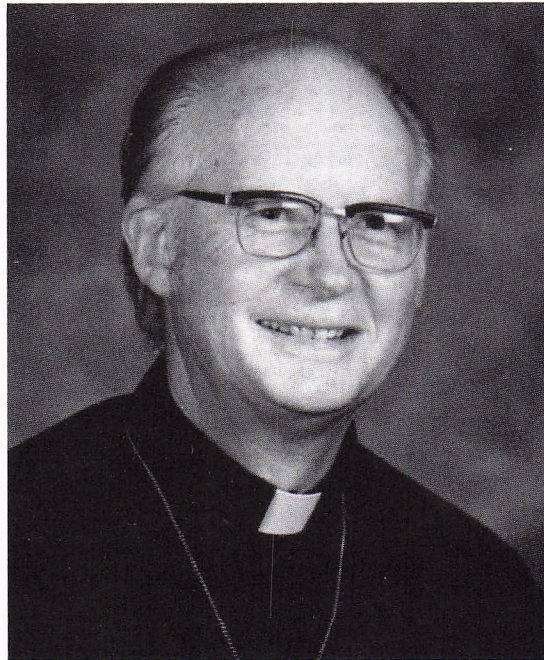




Father Arthur F. Brainard, S.D.B.
(1922-2003)



In Memoriam

Arthur Fredrick Brainard, SDB

Born: November 20, 1922

Professed: September 8, 1943

Ordained a Priest: May 30, 1953

Died: March 14, 2003

*Those who are led by the Spirit of God
are children of God. (Romans 4)*

Arthur Fredrick Brainard began life on November 20, 1922. His father Ernest was born in San Francisco in 1880. He married Ellen Fredrika Patterson who had emigrated to the U.S. from Sweden. She was born in 1897. They settled in Albion, California, a few miles north of Santa Rosa where their first child, Ernest, was born in 1918 and then Arthur. The young family moved to Oakland where their two other children were born: Harry in 1926 and Francis in 1928. The Brainards were a typical Catholic family where the boys grew to appreciate the values given them by their parents. Each of the boys was unique. Art showed an early interest in science and would bring his biology experiments into the house using the dining room table as a workstation. His mother, Ellen, often had to ask him to take his dissected worms and snails elsewhere. His interest in mathematics and science was a life long joy to him. Art had a keen interest in learning, which he would later pass on to his students.



Arthur with his dad on the steps of their Oakland home, 1923.

The boys grew up in Oakland in St. Anthony Parish. They all served as altar boys. Arthur met the Salesians in 1935 at Mary Help of Christians Church in Oakland. In 1937 he entered the Salesian seminary program at the Salesian House of Studies in Richmond, California. This seminary would eventually become Salesian High School where Art would return as a Salesian priest to teach science and mathematics.

Fr. John Malloy, SDB, remembers Art as a freshman in the high school seminary program. Fr. John was a third year student when Art entered. Fr. John remembers Art's "magnificent soprano voice," and his full head of blond hair. That voice is remembered by many Salesians and developed into a beautiful baritone that Art used all his life. He enjoyed music,

especially the classics. We have a small collection of photographs, which capture Art in various moments of seminary life. The earliest photo shows Art peaking around a corner of a booth at the annual fiesta for which the seminary was famous. He is shown pruning the ivy around the Stations of the Cross in the Salesian Cemetery during “work period.” Art would learn from these experiences that the Salesian shared his life with young people and in that manner won them over to the ideals and values of good Christian citizenship. The seminary was also a place of joy. In Salesian terms it was a playground. There were sports and games of all sorts and the famous “outings.”



With his parents in the “good old days.”

Life in the high school seminary at Richmond was a rich experience for the young seminarian. It was here that he learned the Salesian approach to education and to youth ministry not through instruction, but by living it. The Seminary was a school where he received an excellent education in the liberal arts. It was also

home where he lived with his peers and with the Salesians. The seminary, like every Salesian House was a place of prayer, a Church.

Upon completion of the course of studies at the seminary, Art entered the Novitiate program at Don Bosco College in Newton New Jersey. At the end of the novitiate year Art professed the vows of poverty, chastity and obedience as a Salesian. The date was September 8, 1943; he was 21 years old. He spent three more years at the college and graduated in 1946 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy.



Don Bosco College, Newton, New Jersey. Arthur Brainard, in his post-novitiate phase of training, walks the spacious grounds of the seminary, 1945.

He returned to California and was assigned to St. Francis School in Watsonville. Br. Art worked very hard there with the boarding students. Things were tough. Many of the students were wards of

the court. His memories years later were of hard work and joy, a typical experience for a Salesian. Art understood Don Bosco's insistence on joy and camaraderie as essential for his approach to education.



The staff at St. Francis School, Watsonville. (From left, back row) Arthur Brainard, Larry Lorenzoni, Attilio Minoletti, (Front row) Fred Arata, George Hacker, Gabriel Zavattaro, Augustine Sklenar and Victor Andreoni. 1947.

Art nurtured a lively sense of humor all his life. He enjoyed a good laugh, and was often the instigator of a funny story or remark. He shared a story from this period telling it with relish. He titled the story, *My First Experience In A Bordello*. The introduction was spicy enough and caught the attention of any one he drew into the story. He explained that he had taken a number of students down town to Watsonville to sell raffle tickets. The financial administrator of the school had sent him, making it clear he was not to return with any tickets, just the money. He dropped the students off and each took a block of houses to solicit. He took one himself. He approached a house and knocked on the door. As he explained it, "A very beautiful young lady came to the door. I did not immediately

understand her question, 'What brings you here, Father?'"

Br. Art who was wearing a clerical suit and collar explained that he was not a priest but a seminarian. He went on, "I am from St. Francis and I am selling raffle tickets for a drawing at the festival. Would you like to purchase some?"

The lady replied with a twinkle in her eye, "Well Brother, come on in and I will see what I can do."

Fr. Art would go on to explain, "I went into a nicely furnished parlor. There were several ladies some standing and others sitting around the room. All of them were young and very lovely. The hostess explained to the ladies, 'This is a Brother from the boys' home, St. Francis. He wants to sell us some raffle tickets.'

"There rose a bit of giggling from the ladies. The hostess went around the room and collected donations from the other ladies. All of them had money readily available. She handed me the money. I told them the dates of the fiesta and invited them to the event.

"The hostess apologized saying, 'Brother that is a Saturday and we will all be busy.' I handed her the appropriate number of tickets, which she declined explaining, 'That's all right, Brother, this one is on the house. After all you are the first priest to visit us here.'

“It only then dawned on me where I was. I must have blushed, or at least I hope I did. I turned and got out of there as fast as I politely could. That was my first and only visit to a bordello.”



(From left) Fellow students Anthony Luzzi, Arthur and Edward Mazurek on the steps of the dining room at Salesian College, Aptos, 1950.

In 1949, Br. Art began his theological studies in the Salesian theologate in Aptos, California. He was ordained a priest by Bishop Aloysius Willinger in the Church of the Most Sacred Heart in Fresno on May 30, 1953. It was a happy day for Fr. Art and his family. After ordination the young Fr. Art went to St. John Bosco High School in Bellflower where he taught the sciences. Here he began to develop his unique style of ministry. He was and would always remain very approachable. The students would seek him out for advice and counseling. He was a very effective confessor.



With his parents after his 1953 ordination

In 1955 he was assigned to Don Bosco Technical Institute in Rosemead. Here he again taught the sciences and became the chair of the science department. Fr. Thomas Prendiville tells us that Fr. Art was keenly interested in the study of science. He would attend lectures at the California Institute of Technology whenever possible. Fr. Tom was a young priest and taught in the science department. Fr. Art would often ask Fr. Tom to attend with him. “On occasion,” Fr. Tom explains, “we would not make it to the lecture but to the movies instead.” Fr. Art’s interest in advanced math and physics was with him all his life. When Russia launched *Sputnik* in October of 1962, Fr. Art’s response was to take his physics and chemistry classes out to build rockets, which were launched from the athletic field on the Tech campus. He would lead groups of students out to the desert near Edward’s Air Force Base to launch their homemade rockets. Some alumni remember that these were working outings, not necessarily quality outings. A couple loaves of bread

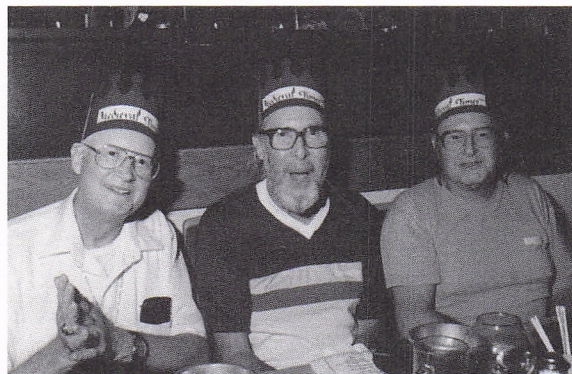
and some peanut butter sustained them during these forays into the space age.



The community of Don Bosco Tech went on camping trips several times a year. Arthur is on the far left, in the high Sierra's, near Bass Lake, 1956.

It was during these years at Tech that Fr. Art developed his unique style of youth ministry. Br. John Rasor, a student of Fr. Art's, explains that Fr. Art was not timid about promoting the spiritual well being of his students. His approach was direct. "I remember Art from his days at Bosco Tech teaching chemistry. One day he did a demo (burning aluminum with iodine), and casually remarking as the combustion products rose in a cloud throughout the lab, 'Now, this stuff is poison, so we should leave now.' Immediately, there was an ordered rush for the exit of the lab... He was sought-out by us for confession. And if we did not seek him out he would go after us. 'Hey, you wan'a go to the desert and shoot some *snattlerakes*? I'll hear your confession.' Before the student could figure out what a *snattlerake* was, Father had captured him and the student was confessing to this wise and gentle priest."

In 1962 Fr. Art went to Salesian High School in Richmond where he would serve on the faculty for the next 27 years. Again he taught Chemistry, Physics and Biology. His approach to the teaching of science was very "hands-on." For him the lab was very important. His interest in gardening flourished in these years. He took it upon himself to care for the upkeep and decoration of the Salesian Cemetery. As a youngster in the seminary he had worked in this cemetery. It was familiar ground for him. He used the property around the school as his biology lab. He had identified 147 species of plants on the school grounds and had his students identify them as part of the biology program.



Arthur, with brothers, Fr. Ernest, an Oakland diocesan priest, ordained in 1945, and Harry at the "Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament."

His brother Harry remembers just how hands-on Fr. Art was after he attended to him after a chemistry lab mishap. Fr. Art had mixed some concoction in a large glass beaker, which exploded in front of him. Tiny shards of glass struck him in the face, arms and chest. He was removing the bits of glass for several weeks after. Fortunately none hit his eyes.

Fr. Art was a model teacher and at the same time not without controversy. He was very demanding with his students. The alumni can share story after story about Fr. Art's methods. He was a tough grader and would not allow his students to lag behind. Many of his students got their careers started in science and mathematics because of Fr. Art's inspiration.

Salesian alumni vividly remember Fr. Art in the classroom. Henry Clemes, Class of 1970 tell the story. "Fr. Art is standing at the front of the classroom at the beginning of the term. Before him sit a new batch of students who either do not know Father or do not believe the stories they have heard about him. Some students are talking or fooling around and disturbing the class. Fr. Art asks them to 'quiet down.' They don't. So he reaches into his cassock and pulls out a Colt .45 revolver and places it on the desk. He continues with the lesson with students at full and nervous attention."

Father used the gun as a prop and the students used to joke about it. He had an interest in law enforcement and firearms. As a good Salesian he took this personal interest and translated it into something he could share with his students. In the basement of Salesian High School he built a firing range where he taught marksmanship and gun safety. He also offered an elective course in Police Science. At his inspiration many of his students entered careers in law enforcement, fire and rescue, and paramedic services.

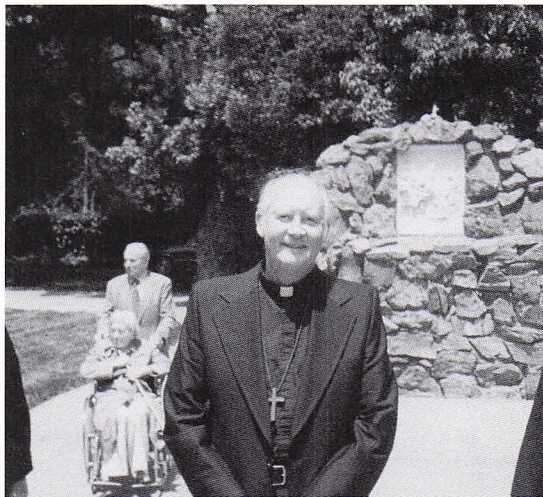


Arthur's mother, Ellen, spent her last years at Mercy Center, Oakland. Arthur would visit her each Sunday morning from Salesian High Richmond.

Fr. Art was himself a life long learner. He enjoyed study and read widely in science, theology and literature. In his later years when he could not do much physically he would spend hours reading. He would average 5 or 6 books a week. He told us that this was, "to keep my mind working while my body falls apart." In the community he was the source for all things scientific. Hardly a day went by when at breakfast he would not point out to us some new or revisited scientific fact or theory.

Fr. Art retired from the classroom in 1989 at the age of 67. He used his retirement in service of the community. He became the weekend cook for the Salesians. He enjoyed the chemistry of cooking and would write down all his recipes and he collected cookbooks. He was a good cook and enjoyed caring for the Salesians.

He spent hours in the cemetery gardens pruning and planting and keeping the cemetery a beautiful and peaceful place. He saw this as a way of passing the time and of honoring the Salesians buried there.



Arthur at the re-dedication of the Salesian Cemetery, Richmond. In the background, one of the outdoor stations the Cross monuments, 1998.

playground, in the science labs. School, home, church and playground were all one place for Fr. Art.



Pascual Chavez and Art share insights, perhaps on the state of the Province, after the Extraordinary Visitation during the Thanksgiving Day reception at Richmond. Nov. 23, 2000.

He lived in the community of Salesian High School for 41 years. He taught in the school for 27 years. For the past several years Fr. Art was more and more confined to the house due to ill health. This ordinary man lived his life in an extraordinary way. Fr. Art was a person of deep prayer, which was fueled by a keen interest in theology and the Church. As a Salesian he influenced countless young people by sharing with them his life and faith. Many of his students kept in touch with him over the years, which is a testimony to their respect and confidence in this good priest and friend.

Fr. Art was resigned to death. He looked forward to a rest from the pain and frustration of the illness, which he suffered, in the final years. In February of this year his health had declined to a point where the community could no longer take care of him. He did not want to leave the house where he

Fr. Art regarded himself as an ordinary person. He was not well traveled. He left California only twice, once to go to Don Bosco College in New Jersey and again in 1985 to attend a workshop in Salesian studies in Ipswich, Massachusetts. While he had an encyclopedic knowledge of science, he did not pursue advanced degrees. He was a good Salesian and good priest. He was always available to his Salesians and to the students for a kind word, counseling and confessions. In the latter he was not very conventional. He would hear confessions anywhere at any time. Students would approach him in the halls of the school building, on the

had lived for so many years, and he did not want to be separated from his Salesian brothers. He humbly accepted the inevitable and went to Mercy Center and entered the hospice care facility on the feast of St. John Bosco, January 31, 2003. The staff took very good care of him there. Fr. Arthur Brainard died on March 14, 2003; he was 80 years old. He was a Salesian for 60 years and a priest for 50 years.



(Left to Right) William Schafer (provincial), and Anthony DiFalco, with Arthur celebrating his 40th anniversary of ordination at Corpus Christi Church, San Francisco, 1993.

His funeral was held at Salesian High School with the faculty and students in attendance. His brothers Fr. Ernest and Harry were there as were his three nieces (Fr. Art's brother, Francis, had died in Oakland at the Veteran's hospital in 1954 of a cerebral hemorrhage). His casket was decorated with four sets of symbols: A collection of books, a basket of cooking utensils, his chalice and a paten of hosts, and his Colt .45 revolver. But the greatest symbol of his life was the large number of alumni who attended. Among them were an honor guard made up of 20 Police officers and Fire Fighters, all alumni who had had

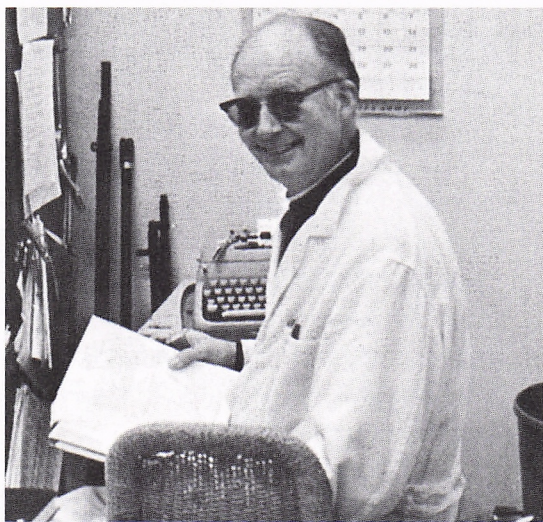
Fr. Art as a teacher. These represented all of the people who grew strong because they knew Fr. Art.

The death of a brother Salesian gives us an opportunity to reflect on our own lives. Fr. Art lived an ordinary life like all of us. he made mistakes, like all of us, and like all of us he did some amazingly wonderful things. In our reflection it would be good to ask ourselves, "What symbols would I use to represent my life?"

Fr. Art we celebrate your life and your entrance into the kingdom promised us by the Lord. Go before us and pray for us to the Father that we may grow in our faith and spend our lives in the ministry of Don Bosco which your Son Jesus Christ has given us . Amen.

May 30, 2003
Christian H. Woerz, SDB
Director

Art the Educator at Don Bosco Tech, Rosemead and Salesian High, Richmond



Salesian High. Art in his third-floor lab office. Note the "protection" to the left of the typewriter. 1970.



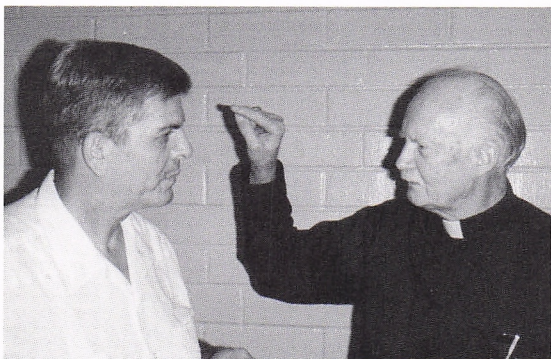
The beginning years of the gun club which was a life-long mark of his school experience. Don Bosco Tech, 1961.



Visiting Louie Masoero and the students at De Sales hall.



Talking over old times at Bosco Tech with Tom Prendiville, 2000.



A salutary word of advice for Carmine Vairo, 2000.



Happy Campers from Bosco Tech in the late 50s. (From left) Ray L'Hereux, Ed Gaffney, Art, Tony Freitas, Frank Bracchi and Rudy Bertagnolli.

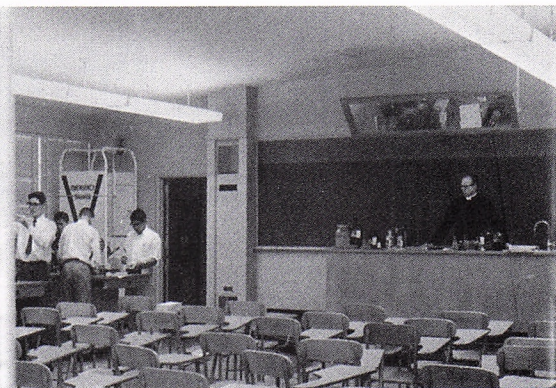
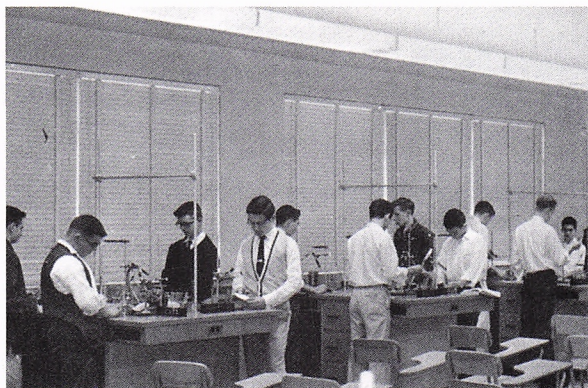
Art the Educator at Don Bosco Tech, Rosemead, and Salesian High, Richmond



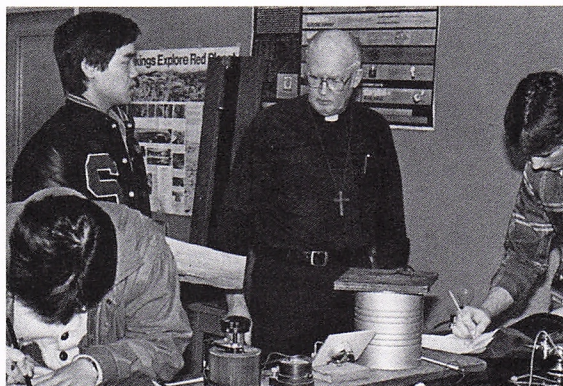
Art was at the front door each morning to greet the arriving students. Salesian High, Richmond, 1983.



Members of the Police Science - Gun Club at Salesian. Many of Art's students went on to make a career in police work, 1972.



Chemistry class at Don Bosco Technical Institute, 1959.



Salesian High. Still active in the chemistry lab in 1986.



Salesian High. Coming down from his third floor kingdom at the end of the day, 1988.

Father Arthur F. Brainard, SDB

Born: Albion, California
November 20, 1922

First Profession: Newton, New Jersey
September 8, 1943

Ordained: Fresno, California
May 30, 1953

Died: Oakland, California
March 14, 2003



Salesians of St. John Bosco

SAN FRANCISCO PROVINCE
1100 Franklin Street
San Francisco, California, 94109