

Br Bert Bro  
(from District  
Archives)

1974-1979 Justin-Siena High School, Napa  
1979-1986 Christian Brothers H.S., Sacramento  
1986-1994 Holy Family Community, Napa  
1994-1995 Novitiate, Mont La Salle, Napa  
1995-Provincialate, Mont La Salle, Napa

Raymond Joseph Coleman was born in San Francisco, October 14, 1914, of parents whose own parents came from Roscommon, Ireland. His father, William, was a professional typesetter for newspapers in the City. His mother's maiden name was Anna McNulty. Raymond had an older brother, Edmund, a sister, Florence and a younger sister, Ann. The family moved about in San Francisco quite bit, and never lived in their own home but always in rented flats.

Edm  
Florence  
Ann

It was at Saint Peter's Parish school he met Brothers in the sixth grade, after having had the Sisters of Mercy in the first five grades. In a recent interview with Brother Richard Moratto he recalled, "Brother Ambrose Reilly invited me to join the altar boys ... I also enjoyed playing handball with younger Brothers, like Joe Buckley and Peter Bird, after school and on Saturdays. While I was in the eighth grade, Ambrose invited me to join the Junior Novices at the Russian River for a few weeks during the summer, and I accepted. I returned to St. Peter's because I was going steady with a girl in my class. However, at the end of my freshman year I decided to go to the Junior Novitiate in Martinez. My mother and dad did not discourage me, nor did they encourage me. They just let me work it out... As an altar boy I had been serving Mass and Benediction on a regular basis. During Lent, even when I wasn't serving, I would attend daily Mass... I was very regular as a kid to say the three Hail Mary's, before going to bed, for purity... I believe the Holy Spirit was guiding me to a destination that was to be my lifetime commitment."

#### JUNIORATE

Since young Raymond had been driving a car from the age of thirteen, getting his first license at the age of fourteen, he brought a valuable skill in 1930 to the Junior Novitiate and had several chances to be of service.

He reported about the staff that "we had Brothers who related well to us: Arcadius Patrick Halligan as Director, Pius Figueroa, Jerome Griffin, Anselm Shanahan, Edwin Adams... I never experienced loneliness in the Juniorate." In a 1982 autobiography, Bertram described some of these mentors as follows: "We had a very wise and concerned Director in Brother Arcadius Patrick; an offhand, joking and athletic Brother U. Jerome; a friendly, sensitive Brother U. Pius;...a lively, witty Brother Anselm Shanahan; and the active Brother Edwin Adams." Perhaps the young Raymond was well liked because he had a sense of humor and took well the

ribbing that he received over his Mission District accent—an accent, by the way, which he never really lost.

In the interview cited above, Brother Bertram went on to praise the quality of the extracurricular program, and he also mentioned that he was elected president of the student body. A major event that year, in April 1932, was the transfer of all the Martinez operations to Mont La Salle in Napa. He notes, “The last days in Martinez were hectic and succeeded in bringing out the Irish temper of Brother A. Patrick. However, once at Mont La Salle, despite the unfinished nature of buildings and delay in arrival of necessary furniture, everyone became more relaxed in the newness and expansion of our facilities and in the beauty of the surroundings.”

The role of student body president almost went to Bertram’s head. In his Oral History he mentions that before his class moved on to the Senior Novitiate, “I went to Patrick and said that we had all kinds of plans for the Juniors, adding, ‘I would like to talk to the Juniors before going over to the Novitiate.’ Patrick said, ‘No. I think that we will be able to take care of ourselves.’ So that was an experience I had in humility that I had to have.”

#### NOVITIATE

The year in the Novitiate started auspiciously under the Directorship of the beloved Brother Leo Burns, but he died within a short time. The severe sub-director, Brother Conrad Vincent Scott, took over. His rigorism and literal interpretations of the old *Rule* were very hard to endure. Brother Bertram approached the Visitor on behalf of the Novices and indicated that he might leave the Novitiate and then return under a different management. He quotes the reply, “Brother Gregory [Mallon], Visitor, gently reminded me that I was free to leave but not to return. It was my second reminder of the need for humility.” Bertram added, “I was assured that my presence was not essential for the continuous success of the Novitiate.” Nevertheless, Brother Conrad was soon relieved of the post of Director, and another, more reasonable Director from the east, Brother Chrysostom Burkert, replaced him. Bertram’s fellow novices were grateful for the successful intervention.

In August, 1932, Bertram concluded the Novitiate with his group at the customary private vow ceremony. Brother V. Philip Leary showed up unannounced for the occasion with Bertram’s father and the father of a Junior Novice. Fortunately, Philip was a popular Brother with great public relations skills, and so the visitors were allowed to attend the ceremony.

#### SCHOLASTICATE

The “graduated” Novices arrived at Saint Mary’s College in August, 1933. The Director of the Scholasticate was Brother Bede Edward

Wilkinson. A senior Scholastic, Brother Walter Smith, was the sub-director. The Director had an outgoing personality but with definite ideas about training the young Brothers in classical music, foreign languages, and the like. Bertram did not appreciate all these ideas. In those days, having only two years in the Scholasticate was standard practice, so Bertram's stay was rather brief. But, fortunately, during that time there were in-house training sessions for the teaching of religion classes (called "Catechism of Formation") and some chances to be observers in classrooms at the Brothers' schools. At the College Brother Bertram continued to serve as chauffeur for several Brothers, including the prominent Brother Z. Leo and the Visitor, Brother Jasper, who maintained his headquarters at the College.

During this time Bertram reports that he was anxious to get out to a teaching community and start work in the apostolate. He got his wish. It was only some years later that he was given time off in order to complete his degree work at the College.

### TEACHING ASSIGNMENTS

His first teaching assignment was to the combined class of sixth and seventh graders, along with one high school class in history, at Christian Brothers High School in Sacramento. This was in August, 1935. The next year he taught exclusively in the high school division. But at the end of the following year, when a vacancy occurred in the Juniorate faculty, he was assigned to teach at Mont La Salle, replacing Brother David Ruegg. That assignment lasted two and a half years, during which he taught almost every subject matter except French and the sciences. His fellow faculty members included Brother Ignatius Kenny, the Director, and Brothers Boniface Kohles and Benedict Reams.

The famous Brother Cornelius Luke led a twenty-day retreat at this time for the Brothers of the District who were not finally professed. Bertram wrote about one of its effects, "I became convinced that the Juniorate gave me too many opportunities to become emotionally involved with the students... I asked Brother Jasper, Visitor, for a change. This was the first of two occasions when I took the initiative for a change of assignment. The other was when I completed thirteen-and-a-half years as a Director and Principal..." He goes on to report about this request, "Brother Jasper accommodated me by returning me to Sacramento..." And he adds, "Returning to Sacramento in 1939 was a rewarding experience. I had a 'first love' for the school and the city, and we had an enthusiastic Director and principal and an eager young Community." Brother Bertram is referring here to Brother William Cyril [Boselli], newly appointed to head up the school and Community.

During 1943-1944 Bertram was finally given a chance to return to Saint Mary's College in order to complete his bachelor's degree but did not return afterwards to CBS. He was moved in 1944 to the High School in Berkeley. His work there was to teach three high school classes and to be prefect in charge of the high school boarders.

### FIRST DIRECTORSHIP

Before Brother Bertram had his thirty-first birthday in 1945, Brother Alfred Brousseau, Visitor, appointed him to be Director of the Scholasticate at Saint Mary's College. It was an interesting time on campus marked by the close of World War II and by the influx of war veterans to the College. Brother Bertram was drafted to teach some courses in religion, vocal expression and English grammar. This pattern of part-time teaching continued over the next several years while he took on various administrative posts throughout the District. He was proud to note that he kept his hand in personal classroom teaching for twenty-eight years.

At the College the Scholastics were crowded into a part of a temporary building called Assumption Hall. Brother Cornelius Luke Pryor was the Visitor General from the Motherhouse, and his official visits were looked upon with some dread. For example, he limited the number of times of recreation to three afternoons a week. But Brother Alfred was prevailed upon to supply the house with its first car and to allow the purchase of a machine for washing clothes.

When the Navy Pre-Flight School moved off campus in 1946, the Scholastics were able to return to Benilde Hall and to more adequate quarters. During the summers the Scholastics worked with boys in the summer camps both on campus and at the Russian River, but they also took courses from experienced Brothers on classroom management. Brother Eugene Ward came to campus for that purpose, as did Brother Justin Sullivan.

Brother Bertram was also proud to note in his autobiography that as a teacher he was involved with students in many extracurricular teams and clubs, starting with his first year in school work. For example, during his first year, 1935-36, he coached grammar school boys and helped Brother Kevin Lynch organize a parochial school athletic league. In the Juniorate he coached all the sports. Back in Sacramento later, he was assigned assistant varsity football coach and ended the first year as head coach. During World War II, when it was hard to hire coaches, Bertram held three titles, Athletic Director, P.E. instructor, and varsity basketball coach. Similarly, while spending a year during the War at the College, he coached several of the football players in basketball! They called themselves "the Moraga Wolves."

As for clubs in the schools, Bertram was seriously involved in journalism. He worked with students on the *Crusader* at Mont La Salle and on student publications at CBS. He wrote articles for the diocesan paper too. But it is safe to say that involving students in so-called "Catholic Action" was Bertram's chief interest. He worked closely with Brother Edward Behan in this work, which also extended to the YCS (Young Christian Students) apostolate.

In the later 1940's there was a rising interest throughout the educational world in counseling and guidance as important supplements to the academic curriculum. As early as 1939 Brother Cyril had backed Brother Edward Behan, who was a prime mover in this apostolate. Brother Thomas Levi has pointed out that his own work as vocation director also led him to encourage the counseling and guidance programs in these early days. Bertram made every effort to bring this concern along with him wherever he was assigned. His years as prefect of boarders at CBS and at St. Mary's High had impressed him with its importance.

#### SUBSEQUENT DIRECTORSHIPS

In February, 1948, Brother Alfred sent Bertram to be Director and principal at Christian Brothers High in Sacramento, leaving behind Brother Jerome West, who had been his sub-director, as new Director of Scholastics. He wrote in his autobiography about CBS, "It did not take me long to become friends with the senior class, a friendship I cherish to this day. I followed them (as I did with all my students) in all the sports, dances, picnics, Catholic Action meetings, and any social activity of the school. We initiated with Sister Celestine S.M. (St. Joseph's Academy) and Sister Manuela OSF (St. Francis High School) the Interschool Council whereby the student officers of the three schools met regularly to plan curricular and extracurricular activities."

After Bertram's term at CBS he was sent to replace Brother William Cyril as Director and principal at Cathedral High in Los Angeles. He admits in his writings that he was reluctant to leave Sacramento, but he adds that it did not take him long to adjust to the new assignment. "At first there was apprehension in light of some stories I had heard about the students and the neighborhoods from which they came, but as I became more and more acquainted with the boys as individuals, I was more relaxed. I grew to love a people I never really knew before. I met them in their homes, in their places of work, coming to appreciate their poverty but also their ambition. To meet these former students in later life at reunions and to see where they have advanced on economic and social levels have been a rewarding experiences."

It is interesting to note that Brother Bertram phased out the mechanical arts programs of his predecessors and replaced them with

sophisticated business courses, while at the same time strengthening the college preparatory courses. Simultaneously he strengthened the Catholic Action work and initiated the well-known Circle C service club.

#### ASSIGNMENTS AFTER 1958

From July 1958 to July 1968 Brother Bertram was given a welcome respite from administering high schools and directing Communities. First, he became assistant to Brother Edward Behan, Vocational Director. He helped in vocational work for three years, first living at La Salle High in Pasadena so that he could finish work on an MA at Immaculate Heart College, and then living for two years at CBS in Sacramento. By then, Brother Jerome West was Visitor, and he appointed Bertram in 1962 to be Inspector of Schools (Director of Education). Also by then, the Provincialate headquarters was in Rheem, so Bertram lived there and was chosen to be Director of the Community for its first year.

As Director of Education Brother Bertram organized separate meetings for high school Directors' associations and that of the principals. But his main occupation was to meet with individual teachers and visit classrooms. He recalled later that this experience was quite valuable to him when he became Visitor himself.

In 1960 Brother Bertram's nephew went to the Novitiate and became Brother Mark, starting his Novitiate with a robing ceremony at Mont La Salle. His official sponsor was Brother Bertram who, we are told used the occasion to tell Mark, "I will give you only one piece of advice all your life as a Brother: the superiors don't need to know everything!" Mark says that the advice served him well!

#### VISITORSHIP

Brother Bertram was able to appreciate the responsibilities of the Visitorship because he had lived in the Provincialate for some time and, even more so, because he had served as Acting Visitor for several months while Brother Jerome attended to lengthy sessions of the 1966 and 1967 General Chapter held in Rome. Shortly thereafter he became the first one in the history of the District to be nominated, under the new Institute policies, by a District Chapter and then to be selected by the Brothers' preferential vote for appointment as Visitor.

The post-Vatican II days were a difficult time, not only of adapting to a new *Rule*, but also a time of general social and ecclesiastical upheaval. Brother Bertram had his work cut out for him. He wrote, "My attention as Visitor was to steer the District through winds of change with some stability and sense of security." He added, "I tried not to be a prophet or visionary, but only to develop within the District the feeling that what we were doing in the schools with the young people was needed and necessary." This conviction about school work he held onto, in spite of the many examples of

the Sisters and priests pulling out of education. When he went to meetings of the national Visitors' Conference and to meetings of Major Religious Superiors, he argued forcibly for his convictions. At the same time, he noted, he tried to keep a sense of humor and to respect what others thought was more important. This was especially the case at the newly-invented conferences called (U.S.-Toronto) Regional Chapters of our Brothers. He noted in his autobiography, "The San Francisco delegation was able to hold its 'conservative' position despite more radical movements on the part of other Districts."

Brother Bertram liked to tell an anecdote about the Second Regional Chapter. He read a position paper detailing some of his negative reactions to the First Chapter. "After I finished reading the statement, one of the New York delegates wanted to know how come we didn't vote against the resolutions of the First Chapter. My retort was, 'If I may mix metaphors, we came to the first Regional Chapter as Babes in the Woods to listen to the Wise Men from the East, but like Little Red Riding Hood we found that there was no grandma in the bed.'" Brothers years later recalled the burst of laughter that greeted this response.

In 1971 there was a meeting in Rome for the Visitors of all the Districts in the world. By that time, Bertram noted, "There was more calm and a greater sense of the need for identifying ourselves with the schools. San Francisco District was cited as one that attracted vocations at a better rate than many other Districts and that our determination to stay with our schools was a factor." But it was not easy to do so—manpower and financial straits meant that bishops, pastors, some parents and some Brothers wanted to "consolidate" many schools in the Catholic educational system. And in fact, our Brothers did withdraw from Garces High School in Bakersfield. For additional reasons the District Junior Novitiate was closed. "These were not easy decisions and left some scars on Brothers who did not agree with them." Procrastination, Brother Bertram admitted, saved other schools.

When nominations and elections were held at the end of Brother Bertram's first term as Visitor, the result was that he was re-elected. However, within months he was stricken with a slight stroke and spent more than two months convalescing. During that time the Auxiliary Visitor, Brother Michael Quinn, and Brother Cassian Frye, the Director of Education, filled in for him. Upon returning to take full charge, Bertram made a decision that was unpopular with a few Brothers, namely, to move the Provincialate residence and offices out of Rheem to less ostentatious quarters. The Rheem Estate was large, had spacious grounds, and had a fine swimming pool, but room for offices was limited. A smaller family residence was purchased in nearby Lafayette for the Provincialate Community, and the office space was taken care of—a new building was erected on the nearby St. Mary's College campus.

In his various accounts Brother Bertram fails to record, about his Visitorship, one interesting problem—he had to deal with a "fugitive

Brother.” This Brother, to the amusement of many others in the District, moved about the western States staying with friends and doing historical research. He published worthwhile scholarly papers, but he eluded contact with Brother Bertram for a couple of years—much to Bertram’s distress. Finally, the problem was settled, and the Brother, whose name was Henry, returned to the fold.

#### MOVE TO JUSTIN-SIENA HIGH SCHOOL

At the end of Brother Bertram’s second term as Visitor, he was given options about his next post. He felt responsible for decisions that had been made regarding Justin-Siena in Napa and wanted to help assure the success of the new arrangements. So he chose to be assigned there, first as dean of boys and then as vice-principal. The school had originally started as co-institutional, with girls under the tutelage of the Dominican Sisters of San Rafael and the boys under the Christian Brothers. The decision to amalgamate the operation into a single coeducational institution required some finessing—for example, choosing principals from among the Sisters and Brothers for alternate terms. He comments, “I found it a rewarding experience working with a Sister Principal who was willing to take the responsibility of ‘letting the buck stop here’ and yet share in the decisions that had to be made. Not all the Brothers in the Community accepted a woman’s leadership and authority, but for the most part there was a cooperative spirit.”

During his five years at Justin-Siena, Bertram taught one or two periods, for example, a course on Christian marriage and another on behavioral science. But fund-raising was his main concern. He had introduced at the school a Federal food subsidy program, so he also had to coordinate the cafeteria program. Also, when he became Director of the Community, he persuaded the District to build extra bedrooms in the house.

#### BACK TO SACRAMENTO

Brothers Ronald Roggenback, principal, and Joseph Neary, development director, at Christian Brothers High in Sacramento persuaded Bertram to accept a post there in charge of fund raising, a full time job. He noted that his multiple chores in Napa had worn him down somewhat. On the other hand, his many friendships and contacts in Sacramento needed to be exploited. He records, “I was able gradually to transfer my responsibilities to Sister Suzannah and Brother Thomas Cannon at Napa in the spring and summer of 1974.” He still continued, however, to be on the board of trustees in Napa for another two years.

His time in Sacramento was very busy. His description runs as follows: “I learned more and more about fund raising through direct mailing, publications, phonothons, and working with the Board of Regents



who made personal contacts with their friends for funds. I attended conferences, seminars and workshops over the course of three years and subscribed to several professional journals.” He started a quarterly newsletter. Of course, he made it a point to attend local funerals, rosaries, parish and diocesan events. This work produced a lot of small donations. What was needed were large donations, and Bertram admitted that that effort was very difficult for him. He reports in his Oral History, “Going out and asking for big money, particularly from people whom I knew, was very difficult.” He adds about his alumni friends, “I felt a great reluctance to reach into their pockets and ask for big amounts of money. I felt that was sort of compromising the relationship I had with them as their former teacher.” One of the chief needs, as he saw it, was to increase the salaries of the lay teachers. Many of them, even the best, felt forced to move on to higher-paying schools. However, he had the consolation of knowing that, compared to the archdiocesan salary-scale that he had found in Los Angeles, CBS was doing better.

Brother Bertram’s devoted efforts in Sacramento led to a new building at the entrance of Christian Brothers High School. The donors made sure to name it in his honor.

Brother Bertram was at CBS in 1982 when the Brothers of the District were all invited by the Brother Archivist, Alfred Brousseau, to write their autobiographies. Many passages cited above are from this 1982 document. It contains, in addition to a chronological account, some pages of additional information and evaluation. He lists his educational background leading up to his MA, his work for a teaching credential, his numerous committee memberships and roles in national organizations—some of which called upon him to serve as officer, and many of which required travel throughout the country to almost every major city including Honolulu. What pleased him most was a train trip to Philadelphia to a CBEA meeting for which he was able to take Brother Ambrose Reilly east on the latter’s golden jubilee trip. The trip included a wide-ranging tour of the eastern part of the country. It should be noted that Bertram continued to show solicitude for old Brother Ambrose during the latter’s remaining years.

Though, while Visitor, he had missed out on attending a General Chapter, he had attended a Visitors’ meeting in Rome and later had a vacation trip to there—and to Ireland. Within the United States what he particularly appreciated was the annual meeting of Visitors. He writes, “The Visitors’ retreats/workshops at Sangre de Cristo each year were most enlightening, spiritually rewarding and helpful. We had expert speakers to address us, bringing their research in areas affecting religious life to our awareness, ... and the exchange of practical problems among the Districts helped to minimize local crises.” For a time he was president of the whole Region and chair of its board of directors.

When he turned sixty-eight, he began to feel the need to slow down and let the professional fund raisers take over at Christian Brothers High. After seven years in Sacramento he was asked in 1986 to become Director of the Holy Family Community at Mont La Salle in Napa. This assignment also included general overseeing of the plant under the title "Director General." He reports about this, "I had some reluctance about coming to Mont La Salle as a Director and administrator because I really thought I wanted to retire and have more time to read and pray. But the Visitor, Brother Norman Cook, said, 'Bertram, you are not going to retire!' " In retrospect, he has agreed with Norman that it was not the right time for full retirement. Moreover, Norman had assured him of plenty of help at Mont La Salle— Brother Columban Derby would be pro-director; Brother Ignatius Kenny would be sub-director; and Brother Thomas Levi would be director of health services.

There were a number of changes during his tenure. The grammar school, which had been using the old Juniorate, was closed, and there was an attempt to convert it into a public conference center—even though it contained no private bedrooms, only open dormitories.

By 1989 Brother Columban became Director, leaving Bertram, as Director general, free to supervise the reconstruction of the Juniorate building, which was being turned into both a true conference center and the new headquarters of the District, including its offices as well as housing for the Provincialate Community.

#### FINAL ASSIGNMENT

During this time of transition, Brother Bertram asked the Visitor, Brother Mark Murphy (the one who was his nephew), for assignment to the District Archives. Since the death of Brother Alfred Brousseau in 1988 that post had been in need of continued energetic and concentrated attention. One problem was that Brother Alfred had not been following the generally-recognized policies for archival work, in particular, the principle of provenance, which called for classifying materials according to their origin rather than by their content.

The first task that Bertram was interested in was a new edition for all the Brothers of the publication called "Curriculum Vitae." This required a certain amount of cooperation from the Brothers and so was difficult! However, with help from Brother Edward Stopper, he brought out a definitive volume. He later brought out updated issues.

A second task involved computerization, and this proved to be especially complex. Brother Alfred had used an obsolete computer language, and after him there was no agreement about whether to use Word, Word Perfect, Apple, or a special archival program in some other language. There were false starts as well as some problems with the DLSI computer preferences. In searching for a younger successor as Archivist, Bertram let Brother John Nunes take over. This choice did not work out and lasted only

a few months, giving Bertram a chance to exercise a great deal of edifying patience. Meanwhile a national agreement was reached among the Districts, and liaison with their Archives was achieved. This entailed some traveling to Memphis and other cities by Brother Bertram to help coordinate the archival work of all six Districts.

To this complex work Brother Bertram brought all his accustomed energy and devotion. And he did so with admirable patience. He needed patience in securing not only the cooperation of the Brothers in the San Francisco District but also getting the cooperation of the individual schools whose staffs were supposed to forward much of their printed material—booklets, reports, minutes, accounts, etc. And this took a lot of persistent pursuit. He would put in a full seven hours' work five days a week, and five hours on Saturdays. It paid off. He reported in his Oral History that the San Francisco District has the most complete archives in the Region with respect to the history of each school. He was glad to help each of the District institutions on several occasions to prepare background photos and documents for display on local anniversaries and the like. Furthermore, with a rise of interest in genealogies, he was frequently called upon by individuals seeking information about Brothers who were relatives. It was surprising how many people came to depend on his work.

For later years he had a part-time clerical help in Mrs. Peggy Aaron, a local housewife. He had some part-time help also from Brother Nicholas Biehle and by 1995 regular part-time help from Brother Brendan Kneale.

Realizing that he needed, in the near future, to train a successor, Bertram kept after the Visitor to appoint a suitable Brother to the post. The only willing candidate among the Brothers was engaged fulltime in classroom work and so was unavailable. This meant that the post of District Archivist would have to be taken over by a non-Brother. Brother Bertram obtained permission to conduct a search and fortunately found a very able successor in Ms. Andrea Miller, a resident of Napa and mother of several Justin-Siena alumni. The timing was perfect. Bertram's final illness began to take serious toll about six months after Ms. Miller began her initiation into the processes of filing, computerizing, and contacting required by her post. For the last months of his life, he had the title Archivist Emeritus. Finally to have his successor in place was a great relief to Bertram. He had developed a passion for the success of the District Archives and was very pleased to see that the work would be capably carried on.

## DEVOTIONAL LIFE

Before leaving the autobiography which Bertram wrote in 1982, we might cite some passages from a section that he entitled "Spiritual Development and Growth in the Religious Life."

"In my formative years my religious expression was greatly associated with 'devotions.'... I guess I evaluated spiritual depth by measurable

actions—First Fridays, First Saturdays, novenas, tridiums, rosaries, Stations of the Cross, etc.”

“Daily Communion and weekly Confession were other measurements of my religious life for most of my years...”

“In my younger years, even in grade school, I loved to imagine Jesus walking at my elbow. I use to converse with Him—though not on a deep contemplative level as I do now, but in a very practical, folksy way. I also had, and still have, a close relationship in prayer with the Blessed Mother. Three Hail Mary’s before going to sleep has been a lifelong practice.”

“I look forward to [retreats] of quiet meditative prayer and reading. In my early religious life I did find, however, the twenty and thirty day retreats a little long. ... To a lesser degree I also found the fifty day retreat on Beaver Island a prolonged agony. ...”

“Perhaps the growth in my spiritual life could be measured by how I became more and more dependent on the Spirit of Faith and on belief in God’s Providence for evaluating decisions as well as weaknesses and disappointments. I also grew to depend more on quiet prayer in the presence of God than on multiple words, gestures or exercises.”

To these observations we could add that in his final years, Brother Bertram had an edifying devotion to what was called “the Personal Annual Program,” a practice urged by the Brothers’ *Rule* and closely related to the traditional daily “examen of conscience.”

#### FINAL YEARS

What most edified his confreres in Bertram’s final years was his devotion to his former students. He drove many miles (and very fast!) to attend meetings in Sacramento and elsewhere. In his own words he writes, “In these latter years I still keep in touch with many of my former students, particularly in Sacramento and Los Angeles. I correspond with them; I visit with them and their families in their homes, even with those who have moved to other localities and States. I make a point to attend as many class reunions as I can, keeping up with my former students as they grow older and have children and grandchildren of their own.”

He adds, “I believe one of the factors that have made me available both physically and spiritually was my consecrated life. My vows freed me from concerns about raising a family of my own or from financial insecurity in terms of salary... This freedom made me more available ...”

In the Archives there are preserved copies of numerous certificates, awards, plaques, testimonials, and news items. These attest to the high regard and notable achievements of an outstanding leader in Catholic education.

In addition, among the papers in Brother Bertram's archival file is a transcript of an interview conducted in 1999 by Brother Richard Moratto. The interview covers much of the material above, but also quotes Bertram as follows: "As a Novice I took seriously the recommendations of the Founder from the *Collection* for developing the Spirit of Faith by daily remembrances of various approaches to God's Providential revelation in our daily experiences. This has helped me in times of difficult decisions as an administrator, in resignation to setbacks and disappointments, in acceptance of frustrations in dealing with Brothers, lay faculty, students and parents ..."

In a later part of the interview Bertram was asked what he considered his major contribution to have been. "I think my real contributions have [derived from] my conviction that my mission was 'to touch hearts' by becoming a real friend and counselor to my students. ... When I was principal in Sacramento and Los Angeles, I made a practice of knowing the first name of each student and referring to them by their first names in my conversation with them...." Further on, Bertram adds, "Overcoming prejudices of the past, I have learned to be more tolerant of diversity and opposition. I welcome developments that meet the challenges of our times as we recall the courage of our Founder in facing up to situations he never anticipated..."

As noted at the start of this account, Bertram was robust, but he had had some health problems, notably the stroke mentioned earlier—from which he recovered completely—and a growing deafness. During the last two years of his life, moreover, he developed cancer in his esophagus, a painful and sometimes embarrassing affliction. The doctors tried, unsuccessfully, to install a tube to replace the esophagus. Brother Bertram bore the radiation treatment and his pain, as well as the dietary restrictions, with dignity and without complaint.

He died on October 9, 2002. His nephew, Brother Mark Murphy, was serving in the Far East and was unable to attend the funeral. He wrote a testimonial letter which began with the following paragraph: "I am most grateful in a special way for the life, the presence, the influence of Brother Bertram. He was, from the time I was young and through all the years of my own vocation, a major influence. By the way he lived his vocation, he gave me—as he gave many of you—hope and confidence that God has a plan and a place for each of us. His very human way of loving, of being faithful and consistent—at times, just plain stubborn!—was a wonderful embodiment of what St. La Salle had envisioned our life to be: faith and zeal." In the next-to-last paragraph, Brother Mark addresses him: "So Brother Bertram—Uncle Ray—while I am very sad not to be taking part directly in this final ceremony, I am very happy that St. La Salle's promise is now true for you: 'What joy it will be for a Brother of the Christian Schools when he sees in heaven all the students whose salvation he has helped to procure.'"

Many other testimonial letters can be found in Bertram's archival file. Passages from some of them are:

"His first words to me in 1955 were, 'The devil you know is better than the devil you don't know.' He said this to encourage me to accept an obedience which sent me to Cathedral High School in Los Angeles."

"Bertram backed his tireless work with long periods of prayer, and his spirit of faith is evident from how he faced the ending of his life with hope and optimism as he put himself in the hands of God. Bert, you showed us how to live and how to meet the Lord."

"If I tell you that Bert earned straight D's, that's not to be taken as a reflection on his academic achievements. The reference is to a trio of his sterling qualities: Dedication, Dependability, and Durability."

"In my own case, when I was at the College and he was back on the campus, and I found myself long of hair but short of cash, Bert would doff his collar, take up clippers and shears and give a first-class haircut. He wouldn't take a cent for it, either. You know, I've been looking futilely for nearly sixty years now for another barber with a vow of poverty!"

"Dan Grady for almost fifty years kept a secret that Bertram held him to. Dan, an outstanding track and football star at Cathedral, got in a fight with a freshman who was hassling the football team. Dan had tried to hold back but the freshman didn't know when to stop. Both were sent to Brother Bertram who impartially corrected them, and laid out their punishments. After the freshman left, Bertram asked Dan to stay on. Fearful that he might be kicked out of school because he should have known better, Dan did not know what to expect. It was then that Bertram said, 'Dan, you taught that freshman a lesson that he really needed—but don't ever tell anyone I said so.' And with that, Bertram hugged Dan."

"Here's a memory I've had of Bertram since September, 1957. I was a freshman at Cathedral High School, and it was the first football game of the season. It was a Friday night. After the game four or five of us freshmen were in the school yard waiting for our ride that didn't show up. Apparently the dad who was supposed to pick us up forgot. Anyway, Bertram came out and asked us what we were doing so late on campus. After we explained, he offered to take us all to our homes. I was very impressed and so were my parents that the principal went out of his way to take us home."

"In Community [in his final years] what edified me the most was his attachment to the Rosary and to Marian devotions in general. Also, he took active part in all the projects of the Community and its various chores, in spite of the handicaps of hearing loss and of diabetic symptoms..."

Brother Norman Cook, a later Brother Visitor, was the eulogist at the funeral Mass on October 10. He gave a stirring account of Bertram's life and outstanding achievements. He added some personal notes, recalling for example: "I'll never forget a telephone conversation I had with Brother Bertram, Visitor, while on retreat at St. Helena in June, 1973. He wanted me to be principal at Saint Mary's High in Berkeley. ... As we conversed on the

phone, and I eloquently protested the possibility of my going to St. Mary's High, Bertram interrupted my train of thought by instructing me to go to the retreat chapel and pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance and enlightenment. 'It is not a question of what you want, Norman, but what God wants!' He went on to say he was also going to the Provincialate chapel to seek guidance regarding this matter. I hung up the telephone and in a spirit of 'Bertram obedience' headed for the chapel to converse with the Holy Spirit. I got about ten steps from the phone when it suddenly rang. I retraced my steps and answered it. Bertram was on the other end of the line. He said, 'I just had a very nice conversation with the Holy Spirit in our chapel here, and He said to me that you, Norman, are going to St. Mary's High as principal!' And then he hung up! And I wept!" Norman went on to report that "my five years as principal of Saint Mary's were some of the most adventuresome and joyful for me as a Brother."

We can conclude here with Brother Norman's final words of eulogy: "Richard Little, a friend and protégé of Sir Thomas More, desired a prestigious career where he would find fame, glory, and recognition. Sir Thomas More's reaction, 'If you become a teacher, Richard, you will be noticed by nobody but God and your students. Not a bad audience, Richard.' For over sixty-five years of service as a teacher and educator, Brother Bertram was most certainly noticed by God and by his students! Not a bad audience, Brother Bertram! Not a bad audience!"