

A SHORT ACCOUNT

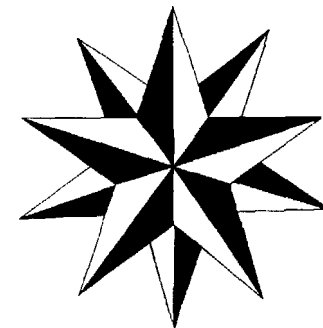
OF THE LIFE

OF

Brother Melville Bock, F.S.C.

(Aloysius Herman)

1928 - 1997



SIGNUM FIDEI

TOUR OF DUTY

- 1948 - New Iberia, Louisiana
(St. Peter's College)
- 1949 - Santa Fe, New Mexico
(student)
- 1951 - Lake Charles, Louisiana
(Landry Memorial High School)
- 1959 - Lafayette, Louisiana
(De La Salle Juniorate)
- 1961 - New Orleans, Louisiana
(De La Salle High School)
- 1963 - Santa Fe, New Mexico
(Sangre de Cristo - student)
- 1964 - Santa Fe, New Mexico
(St. Michael's High School)
- 1964 - (August)
(Philippines)
- 1971 - New Orleans, Louisiana
(De La Salle High School)
- 1973 - Galveston, Texas
(O'Connell High School)
- 1974 - Covington, Louisiana
(St. Paul's High School)
- 1975 - New Orleans, Louisiana
(Christian Brothers School)
- 1988 - Metairie, Louisiana
(Rummel High School)
- 1991 - (November) Lafayette, Louisiana
(De La Salle Christian Brothers)
(Sick list)
- 1997 - Died January 5

On January 5, 1997, the feast of the Epiphany (Three Kings), BROTHER MEL BOCK passed from time into eternity. He was 68 years of age and had been a Brother of the Christian Schools for 52 years. During most of those years Brother Mel ministered in the classroom. For many years he had suffered from diabetes and toward the end of his life one of his legs had to be amputated due to the ravages of the disease.

Everyone wants to be remembered in some way after death. How should Brother Mel be remembered? What is the one thing that threads through his life? How had he been blessed by God? There can only be one word that best describes him. Brother Mel was a man filled with JOY. The word joy comes from the Latin word "gaudium" which is an emotion of happiness, gladness, or delight. St. Augustine said: "It was only when I was startled into self-forgetfulness, that I again tasted joy." Those who knew Brother Mel would surely say: "He enjoyed the taste of joy each day because he always put others and their needs before his own."

Melville E. Bock was born on January 21, 1928, in the city of New Orleans, Louisiana. He was the third son of Walter Bock and the former Hazel Brady. It was on February 5, 1928, that he was baptized in the Church of St. Francis de Sales in New Orleans. He received his elementary education from the Sisters of Christian Charity at St. Francis of Assisi School on State Street. These Sisters held a special place in his heart and he always spoke fondly of his former teachers in that religious congregation. When he was thirteen years of age he entered the Junior Novitiate of the Brothers of the Christian Schools in Lafayette, Louisiana. It was in the Juniorate that his Brother teachers and fellow Junior Novices were to first encounter that joy which would characterize his life.

Life in the Junior Novitiate was very strict, but Mel took each day one at a time and in stride. He was a source of

encouragement to those Junior Novices who became faint hearted and wanted to throw in the towel.

Although he wasn't the most gifted of students, Mel always put his best foot forward. Deep down inside he knew that the life of the Christian Brother was what God wanted for him and what he wanted for himself. As far as anyone knows, he never wavered in his determination to serve God by becoming a Christian Brother.

JUNIORATE REMEMBRANCE

Brother Gregory Wright

Mel Bock entered the Juniorate on 10 June 1941. This was at St. Paul's in Covington where the Juniors were spending a month while a 30-day retreat was going on at Magnolia. In some ways he seemed more at home than others of the newcomers. Perhaps this was because an older brother had spent some time as a Junior before returning home following the death of their father. Mel remained there until 28 May 1945 when he went to the Novitiate to begin his Postulancy.

Probably he was most outstanding as a good singer with a fine voice. Also, Mel showed himself to be a cheerful person, one largely undisturbed by any untoward events he experienced. Like the others he involved himself in a number of activities and tasks which he tried to do as well as possible. Frequently he seemed to be able to joke about these things. And at times he did not take them as seriously as his teachers might have desired. All in all, as in the case of many of his com-

panions, these four years were not that eventful for him.

Still they seem to have been a happy time for him as well as one in which he developed in a number of ways.



After completing his high school education, Brother Mel entered the Lafayette Novitiate of the Brothers in June of 1945. On August 14, of that year he received the religious habit and was given the name Aloysius Herman. Of the two names, he favored Herman and in his early classroom experiences that was the name he used. It was only in 1966 that he began to use the name Mel again.

**NOVITIATE REMEMBRANCE:
Brother John Young**

Mel Bock entered the novitiate in the days of Devotional Catholicism. The question of youth, "What should we do with our lives?" could be answered by pointing out a path that gave a balance to the tensions encountered by American youth between personal values and the rapidly changing industrial society that centered on work, multiple step careers, and lack of commitment.

In the novitiate Mel was taught that life was to be lived with discipline, attentiveness, and a concern for others. Talk was good, but too much talk could spoil the trip. Life was to be lived with companionship, in a dignified,

happy, and fulfilling way. Not even suffering could rob life of its integrity.

It would seem that Mel's basic formation is something that he brought to the novitiate, rather than something he received in the program. When Mel's mother visited him, she stood out as a "very special person" -- one with a buoyant, cheerful, happy disposition.

Mel had the key quality of "common sense," as it was called by the French brothers. He did well in study, ability to get along with others, tact, concern, insight, balance, and sensitivity. He was also gifted with an outstanding voice and excellent memory.

The direction of his life seemed rooted in his family. They never failed him; he never failed his family.

Mel's life itself is the answer to the question, "What should we do with our lives?"



On August 15, 1946, Brother Mel pronounced his first vows. He then traveled to Las Vegas, New Mexico, to pursue his B.A. degree in History at the Sacred Heart Training Institute for the Christian Brother Scholastics.

**SCHOLASTICATE REMEMBRANCE:
Brother Amedy Esquibel**

I first met Mel Bock in Lafayette in 1945 as a postulant. We made the Novitiate together and were together in the Scholasticate for

three years. Mel had four years of Scholasticate; he finished in 1951.

Since Mel's personality was rather low-keyed, I cannot recall many specifics about him. He did have a steady influence on our class because of his equanimity and jovial disposition. Not too many things ruffled him. I think his peace of mind is what got him through the strenuous regimen of the Scholasticate. He was methodical and well organized and always ready to share his materials. Whenever I needed information about some project I would be working on, I could always bank on him for help in finding such information, either by making the material available to me or by telling me where to find it.

In short, his main contributions to our years together in college were his cheerfulness and willingness to help others that characterized him most of his life.



It was in August of 1948 that he had his first teaching experience in New Iberia, Louisiana. The year 1949 found him back pursuing his B.A. degree at the newly opened St. Michael's College in Santa Fe, New Mexico. He received his B.A. degree from that institution in 1951.

His studies behind him, Brother Mel taught the next eight consecutive years at Landry Memorial High School in Lake Charles, Louisiana. It was while he was a member of the Landry Community that he made his final profession of vows on June 7, 1953.

In all, he taught in ten Lasallian Schools in the New Orleans - Santa Fe Province. For thirty-eight years he labored as a Christian Brother in the classroom. For him it was a labor of love. He loved his students and in turn they loved him. As a teacher, he was thorough in his lesson preparations, but his classes lacked strong discipline. Because the students loved him so much they were very respectful of him. Students were generally attentive. If on occasion, Brother Mel gave an inch, the students would take a mile.

In 1964, Brother Mel received the missionary call. He had spoken with a Brother who was serving in the missions and felt this was a contribution to the Institute and the Church. He had hoped to be assigned to Japan, but on August 25, 1964, he received an obedience assigning him to the Philippines. So in August of 1964, he left St. Michael's of Santa Fe, New Mexico, to begin missionary work in the Philippines. He remained there for seven years. While in the Philippines, he received his Master of Arts degree in 1968 from De La Salle University in Manila.

In the years from 1971 to 1975, Brother Mel was assigned to three different communities: De La Salle High School, New Orleans; O'Connell High School in Galveston, Texas; and The Saint Paul's School in Covington, Louisiana. In 1975, he was assigned to Christian Brothers School in New Orleans. It was in this school, which he loved so much, that he would spend the next thirteen years.

**CBS REMEMBRANCE
Brother Raphael Bonin**

Brother Mel Bock came to Christian Brothers School from St. Paul's in Covington in 1975 and remained until 1989 when he left for Rummel.

In class and out, Brother had a wholesome influence on the students. His class discipline was excellent and that, added to well-prepared lessons, helped his students to obtain self-discipline, improve good study habits, and achieve academic success. Often, when alumni stopped by for a visit and a chat, they inquired first about Brother Mel.

Among characteristics of Brother Mel were the following trinity: joy, laughter, and optimism. He dissipated melancholy with his laughter: he encouraged people with his optimism. People were happy in his presence. They also appreciated his remembrances of special events in their lives and his help in the celebrations. Several persons told me that they had adopted him as a member of their family.

Brother Mel had so many collectibles, that much of the available space at CBS was used for storage.

We are happy and grateful to have had Brother Mel with us for those wonderful CBS years. Now when I hear thunder, I'll imagine that it's Mel's bellowing laughter from paradise. Finally, I believe that the following verse from Proverbs, 15:15, was written with Brother Mel in mind: "He that is of a merry heart hath a continual feast."



In August of 1989, because of failing health, Brother Mel was assigned to Rummel High School in Metairie, Louisiana. At Rummel he had a reduced work load as co-moderator of the school bookstore. His health continued to fail but he was always faithful to his duties and ever present to the community of his Brothers. The students and faculty at Rummel remember him as a happy person who was always quick with a smile and words of encouragement.

**RUMMEL REMEMBRANCE:
Brother Alphonse LeBlanc**

Brother Mel Bock was only at Rummel for a short time, 1988-91. Somehow it seemed much longer. His physical health was so complicated by diabetes. Over the three years, he was in the hospital several times. His sight was failing, and he had circulation problems in his feet. His heart was also affected. Yet, with all that was happening to him, he maintained a very healthy mental attitude. He was cheerful, sociable, and optimistic. He was always the gracious host when we had visitors and always lively at community socials.

I especially remember Brother Mel's rapport with the faculty and staff at Rummel. He volunteered to help out in the bookstore and to get the mail. Always ready with a friendly greeting, he was a ray of sunshine, another kind of light of Christ to others. Everyone loved Brother Mel. When he didn't show up in the school for a while, the faculty were solicitous about him, inquiring about his health, offering to pray for him, and expressing the

hope that he would be back in the bookstore soon. When he was reassigned to Lafayette, he was missed. He is still remembered fondly by those at Rummel who knew him.

In the short time that he was at Rummel, Brother Mel did a lot for the people there. He brought kindness and cheerfulness to the faculty and to the students. He attended school functions often, being a visible presence of the brothers. He often remembered the teachers, the staff, and the students at community prayers. He brought the gospel message to all in his own way. He made an impact that some of us did not make after 25 years."

iiiiiiiiiiii

With his continued poor health, and a near brush with death, Brother Mel was assigned to De La Salle Christian Brothers Retirement Home in November of 1991. His long battle with diabetes was taking a toll on his body. Generally, he followed the directives of his doctor concerning the things he should avoid eating. It would be an untruth to say that he didn't cheat on his diet from time to time and this caused his Brothers to keep a close supervision of his eating. In May of 1993, the Brother Visitor found it necessary to place Brother Mel in Oakwood Village Nursing Home.

Brother Clarence Fioke, Provincial of the New Orleans-Santa Fe Province, made the following remarks at the Mass for Christian Burial in honor of Brother Mel concerning his time at Oakwood Village Nursing Home:

If any one aspect of Brother Mel's life bears some commentary, it was probably his spirit

of happiness and joy. He was always able to put a positive spin on things. Never one to be "down" for too long a period, he always seemed able to bounce back from his trials and sufferings. Even at Oakwood village, he practiced a Christian Brother ministry of caring for other patients there. He was respected by all, staff as well as the others who knew him. He always had time to chat with others. In his better days, he was most often in the public areas, mixing with people and enjoying social contact with them, rather than staying in his private room. He was an outstanding example of accepting God's will in good times and not so good times. His smile was ever present and his laughter could be heard in the center. People loved being around him and he loved being with people. When he was well enough, he never missed a trip to the local casino to try his luck with the slots. Bingo was another of his favorite pastimes."

iiiiiiiiiiii

The doctors who cared for him called Brother Mel their "miracle brother." They were convinced that it was Brother Mel's joyful disposition that helped him to bounce back each time he faced a new medical crisis. But like our Lord Jesus, in the end, he was handed over to suffering. His family and friends who visited him at Lourdes Medical Center were witnesses to his suffering, but also his ever present joy - smiling, chatting, enjoying the presence of others.

**REMEMBRANCE:
Dr. Lawless Bourque**

I first met Brother Mel when he came to De La Salle in 1991. I read his medical report and he had conditions that could have easily been fatal to someone else. From the very first time I met him, I always felt the presence of God around him. He was so profoundly appreciative of the least I did for him. He was so ill, yet never complained, except for the final few days when he was in great pain. When I was giving him hyperbolic treatment in order to save his leg, he kept begging to go home in order to be with the Brothers and his friends. Brother Mel had enough diseases to have died years ago, but God kept him with us to inspire us to help one another and to believe that there is a God. To me he was a little bit like Mother Teresa or St. John Baptist De La Salle, i.e., someone very, very holy."



On New Year's Eve Brother Mel's vital signs began to weaken. A number of the Brothers went to the hospital to spend some time with him.

**REMEMBRANCE:
Brother John Kelley**

On New Year's Eve, '96 I went with Brother John Young to visit Mel in the hospital. John informed him of the recent death of my sister. I said: "May she rest in peace." Mel answered "Amen." He appeared to be heavily

sedated. In spite of this, he was able to wish me a "Happy New Year." He went to spend his in a better place.

I saw this on a tombstone in Lafayette:

**A link is broken in our earthly band
A golden chain is forming in a better land**

Mel had me make copies of inspirational papers for him. He seemed to place quite a store in such things.

I think of Mel as being ordinary. I think that God, the Weaver, has taken all of Mel's ordinary actions and woven them into something beautiful in His sight."



At the beginning of this brief biography, it was mentioned that Brother Mel was a man filled with joy. This was God's great gift to him; a gift Mel used. As the author Henri Nouwen stated in his book **BREAD FOR THE JOURNEY**, "Two people can be part of the same event, but one may choose to live it quite differently from the other. One may choose to trust that what happened, painful as it may be holds a promise. The other may choose despair and be destroyed by it." Brother Mel's joy helped him to look to the promise side of his sufferings.

On January 5th at 11:40 a.m., our joy-filled Brother passed away while being attended by his nurses. He moved quietly into the promise, or as Brother Raphael Bonin quoting St. Paul expressed it "into the realm where eye has not seen nor ear heard what God has for those who love Him." Brother Mel's journey was now over; his joy is complete.

A wake and Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Wednesday, January 8, 1997, at De La Salle Christian Brothers followed by interment in Christian Brothers cemetery. At the funeral mass, Brother Clarence closed the Eulogy for Brother Mel with the following words:

Now, the time of suffering is over. We must focus on Mel's entrance into beatitude with the Lord. He lived his life in a spirit of joy and certainly his eternity will echo that sentiment. His funeral occurs here at Magnolia during the season of Christmas and Epiphany. This year Brother Mel was not able to come to Magnolia to see the decorations and splendor of the property at its best. I am happy that the adornments of the season are still displayed here, for it provides us all a chance to rejoice with him amidst the colors and lights, amidst the crib and decorations, with the shepherds and Magi, as we celebrate the rebirth of Christ. What a wonderful way for us to remember Brother Mel's own rebirth with Jesus in Glory."

By: Brother Louis Welker, FSC
Director of De La Salle Christian Brothers
Lafayette, LA.