

BR VICTOR McGREEVY (1931-1960)

Victor McGreevy was born in the Victorian country town of Dunolly on the 24th September 1931. He was born with a curvature of the spine and spent much of his time as a boy and young man in and out of hospitals and Rehabilitation Centres. It was during one of these long spells in hospital that he came in contact with a member of the Legion of Mary and became interested in the Catholic faith since it seemed to give him a reason for living and for suffering. After his return home he went to the Parish Priest of Yarram

where the family was now living, and asked for instructions. He was instructed and baptized by Fr. Crowe on the 19th November, 1951.



Once a Catholic, Victor wanted to follow Christ as closely as possible and he was advised to approach the Salesians in the hope that they might accept him as a Brother. He was, at this time, at the Maryport Rehabilitation Centre at Mt. Martha. When consulted, his doctor saw no reasons why he might not be able to plan an active part in a religious order provided he took things carefully

and kept up his treatment. Accordingly Fr. Fedrigotti accepted him as an aspirant on the 10th May, 1952.

After 18 months as an aspirant first at Oakleigh then at Sunbury, Victor applied for the novitiate and was accepted. Seeing that he would be the only novice the following year, it was decided to send him to India where he entered the novitiate at Yercaud. He made his first profession on the 24th May, 1955, and returned to Australia.

He was posted to Sunbury and began work as assistant cook. This proved too much for him and so he took up clerical work in the Prefect's Office. Although he was not able to take part in sporting activities, he nevertheless realized that, as a Salesian, he should keep up close contact with the boys so he began taking classes in such Crafts as leatherwork and organized a Mission Society. No doubt due to his stay in India, Victor always took a keen interest in the Missions and was always thinking up ways and means of raising money to assist them.

Fr. John Briffa, who was Prefect at Sunbury at this time, and who therefore got to know his assistant very well, writes of him:

"When I first became Prefect he was a great help to me. In the first few weeks especially, since the Rector had changed (Fr. Power had replaced Fr. McDonald) he was a valuable link between one administration and the next.

He was tremendously methodical and persevering. He might not have been very good at figures, but he would persist for hours - sometimes for a couple of days - until an error was detected and corrected.

He had a good memory, which suited me down to the ground because the more things I had on my mind the more I forgot and the more I relied on him reminding me.

Others have written of his love for the Missions and he often had boys in

the office planning the various campaigns.

People did sometimes wear him but he would make visible efforts to control himself once they had left the office, allowing himself only a deep sigh and an unintelligible mumble which he would refuse to elaborate upon.

Most memorable was his last day at Rupertswood - a visiting Sunday. I was away on Supply in Essendon and Brother was holding the fort, besieged on all sides by both parents and boys.

On my return I had to go a few miles up the highway to a man who had had a heart attack the previous day and I did not get back until about 2.30 p.m. Fr. Power recalls that, although Victor was due to leave for St. Vincent's Hospital at 3 p.m. he was still dealing with parents. He did this without sign of impatience although he had not as yet packed his bags. It was after 3 p.m. when he eventually packed his bags and was taken to the Hospital by one of the parents.

In hospital he was a model patient. I visited him regularly but could never get him to acknowledge that he needed anything.



Br. V. McGreevy, Fr. A. Fedrigotti, Fr. E. Power - Sunbury 1959.

No indication of his closeness to death was given us until I visited him the day before his death. He was sitting in his chair by the bed and being given oxygen and intravenous injections. The Sisters told me he was bad but said that they would move him into a Ward on his own as soon as one was free.

That night, at about 8 p.m., the Hospital phoned to say that he was dying. Fortunately they also phoned Brunswick where Frs. Power and Jennings were just about to begin the first meeting of the Festival Committee for that year.

It was difficult to contact his mother. We could not raise the Parish Priest and no local police were available. Eventually the police contacted his mother and she came all the way from Yarram in a taxi to be in time for the end."

One mother, who had two boys at Rupertswood at the time, writes: "I never came away from his presence without being more resigned to bear my own sufferings with more cheerfulness".

Brother Victor passed to his reward on the 6th of July, 1960. He became the first Australian-born Salesian to be buried in the "Rupertswood" cemetery. In his panegyric Fr. B.M. Fedrigotti remarked that Bro. Victor had left us all a marvellous example of courage in his infirmity and of a quiet, unassuming but constant, courteous and diligent service to boys, parents and confreres. He expressed the hope that some of the boys present would follow in his footsteps as a Salesian Brother, who was such an integral part of any Salesian community.