

Bro. Francis Bracchi, SDB
11/9/1915 - 8/19/2009

SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO

PROVINCE OF ST. ANDREW | SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

Brother Frank Bracchi

There was a tradition at St. John Bosco High School that began when Fr. Austin Conterno was the prefect of both the Salesian community and the high school. Usually, around 3:00 or 4:00 o'clock, Fr. Conterno would invite a few of the confreres and Valentino Colussi, the cook, to a "meeting" in the cantina (a special corner in the basement) to discuss the "problems of the world". After a few years one of the friends of Bosco (Bill Zolg) remodeled the cantina with new lights, a new gathering table, a new door, and a fresh coat of paint. Often times other close friends of the community and school were also invited to join in the camaraderie. Of course the members attending would change from year to year but Bro. Frank Bracchi was the mainstay. Once the cantina was closed, the tradition moved upstairs to the community room. The usual attendees were Bro. Frank, Val, Fr. Leo Baysinger, and Bro. Joe Lockwood. At times, Bro. Noel DeBruton and Fr. Joe Nguyen, Director, and others, visitors would join in the camaraderie.



Bros. Jack McLinden, Frank Bracchi, Joseph Lockwood, Jerry Warner and Christian Brother of **Mash**. This was Frank's last 3:00 pm "meeting".

On August 18, 2009, Frank, made his way to the community room inviting the usual attendees to gather and spends a few moments together. That day, however, only Frank and Joe were able to attend. Frank had his usual Manhattan and both he and Joe settled down to talk about the events of the day, discuss the vagaries of life, and watch an episode

Bro. Frank Bracchi died in the early hours of the morning of August 19, 2009. He was 93 years and 10 months old.

Frank was born November 9, 1915 in San Luis Obispo, California to Henry Francis Bracchi and Maud Grace Stebbins, both California natives and grew up in San Jose, California. In 1932, Frank graduated



Frank's Parents, Maud and Henry

from St. Joseph High School and attended the University of Santa Clara for a year. Frank had to withdraw from the University due to financial difficulties. During this time, Frank was working at Paterson Parts Inc., San Jose.

Frank enlisted in the US Army Air Corps in October 1940. He was assigned to the 88th Reconnaissance Squadron, 7th Bomb Group – Tenth Air Force stationed in Salt Lake City, Utah. In 1941, Frank attended Aeronautical University in Chicago, Ill and completed the six months course. His unit was destined for Pearl Harbor but on December 7, 1941, the Japanese attacked the US naval base and his unit was rerouted to Brisbane, Australia. His

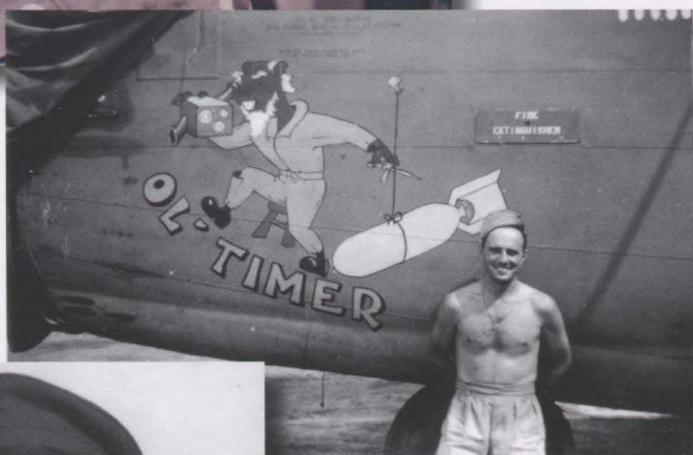
unit spent only six weeks in Brisbane assembling P-40 aircrafts to be used in Java where the 88th unit was assigned but the Japanese changed the unit's plans by invading the island.

The revised assignment for Reconnaissance Squadron, 7th Bomb Group was Karachi, India where it arrived in March 1942.

In the early part of 1943, the 7th Bomb Group was divided into the 492 and 493 respectively. Frank was promoted as crew chief of the 492 Bomb Group's airplane mechanics maintaining B17's and B24's to be used in the China-Burma-India Theater. Living in Karachi, India was an experience that Frank was not fond of, and he expressed this every time he spoke about his army days.

Frank was very faithful in attending Sunday Mass either on the base or in the town at the local parish church.

In 1945, Frank was assigned to Victorville Army Air Field, California as line chief of the B24 Squadron.



Days in the Army

Frank was honorably discharged from the Army on September 14, 1945 with rank of Master Sergeant at Fort MacArthur, California. At the time of his discharge Frank was honored with a bronze star on his American Defense Ribbon and three bronze stars on his Asian-Pacific theater ribbon.



Frank building his "dream house", Redwood Estates, California

After the war, Frank settled in the San Jose area and built his "dream house" in Redwood Estates. He spoke often and proudly about his house. He purchased the property, designed the home and built it with the help of different contractors. At the time he was employed at Redwood Automotive Supply in Redwood City, California.

At that time Frank felt a calling to ministry in the Church. He met a Jesuit priest, Fr. Warren who celebrated Mass in his parish church. One Sunday after Mass, Frank spoke to Fr. Warren and was invited to visit Alma College (then the Jesuit School of Theology) to discuss his vocation. Fr. Warren helped Frank to discern his calling and suggested that he visit St. Francis School, Watsonville, operated by the



Frank's great friend Bro. Jack McLinden



Frank's Novitiate Class - 1956

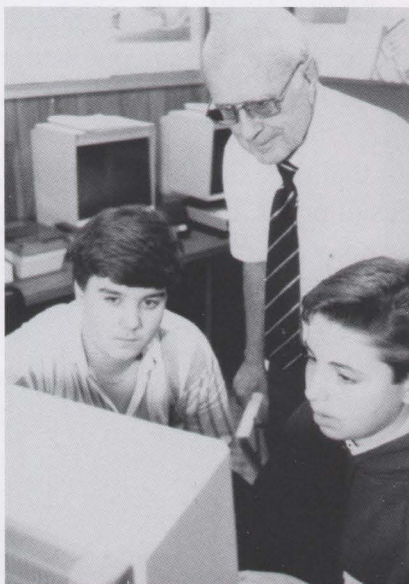
Saleians. Frank took the advice and spoke to Fr. George Salbeck, Director, who invited Frank to move in with the community to continue his vocational discernment.

In 1953, Frank joined the St. Francis School's community and immediately began his work with the young people. Fr. Salvatore Giacomini (Jack), the Vice Principal of the school, interviewed Frank to determine his assignment for the 1953-54 academic year. Fr. Jack asked Frank about his life experience. Frank told him his story of being in the Army Air Force as a mechanic and having served in India during the war. Fr. Jack was impressed and he determined that with all of Frank's experience in the Army and as a world traveler, Frank was qualified to teach World History to

the students. This was Frank's first exposure in teaching young people.

After this "wonderful year of teaching" (as Bro. Frank always referred to it), Frank applied and was accepted to the Salesian novitiate in Newton, New Jersey. On September 8, 1955, Frank made his first religious profession as a Salesian Coadjutor Brother. Immediately after professing his first vows, he was assigned to the newly opened Don Bosco Technical Institute, Rosemead, California.

Fr. Felix Pena, Founder and Director of Don Bosco Technical Institute, was elated that Bro. Frank was assigned to the Tech. Bro. Frank with all of his experience in the automotive area, would be the founder of the Automotive Department. The automotive shop was not completely built but Frank adapted to



Frank instructing students



An Automotive Reunion of Teachers, Students, & Learning Shared...

-April 20, 2001

the situation. In one part of the shop building was an indoor basketball court! Frank developed and wrote the students' shop hand books, developed course outlines for each year, instituted the shop procedures, wrote shop safety manuals and at the same time was teaching the students about engines, transmissions, brake systems, etc. in the the shop.

The automotive department was a very orderly and serious place dedicated to learning. Safety and order were imperative for Bro. Frank. He insisted that there was a "no fooling around policy" when it came to the shop and that the students were to be focused on the task at hand. There is always an exception to all rules and Fr. Tom D'Amato personified that exception. Frank allowed Fr. Tom to visit and talk to the students at their work area. The students really appreciated Fr. Tom's kind words of encouragement.

During the 1960's Bosco Tech sponsored many youth leadership rallies. Around 300 to 400 students from the Catholic Schools of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles would attend these rallies. Lunch was always served and Frank and Brother Jack McLinden were the cooks. It was always a great lunch.

Frank was a great community person. He would help organize the community outings to the high desert and camping trips to June Lake, Bass Lake, Salton Sea, San Diego and to Baja California. There are great

memories of those outings and camping trips. With the help of Bros. Jack McLinden and Tony Frietas, he converted a small trailer into a "chuck wagon" for these adventures. The kitchen was first class with refrigerators and stoves. Between Bro. Frank and Bro. Jack the meals were well prepared, especially the "meditation coffee". Frank was great at Bar-B-Queuing.

On September 8, 1961 Frank made his final vows at Don Bosco Technical Institute, Rosemead after a teaching a full day of class that began at 7:30 am and ended at 4:15 pm.

Frank remained at Don Bosco Tech until 1974, when he was assigned to St. Joseph Salesian Juniorate, Rosemead as community treasurer.

In September of 1976 Frank was re-assigned to St. John Bosco High School, Bellflower, California.

Frank was very generous with his personal time. In 1977, one of the confreres at St. Mary's School, Edmonton, Alberta, got sick and the staff became shorthanded. Since Frank had boarding school experience he was asked to go to Edmonton to help out. He went to Edmonton and stayed there for a few months. The "tougher kids" really liked Frank. They would help him with different projects and would hang out with him and they were sorry to see Frank leave and they presented him a little token of their appreciation. Frank always remembered his time at St. Mary's fondly.

In 1982, Frank's was assigned as freshmen academic counselor at St. John Bosco High School, Bellflower. This was a major career change for Frank.

Frank always thought that students should be exposed to different types of careers. He believed that after a student graduated from Bosco and went on to college, he should have an idea about his career options. He continued developing his ideas and while he was on a religious renewal program at Sangre de Cristo Renewal Center in New Mexico, he met a Christian Brother who taught philosophy at St. Michael's College, Santa Fe, New Mexico, who helped Frank to clarify his philosophy regarding

preparing students' development for college and career choices. Frank attended St. Michael's College for a year and after returning to California he earned his graduate certificate in career counseling from California State University at Long Beach.

In 1985 Frank developed the Career Guidance Center at St. John Bosco High School and in 1998 he introduced the students to the computer program "Career Cruising".

Frank was very well respected in career counseling by his peers. In March 1989, St. John Bosco High School received the "President's Award" from the California Career Association for having an outstanding Career Education program. The school thanked Bro. Frank for all his dedication and work on career counseling program.

In 1995, Frank celebrated his 40th anniversary of religious profession. One of his desires was to drive back East during the fall and visit his friends in New Mexico and North Carolina. He contacted his two good friends, Bro. Tony Freitas and Fr. Austin Conterno to travel with him across the United States along the Southern route. Fr. Conterno was chaplain for this adventure, with daily practices of piety and the celebration of the Eucharist.

Frank was very faithful to his prayer life and especially to the rosary. No matter what time it was or where he was, the rosary was said every day. The quarterly days of recollection were very important to Frank. The community would go to the House of Prayer in Orange, California and he would speak to his spiritual director and go to confession.

In 2006, Frank celebrated his 51st anniversary of religious profession. St. John Bosco High School presented him the "Lifetime Achievement Award" for his service to young people.

One of Frank's hobbies besides reading and crossword puzzles was to work with leather. He would make book covers for Office of the Hours prayer books, name plates, rosary cases, and many other items. His last name plate was one for Juan Carlos Montenegro (St. Dominic Savio Parish Youth Minister) Frank's hand coordination was becoming harder



Frank's last leather project

to control. However, if you asked him to make something out of leather, he did it. Juan Carlos had asked him to make a name plate for his bedroom door. Frank worked late into the night to complete the name plate.

Frank taught Larry Arel-lano, an alumnus and long time friend of the Salesians, how to use the computer. Larry would join the community for the Friday night BBQs and after dinner, Frank taught Larry the

basics and began by teaching him how to play cards on the computer. Frank was a good and demanding teacher.

Frank's favorite moment of the day was around 2:30 PM when he would be getting ready for his daily "meeting" and then he would hear the school's band percussion section practicing. He especially "enjoyed listening" to the drums.

Everyone who knew Frank respected, loved and admired him for his generosity, work ethic, and direct approach to difficult situations and problems with "tons" of patience. He was an intelligent man who never stopped learning and teaching. But most of all his exemplary living of the Salesian spirit and religious life and his dedication to community living is his legacy. May he rest in peace!

The celebration of the Mass of Christian Burial was on August 26, 2009 at his parish church, St. Dominic Savio Church, Bellflower, California. The only "extraordinary" event that took place before the mass was: during the viewing before the ceremony, Fr. Jack Gibson had placed the holy water bucket on the floor next to the casket. Sandy the good com-

munity dog walked up to the casket and drank the holy water as everyone was praying and watching.

Frank was laid to rest on September 3, 2009 at Salesian Cemetery, Richmond, California.

Rev. Thinh Joseph Nguyen, SDB
Director
St. John Bosco High School
Bellflower, CA

August 20, 2010



*Frank's last visit to Shadow Mountain, High Desert
Larry Arellano, Bros. Tony Frietas, Frank Bracchi, Fr. Leo Baysinger and Sandy*

Thank you Bros. Ernie Martinez, Joseph Lockwood, Mr. Juan Carlos Montenegro, Mrs. Judith Day Frs. Leo Baysinger and Chris Woerz for assisting me in writing this letter.

Brother Frank Bracchi

Born	San Luis O'Bispo CA. Nov. 9, 1915
First Profession	Newton, NJ Sept. 8, 1955
Perpetual Profession	Rosemead, CA Sept. 8, 1961
Died	Bellflower, CA Aug. 19, 2009



SALESIANS OF DON BOSCO

Signs & Bearers of God's Love for the Young