La Salle from Belgium to Rome in 1937. Leo and I completed our Scholasticate Formation in December 1960.

In January 1961 Leo began his teaching ministry in Katoomba, while I was sent a little further west to Dubbo. Both he and I remained in these communities for six years during which Leo completed his BA degree at the University of New England. The following year he was appointed to Malvern in Victoria and I took up residence at Burradoo, NSW.

Leo worked in Malvern and Dandenong, Victoria, while I remained in NSW. As the years moved on, other than meetings to which all the Brothers were required to attend, we rarely met one another.

The year of our Silver Jubilee we made an effort to have a dinner together at a café near Mascot airport as Leo was returning to Melbourne after a Council Meeting and I was finishing my final year as Director and Principal of Marrickville. During the long time that Leo lived and worked in Balgo Hills WA, I was in various communities in NSW, New Zealand and overseas, so contact with each other became more infrequent.

In recent years we made use of the Internet to keep in touch. In his eulogy given at Boroko, Port Moresby last Wednesday night, Br Joe Gabel made mention of the fact that Leo was a good listener. It is not a surprise that he became a good listener for that was a skill he learned as a young man coping with a speech difficulty.

At the recreation times in the Novitiate Leo had great difficulty in participating in our conversations because of his severe stammer. I know that he did leave the Novitiate on regular occasions to attend sessions in Speech Pathology. These sessions took place at St Vincent's Hospital.

Such personal information as this was shared neither with the Novices by the Brother Director nor indeed among the Novices themselves, because of the strict rules governing conversations among the Brothers. At that time the understanding of formation for the Brother was conformity to a prescriptive Rule of life.

It was presumed that Religious Formation began when the young man crossed the threshold of the Novitiate and anything that had happened in a previous life was to be forgotten and definitely not talked about. As a result we learned nothing about our fellow novices and the various vocational journeys each of us had made.

We would certainly not have understood the comment made by Saint Mary MacKillop that her mother had been her first Novice mistress.

One afternoon in the first year of our Novitiate Leo broke a boundary. He asked if he could talk with me privately. He was breaking Novitiate silence! He asked me how I felt about his stammering. I was not at ease in the situation for several reasons. I had to presume that he had permission to break Novitiate silence and to be asked such a personal question by another Novice about my feelings was indeed something extraordinary.

I managed to reply that I had no difficulty in waiting for him to finish what he wanted to say. He thanked me for my stumbling response and hopefully, my reaction and my response gave him encouragement to persevere with the healing process. It must have been one of the healing strategies he was required to do as part of his therapy.

There are two facts that have stayed in my memory which indicate that the Directors of Formation, Brother Gregory McNamara and Brother Aloysius Carmody, were concerned that Leo would never make it as a classroom teacher. The first fact is that he was one of the very few Novices to be chosen to learn touch-typing during the morning house-work period.

The impression we novices picked up was that any novice who was invited to do this was thought to be a good candidate who would probably persevere in Religious life. You might be pleased to know that I was not one of the chosen ones! It was something we joked about in later years.

In hindsight, the Directors probably thought that if he could not teach then this would be a skill that would still enable him to realize his vocation as a Brother. The other fact was that Leo was assigned to work with

Brother Kevin Price in the printery. This meant he was introduced to the various processes associated with the printing machines used at that time.

Here was another skill which could be developed to help him be an active member in the educational mission of the Congregation. Because Leo and I had not done French in our Leaving Certificate we had special lessons in French given by Brother Ambrose and during which there was time for much laughter when dealing with difficult phrases.

One of us learnt by practice the reality and meaning of an ascetical practice of 'manger a genoux' (eating one's meal on one's knees!).

Leo and I knelt here on these sanctuary steps on the morning of Monday 26th January 1959 after a Missa Cantata to pronounce our first vows before moving round to the Eastern wing of this building to begin our professional formation in what in those days we called the Scholasticate.

I cannot remember whether or not he joined us in the afternoon teaching practice lessons at Oakhill Boarding College or whether he would spend his time at the printery, but I do know that he attended morning lectures and began University Studies through the distance courses offered by the University of New England, Armidale.

With our Leaving Certificate results, Leo and I had successfully completed two Maths Courses so that when it was announced that we were to enrol in English Studies we went together to the Director and asked if we could study Maths at UNE.

We were told that we were to do the same subjects as the other brothers, namely English I, History I, Psychology I and Education I. So our journey as professional English Teachers began and can I say it began in response to holy obedience!

It would be interesting if the walls of the Brother Visitor's Office which was located at the Western end of the main corridor could talk and could provide us with the discussion that must have taken place there about where to send Leo on his first appointment.

What happened behind those closed doors we will never know! But we do know that Leo was appointed to teach the Primary Classes at Clairvaux.

Leo somehow must have been extremely insistent with the Director and the Brother Visitor and let them know that he desperately wanted to go into the

classroom.

When he did enter the classroom a miracle happened. It was here that he found his voice, teaching the little ones of Third Class. The voice he found here for his teaching ministry became more and more a prophetic voice.

We could say that he was not in the line of those reluctant prophets who have served the People of God throughout the ages and who began their mission using the excuse that they were unable to speak. "Truly I do not know how to speak" (Jeremiah 1:6) pleaded Jeremiah when he was called.

The greatest of the Prophets, Moses, also tried to squirm out of his prophetic vocation complaining that he was "slow of speech and slow of tongue" (Ex.3:10). But as we know God had other ideas for them. God had a plan to use Leo's human spirit of determination and commitment to further the Kingdom

In his early years as Principal of St John's College Dandenong, Leo faced several difficult and complicated situations. With the recently completed Second Vatican Council, the various reforms to secondary education, the groundswell among youth searching for peace in view of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War and a call for societal reform evidenced by student riots in Paris, the foundational values of many institutions were being challenged.

It was a difficult time for school administrators to stand firm on the solid values of the past while responding to these new cries for dialogue, participation in decision making and the quest for personal freedom. Out of his care for both staff and students, Leo had to make some unpopular decisions. His task was to lead the School Community towards harmony among these many competing forces.

During this period he instituted a Driving Course for his students which in those days was seen as an innovation for schools. Leo had no problem adapting to a new sets of circumstances, which in Dandenong meant moving into Co-education, developing the campus to implement a curriculum so all students could be skilled to face a changing world.

His leadership and dedication remain lasting legacies at the College. Once again he found his prophetic voice. Jeremiah would have been proud of him for "There! I am putting words into your mouth. Look today I am setting you over nations and over kingdoms, to tear up and to knock down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jeremiah 1:10)!

In 1982, there was a cry from the poor in the desert in Balgo Hills WA, the local community of indigenous people decided to ask the bishop for a Catholic school. They asked that the school be staffed by teachers who would be willing to stay and adapt to local conditions and that there be a secondary school so that their children need not leave the area for further schooling.

They requested that their children be educated in the Catholic faith. They asked that Kukatja language and culture be supported in the school alongside a mainstream program, Leo heard the cry and alerted the Brothers to this voice from the wilderness.

He took a sabbatical to prepare himself for this mission and became the principal of Luurnpa School at the beginning of 1984 and remained in that position for the next seventeen years.

He added the secondary section to the School and positively encouraged the use of the local language as the way to preserve this ancient culture. No one knows the personal agonies and traumas he suffered in this foundation.

I can remember standing here in this chapel one morning in 1985 with a great personal pride in suggesting to the Brothers that we should rejoice in the foundation of this work because good things came from that back water Nazareth and we do not know God's plan for the desert regions of Australia.

On one of my visits to Leo in PNG I saw him in action with the local people he was a great listener certainly, but I witnessed on a number of occasions how at the end of the conversation he was able to say "No" when he thought the request was unreasonable.

Leo spent 28 years working in several different cultural contexts. This was more than half of the time the Lord had made available to him for ministry. It is significant I think that Leo should complete his apostolic life reflecting on the latest letter of Brother Superior.

In this Christmas letter of 2010, Brother Superior reminds the Brothers that "we are called to exercise a prophetic ministry, along with the People of God, of whom we are a part. This ministry today takes on a new force and urgency because we are living in tough times in the history of the Church and society... We are called to be mystics and prophets. Mystical experience allows us to feel God's indwelling in the deepest part of our being (pages 8/9).

I wonder whether or not we will find any notes,

19/10/11

writings or annotations to books and Bibles among Leo's personal papers to learn something of his deepest mystical experience. I certainly hope so because as we read in the Gospel of Luke last Friday, Jesus asks us the question: 'How it is you do not know how to interpret these times? Why not judge for yourselves what is right?' (Luke 12 55). I am suggesting that Leo as he responded to the grace of God had such an insight.

We, by a continual reflection on Leo's life, might just find the way forward when we are in our present experience of Church, Religious Life and society "There is no sign from God, nor have we a prophet, we have no one to tell how long it will last"(Psalm 74:9).

I do not know what was Leo's favourite passage of Scripture but I wonder whether or not he resonated with Zachary's prophecy "and you, Leo, will be called the prophet of the Most High; for you will go before the Lord to prepare his ways, to give knowledge of salvation to his people by the forgiveness of their sins, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace" (Lk.1:76-79).

Today is the 25th of October, which is still observed in our District Lasallian Calendar as a special day to pray for vocations to the Institute- a remnant of the Devotion to the Divine Child which was once so important in the life of the Institute keeping us ever mindful of the mystery of the Incarnation so much associated with the Christmas cycle of Feasts.

This was the devotion that spawned the prayer Leo composed for us and gave us each a typed copy which is in the front of your Mass booklet. I hope you can sense in this prayer the stirrings in the generous heart of a young man who, committed to Jesus of Nazareth lived by faith and worked with zeal. (pause)

Thank you Margaret and Paul and your extended family for nurturing Leo's prophetic vocation and sharing him with us. Thank you to the many brothers, colleagues and students who over the years supported Leo and gave him such powerful encouragement to continue in God's Holy work.

Leo, be at rest, Share the joy between you and your disciples in the presence of God and receive the glory that awaits you as a faithful follower of the Lamb.  
**Amen.**

**EULOGY FOR BROTHER LEO SCOLLEN**  
given at the Funeral Mass at Boroko

Leo was born in Parramatta, Sydney Australia on the 23/04/1939. He was the third born and youngest child of Michael and Myra. His older sister Margaret lives in Liverpool, Sydney and his brother Paul in Canberra.

His father was one of the Governors of the Prisons System and hence worked in several of the large prisons in NSW over a number of years. I occasionally teased Br Leo that he was brought up in prison to which he used to laugh heartily.

Maybe this was where he developed the strong desire to serve those that were in need. De La Salle our Founder often visited the prison of his home city to minister to the needs of the prisoners.

Leo first met the De La Salle Brothers while living in Bathurst NSW when his father was the Governor of the large Bathurst Gaol. There he did his primary schooling. His secondary schooling was at Parramatta, Sydney.

His father had been promoted to a far larger institution there. Leo attended Marist Brothers High School. While there, Leo felt a calling to become a Brother. Interestingly he chose to join the De La Salle Brothers whom he had first met in Bathurst.

He left home at a young age and went to the De La Salle Brothers Training College not far away from Parramatta at a place called Oakhill. But his stay there was very short. Young Leo was sent home because the Brothers in charge of the pre-training program felt that he could never be a teacher. Leo had a severe speech impediment.

Whenever he talked he would stutter badly. Leo who still felt that God wanted him to be a Brother went back to Oakhill and while there started a speech therapy program which eventually helped him to control his stutter. He became a De La Salle Brother in 1957.

After successfully completing his teacher training he began his teaching apostolate at Katoomba in the Blue Mountains outside Sydney, in a small boarding school teaching 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. I have often wondered how the children felt in front of this



very tall, imposing figure standing there before them. I am sure he treated them tenderly.

While at Katoomba, Brother managed to complete his Bachelor of Arts degree at the University of New England, specializing in English and History.

From Katoomba he was sent to teach in a big secondary school, De La Salle College Malvern in Victoria. After a short stay there he was again asked to move to a new school in a fairly depressed semi-rural, working class area called Dandenong, first as a teacher and then as the Principal.

This was one of the satellite suburbs where factories were built to provide employment for the working class Victorians. It was here that I first had the privilege of working with Br Leo. He was both my Principal at the college and Director in my religious community. This was in 1976.

At Dandenong Br Leo had the task of developing a new Co-educational College for the archdiocese, amalgamating an existing boys' school with a local girls' school which was conducted by the Presentation Sisters.

The new College was to be called St John's Regional College and conducted jointly by the De La Salle Brothers and the Presentation Sisters. It was there that I saw the real strengths of Br Leo, his quiet unassuming character in administering a large educational complex of over 120 teaching staff working in three sections on the same campus, his tender concern and interest in staff and students, his ability to have a vision and be able to achieve it, his strong sense of justice when the interests of the students or staff were being jeopardized, and his unshakable determination to carry out decisions when hard decisions needed to be made. He also guided his Brothers' Community with warmth, interest, fraternal and kindly leadership valuing each of us, listening to us always and seeing that all our needs were met.

Br Leo was a deep thinking man but he was also a very practical man who was not afraid to do things himself. I remember him at 1:00 AM in the morning digging a trench on the newly graded oval. The contract plumber installing a sprinkler system had placed the sprinklers in the wrong place so Brother set about to correct the error

because the oval was due for seeding the next day.

All of a sudden he was surrounded by police from the dog squad demanding to know what he was doing and who he was. Br Leo got such a fright that he began to stutter saying that he was the principal of the college and he was doing some alterations.

Evidently a neighbour near the college had heard someone digging and reported the matter to the police. When Br Leo finished his term at Saint John's, he left behind a large well developed and resourced college and a hard working staff that were very saddened to see him go. Brother had another dream which he had to pursue.

Br Leo had shown a great interest in the educational development of Aboriginal children and youth for a long time. In 1982 he was asked to present to the De La Salle Brothers Council a proposal of where we as a congregation could assist in the education of Aboriginal youth. After a year travelling to many Aboriginal communities he proposed that Balgo Hills on the edge of the Great Sandy Desert in a remote part of Western Australia seemed to be the most needy community and in his opinion the best place for the Brothers to work with the indigenous people of Australia. Brother Leo offered to go and develop the school. Here at Balgo Hills Br Leo continued to show what kind of a wonderful person he was.

The school started in controversy. A small disaffected group led by a white person threatened the opening of the school. But the obstacle was overcome with a prayer vigil arranged by Brother and his small staff of dedicated teachers (including two Mercy Sisters) combined with the intervention of the elders of the community. So the school was able to open.

By normal standards the conditions were harsh and primitive. The temperature often soaring over 40 degrees and the flies terribly uncomfortable. Within a couple of years Br Leo had an ingeniously built school complex constructed 3000 km away in Perth, brought up to Balgo on the back of large semi-trailers and assembled on site in the community.

The original idea of this type of school construction was his. Here yet again his patience and quiet reflective attitude, his love of the indigenous people which was reciprocated, his extraordinary capacity for hard work, his attentive listening, his generosity and prayerfulness were all in evidence.

When it was known that Brother was leaving there was a massive outpouring of regret and sorrow among the local community. I for one know that in a way he accepted having to move on from the school but after seventeen years of serving the people, he had hoped to have stayed and continued working with the old people and the adult education Centre.

But Br Leo in obedience to the vows that he had made to God accepted this leaving as God's call to a new venture. His new appointment was to go and work in PNG at an age when most people were getting ready to retire.

In 2000 Br Leo arrived in PNG, not for the first time as he had come here before to work on Yule Island during Christmas time preparing work books, with other young Brothers, for the young students of PNG to use in schools.

Brother was asked to be the director/principal of HYDC. Once again his educational savvy came to the fore.

With assistance from Br Robert the teaching became more structured and formalized, the facilities greatly improved, computer areas and technical areas were developed with no local government help but with kind help from our Australian schools.

Then over time submissions to Aus-aid which took Brother much intense work over a number of years, gave the Centre the wonderful facilities that exist now. But the dream was not over.

Brother had been working very hard lately to obtain official recognition from the Education Department to become a registered school.

He wanted it to be called "La Salle Technical High School" but he found it hard to accept the requirements of higher school fees and the selection criteria which he knew would handicap those most in need.

Even with the support of the Secretary of Education Dr Pagelio, the registration officials have been very slow to act.

He was also concerned by the lack of co-operation of Lands Department officials when he was attempting to purchase land behind the school in order to build twenty teacher houses, which in PNG is essential if good teachers are to be attracted. But Leo was persistent and continued to visit the offices day after day to check on the progress.

Br Leo was in the process of requesting Aus-aid for a grant of K10.5 million to redevelop the old existing asbestos clad buildings with a double storey structure offering better facilities for teaching personnel who needed offices, also needed were electro-technology rooms, craft and sewing rooms, extra classrooms and an extension to the present hall. He already had, I believe, two successful interviews with the panel from Aus-aid.

Being a true disciple of St. John Baptist De La Salle, Br Leo helped the poor and marginalized youth through education. His tireless passion and generous efforts to serve the most in need have had a great impact on the lives of many unfortunate youths who would not have had a chance at furthering their education.

He served with distinction and brought hope to so many people. We will miss him now that he has gone. The Lord I believe has called Br Leo saying, "Leo you have done more than enough, let someone else finish the work. Come to Me and to your eternal reward."

**"Rest in Peace Brother and thank you."**

(Br Joe Gabel fsc)