

BROTHER WILLIAM JOSEPH NAYLON SDB

Brother William Joseph Naylor SDB (Br. Bill) died at Chadswood Private Hospital, Ashwood on 31 January 1990.

Bill had been 'wearing out' over the past year and finally had to be admitted to hospital about one month before he died. Knowing Bill's death to be imminent the community had gathered to work out a roster so that there would be a member of the community with him all through that night. During our meeting the telephone call came to tell us that Bill had died. Three members of the community had just returned from anointing him. While we were in a sense expecting Bill's death, nevertheless, the community was stunned by the news. Solace came from the knowledge that he had died on the feast of St. John Bosco eminently prepared to meet his God.

Bill was born in the Australian country town of Elmore, Victoria on 28 March 1905 and was educated there at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart School. He finished school at the end of grade 8, attaining the Merit Certificate, which at that time was considered to be a good education. The town of Elmore had a special place in Bill's heart and he had revisited it even in recent years.

The family later moved to Moonee Ponds. It was here that Bill's father decided to take on a butcher shop. This was a family venture of which Bill was always immensely proud. He regarded it as a real accomplishment on the part of the family. At the time Bill was working as a station assistant with the railways. When his father asked Bill to join him in the shop Bill gladly agreed; this was a decision he never regretted. During this period Bill became a leading member of the Ascot Vale parish. He joined the St. Mary's Ascot Vale branch of the Catholic Young Mens' Society where he was highly regarded as a sportsman and a debater. Bill was a very good dancer and as a result had a wonderfully social time. He was to remain for the rest of his life a man who enjoyed company and conversation. Not surprisingly, all his life he had the knack of making good friends.

Bill felt the call to a religious vocation and went to Sunbury to enquire about the Salesians on Show Day 1937. Bill's mother had been expecting him to take this step for years. She was only surprised by the length of time it took him to discern for himself that he had a vocation. Bill was impressed by what he saw that Show Day and returned in 1938 to join the aspirantate. Later that year he sailed for England to join the Salesian novitiate. The superiors in England decided on a further year of aspirantate at Shrigley and Bill finally entered the novitiate at Beckford on 31 August 1939.

Bill spent the next three years cooking at the Salesian Novitiate at Beckford. It was during these years that using a bicycle, Bill developed an appreciation for and an excellent knowledge of Church architecture. Bill's return to Australia was a real adventure; he came by ship during the war years sailing on the SS Menelaus just before Christmas 1943. His ship crossed the Atlantic from Glasgow to New York in a fifty ship convoy guarded by eleven warships; it took 15

Bill spent the next years as a cook at Sunbury (1944-46), Brunswick (1947-50), Sunbury (1951-61), and Brunswick (1962-65). It was while at Brunswick that Bill's special gift of being able to relate well to young men was most evident. They revered and admired him. These were very demanding years. Cooking for upwards of three hundred boys, farm workers and Salesians, three meals a day, seven days a week, with the confreres' retreats thrown in for good measure during term 'holidays', was no small task. You could be sure, however, that whatever food Bill served up had been '**passed by the Board of Health and recommended by the medical profession**'. Bill endured a very dull routine which would have resulted in an emotional or vocational crisis for most people. True, he could be very testy, but he never lost his sense of his own worth before God of his acceptance of his own particular vocation. Bill would at times such as these quote Harry Collier to good effect, '**What I done, I done for me club!**'.

Bill came to the community here at Chadstone in 1966. In those days about 15 aspirants and 11 Salesians were in residence. Bill was needed to cook and to be part of the formation team. Bill's baked dinners, especially, were enjoyed by all. Bill's rector at the time of his death was an aspirant 'under Bill' and knows of what he speaks.

Naturally, as Bill grew older his duties shrank somewhat but the tasks he undertook, particularly in his capacity of Assistant Bursar, were undertaken seriously and he attempted to do them efficiently and pleasantly. Bill's interests at this time were classical music, and film and literature with an historical flavour. Bill had kept the remarkable Victorian sixth and seventh grade readers of his schooldays which are now collector's items; from them he could quote much of the fine poetry recorded in their pages. Poetry was another of Bill's special pleasures.

At Chadstone, Bill was for many years the House Chronicler; his last entry being for Friday 23 April 1982 about the Year 10 Social. Bill had attractive, masculine, copperplate handwriting and everything in the House Chronicle is beautifully presented.

It was in these years that Bill began at Chadstone the very special relationship he was to enjoy for the rest of his life with the ladies of the tuckshop and with the teaching staff. Bill liked company and the company liked Bill. He had a knack of being comfortable in any company from Church dignitaries to the fellow delivering the groceries. A gentleman with the ladies, yet able to turn his hand to a glass or two with the men.

Bill was not a great respecter of persons – indeed, he could get quite difficult as and when he felt the occasion warranted it; but it is worth remembering that his friends were ordinary people, not necessarily those in authority. It was these ordinary people who looked after him in the last few months of his life when he was unable to look after himself.

In this regard the community wishes to acknowledge the nursing and other care provided, without cost to us, but obviously at a great cost to themselves, by Sr. Chris Hellyer and Liz Philpott. The deep friendship and the intelligent care given by Bill's friend Fr. Terry Jennings was a special source of grace for the whole community.

Bill's achievement was to persevere as a gentleman, albeit an Australian gentleman who brooked no nonsense, and as a Salesian. Bill joined the Salesians when we were very small chips here in Australia and when there were still very real questions as to whether the Salesians would make a go of it. Bill's decision to join and to stick took courage. Bill gave up a partnership in the family butcher shop and his independence for the gruelling work of the kitchen at Rupertswood. His perseverance, just a few months short of fifty years of vowed life as a Salesian, is a triumph for him and for all who were part of his life.

Bill's whole life was eucharistic; he fed multitudes of boys, young men and Salesians for over thirty years, feeding body and spirit with Salesian optimism and joy. "Then the virtuous will say to Jesus in reply, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you?' And Jesus will answer, 'I tell you solemnly, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine you did it to me'" (cf. Mt.25:31-46).

One of Bill's notable characteristics was his unfalling presence at the community celebration of the eucharist; this goes right back to the early days when he would have to rise at 4.30am in order to have the breakfast under way and so be able to attend mass. This faithfulness to the community program of prayer continued right up to his entrance into hospital just before his death.

At the community table Bill increased our mirth with his sayings. These were delivered sparingly and only when they were warranted. We always looked forward to the next time he would come out with one; but in this as in other matters Bill wouldn't be hurried. When pronounced they came with a flavour that was uniquely Bill

"You pick'em, I pay 'em. There's no fairer way of playing!"

"Dyed in the wool and a yard wide!"

"Alas, she cried and her voice trembled with suppressed emotion. She waved her wooden leg and her tin socks rattled."

And when something was said at table that shouldn't have been said... **"That's French of course!"**

And particularly in cricket season Bill wasn't at all adverse to quoting the Bard himself... **"Once more into the breach, dear friends, once more!... Or fill the gap with our English dead".**

In these ways Bill managed on many an occasion to enliven our table fellowship and so his presence was eucharistic.

Ironically enough, Bill is on the retreat list for 1990 for a private retreat; how private a time of it he has in heaven is uncertain; it seems to us he is too social to make a private retreat even in heaven.

Our Community asks that you pray for Bill as our regulations require but not simply because our regulations prescribe it shall be so. For our part we have asked Bill to give some special grace to this house where he lived one in spirit and in action with his confreres and with the lay people who were our associates over the twenty-five years of Bill's apostolate at Chadstone.