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Brother  
FRANCIS SUTA S.D.B.

Born May 17, 1909  
First Profession Sept. 22, 1929  
Died March 11, 1996

Data for Necrology:

Coadjutor Brother Francis Suta,  
born May 17, 1909 in Francova Lhota, Czech Republic;  
died in West Haverstraw, March 11, 1996 at the age of 85,  
after 65 years of Profession.



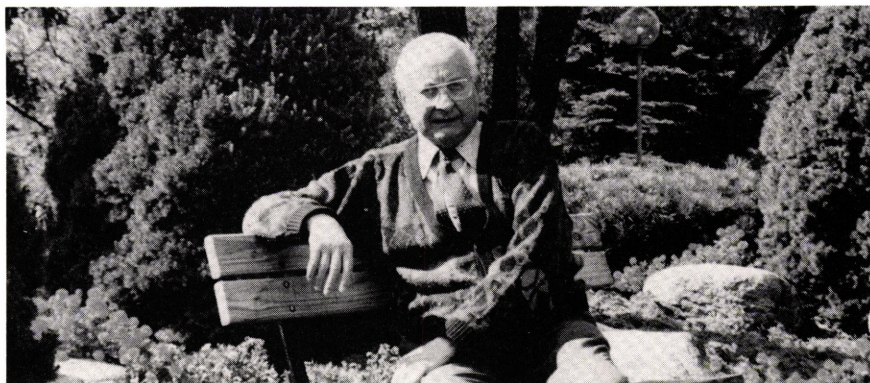
Bro. Suta when he first came to the United States in 1953

June, 1996

Dear Confreres,

We all love a mystery. You take the facts and put them together and, with a little bit of logic, solve the mystery and go on to something else. To some of us Brother Suta may have been a bit of a mystery. He was a very private person and a very independent one as well. But when you put all the facts together, you find that he was another man of God who did his best to serve the youth of Paterson, here in the United States and various other countries as well.





Bro. Suta enjoying the beauties of nature that he painted so well

In 1909, on May 17, Brother was born in Francova Lhota, Czechoslovakia. His father's name was Frantisek and his mother was Katerina. I do not know much about his family. I think he was the last one alive. His father from what I gather, is buried in Milwaukee or near there. I imagine that there was a lot of moving around in the family especially with the events in Europe in the thirties, forties, and fifties. There were always relatives to go home to in the Czech Republic. He did manage to get home a couple of times since the change from Communism.

In 1925 at the invitation of the brother of Cardinal Trochta he went to Italy to begin his Salesian formation at Foglizzo. After three years he entered the Salesian Novitiate in Cumiano. Following his first profession he returned to Foglizzo and learned the technology that he would be teaching for the rest of his life: drafting. He was a "magistero" at San Benigno. He was also the senior class assistant while he was there. From there he moved to Ljubliana, Yugoslavia in 1931. It was there that he made his perpetual profession. In 1935 he became the drafting and art teacher at the Salesian Institute of Pio Undecimo in Rome.





Bro. Suta watching over his young "cowboys" in the Drafting Shop

Upon learning of Brother Suta's death, Brother Pietro Tatti wrote from the Salesian Community at Pio Undecimo in Rome. They were companions for a number of years at the school. While there Bro. Suta helped the art teacher, Mr. Menghini. When the art teacher died, Bro. Suta took his place. During this time, Bro. Suta also played the saxophone in the band at the school. Brother Pietro and Bro. Suta kept up a correspondence over the years. They would get together whenever Brother would return to Rome.

Although he loved Pio Undecimo very much, he volunteered to come to Paterson, NJ to open up and teach Mechanical and Architectural Drafting. This was in 1953. He stayed in that position until 1986. That meant that his teaching career spanned about 55 years. He retired in 1986 at the age of 77 and remained in Paterson until July, 1995. He occupied himself with painting, visiting and helping out in the community in various ways. For example, who can ever forget the great job he would do for the community tree in the dining room at Christmas? He enjoyed good health for just about all his life. In the end his kidneys started to fail. This precipitated his going to our house for the elderly in Stony Point, NY. He had

his ups and downs there and eventually died in his sleep early on the morning of March 11, 1996.

We have just gone through 86 years in a few paragraphs. It's amazing how we tend to summarize a life in a few words. I don't think we can put Bro. Suta's life together in a few paragraphs. He was a teacher, an artist, a Brother and a Salesian. He fulfilled each of those roles in an extraordinary way.

An alumnus wrote in a letter to the Beacon, that every student had his favorite Bro. Suta story. I never got into one of Bro. Suta's classes, but there are plenty of things left around to give evidence of what his classes were like. We have seen photos of a great number of students in a class at one time. He made demands on his pupils. He just did not accept mediocre work. Look at the work hanging on the walls in the shop. You will see details on simple nuts and bolts, saw horses, houses, theatres, and churches. By the end of a student's years at Don Bosco Tech, those in drafting had quite a few items of worth in their portfolios. Professors of colleges and universities were amazed at the work of Bro. Suta's "cowboys", as he sometimes referred to them. He spent hours correcting papers and preparing material for his students. His classes were places of work. Mr. Bert Cooper, a former teacher at the Tech, mentioned at Bro. Suta's wake that when he asked a student, who was a bit of a cut-up in other classes, how he fared in Bro. Suta's classes, the student said there was no problem. There was only one thing that bothered him: the hum of fluorescent lights. Imagine how quiet a classroom has to be for someone to be bothered by the lights' hum!

As we said before, around the school and the community areas there are a number of Bro. Suta's paintings. He also taught art during his years of teaching. At Paterson we had an art teacher already, so I don't know how much art he taught here. He did produce many fine paintings. The ones that I have seen have been mostly country scenes. Landscapes that depicted





*One of Bro. Suta's Paintings of an Outdoor Scene*

peaceful woods and streams and mountains in the background, were characteristically his. The use of green in these paintings has always struck me. They just seemed to be so peaceful and calming. His paintings have probably graced the walls of many houses in the United States as well as parts of Europe. Brother could have easily made a living as an artist. Mr. William Walsh ('58) was a student in the fifties when Bro. Suta first came to the United States. He was sent to be Brother's assistant and protege. He recalled that for Bro. Suta not only was his art a relaxation for him, but it was also a spirituality. In art he tried to have the perfect color scheme. This represented the perfection we all seek.

Bro. Suta was professed as a brother for sixty-six years. He never forgot that he was a Religious. He was faithful to his practices of piety. He was always on time and right in his place in the second row where he kept his rosary beads and his prayer books. He was like clockwork. Whether it was 6:30 in

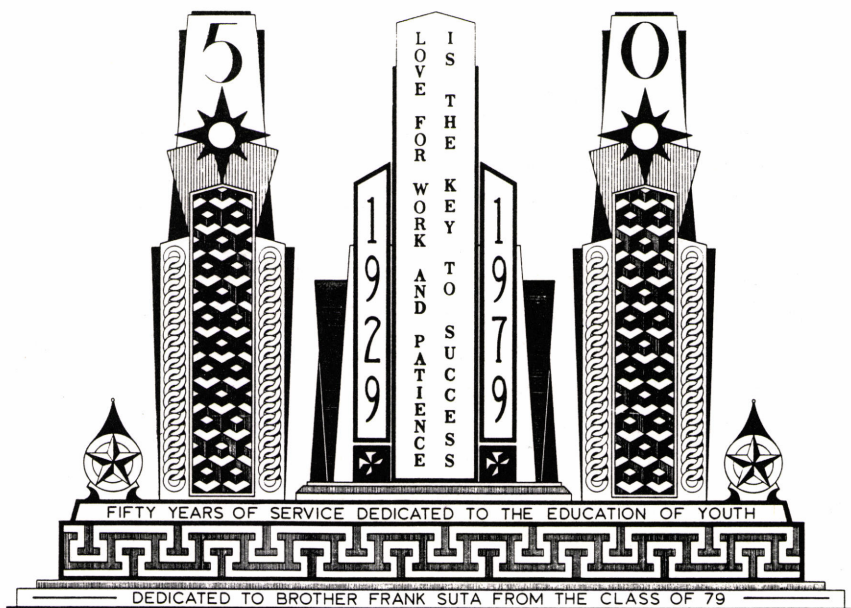


the morning or 5:00 in the afternoon he would be right there. He was an example to the rest of us who sometimes find legitimate reasons not to be there. When it was time to move to Blue Gate, he went without any fuss. He didn't always have his way, especially towards the end of his life, but accepted what he could not change. He always dressed like a gentleman. He was not fussy about his clothes but always neat. He was a good religious. Father Tom Ruekert summed up things this way: "Suta had a tough outer shell, but a religious spiritual inner core. He responded well to kindness and gentleness."

If he was a good religious he was also a good Salesian. You could see that the good of the boys was always uppermost in his mind. He had the knack of being able to make pupils produce more than they thought they could. He was able to handle the hardest students. He often spoke to me of the need of our students to have discipline. Sure, he was one you might consider from the old school. But let's not forget that he would probably would have done what needed to be done to get the job done in the classroom today. A teacher is a teacher for all times. He loved Don Bosco enough to find his home wherever he was sent. He loved the Church as well.

Mr. Philip Cocilovo ('75) had been inspired by Brother Suta, He wrote:

"As a classroom teacher, I strive to bring out the very best efforts of my students. This is due I feel, in no small part, to the influence of Brother Suta. He had a way of leading his boys to discover and produce their own personal best work. He accomplished this through varied means - sometimes with fear, usually with positive encouragement, but always by example. Brother Suta never settled for mediocrity in his own work nor would he allow us to content ourselves with mediocrity in ours. Under his guidance I learned a great deal - a little bit about architecture, a lot about drawing, but mostly about the kind of teacher I want to be - demanding, yes - but



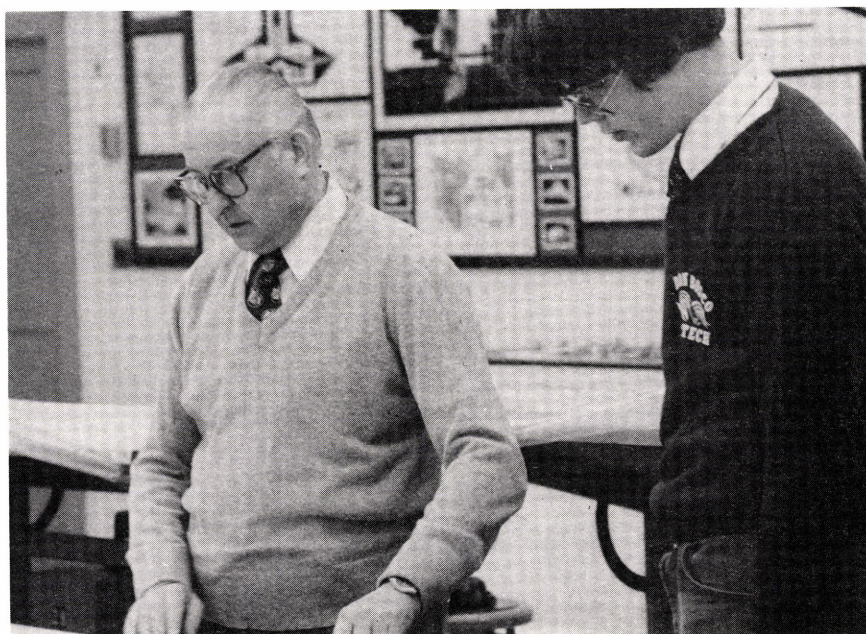
This Dedication was designed by one of Bro. Suta's students, and presented to him on the occassion of his 50th Anniversary

through support, patience, and love. For this I will always be grateful to him"

Brother Suta, although he knew many languages, was not a man of many words. I think that he could hold a conversation in at least five different languages. You knew what he was trying to say even though you had trouble sometimes picking up on his constructions. As a student remembered "Ay Caramba! You to do me no good job, mister!" As Salesians, we would listen to the expression "long time go".

Bro. Suta found being sick most difficult because he believed in strength. He was always pretty independent and took care of things himself. In his sickness at the end he was no longer able to do that. He had to depend on other people. This was probably his greatest penance. He always said to me "I don't want to give trouble to nobody." For the most part that was true until the last few months. He was very grateful to the





*Bro. Suta teaching one of his students at Don Bosco Tech*

people who helped him. He could not say enough about a person who helped him, wrote to him or visited him. When he asked you for something you got it. I remember visiting several bookstores trying to find a copy of Ben Hur for him. I found it after a couple of days searching from store to store. Again he was very grateful.

When he started talking about his passport we started to panic. Doesn't he realize he can't travel anymore? His passport, it turned out, was his crucifix. He was traveling to Heaven. He knew it wasn't going to be long so he wanted to be ready. He was ready.

He always told me that should anything happen to him there was an envelope that had everything. I think I found what he was talking about, but I am afraid there was not a whole lot of information in it. At the end though, there were two sentences that said a lot "I loved my students, my work, and all the



houses I was in, especially Don Bosco Tech. I thank the Blessed Mother for helping me and protecting me all the time." In a few sentences he said a lot about his life and the way a Salesian should live. We're given our call by God. We are sent to various places but Mary protects us all the way.

The 1976 yearbook was dedicated to him. Maybe it's fitting to close with these words from our Alumni. They said in the dedication statement..."Bro. Francis Suta a native Czechoslovakian , like our forefathers, left his homeland to come to this country and give of himself so as to educate the youth of this great country. He certainly has given the best of his talents, the best of his time, the best of his total self to train and educate the students of Don Bosco Tech.

Bro. Suta , a man of tall stature, high caliber, strict discipline and a deep foresight for the needs of the times, has by his example and sheer presence given the students of Don Bosco an image, a symbol of what dedication and true Salesian apostolate is ...

Not only has he taught the various techniques and variants of drafting, but he has trained his students to meet the challenges and competition of a fast changing world. He has trained, so to speak, an army of men to value those qualities which every man must contain in order for that same man to walk upright and face any trial with character, honor and nobility."

While Bro. Suta did not want to be a bother to anyone, I do not think it would be much trouble for any of us to remember him in our prayers. Please pray for him and for the mission he loved so much: Don Bosco Tech. Thank you.

In Don Bosco,

Rev. Willliam Keane, S.D.B.  
Director

