

A SHORT ACCOUNT

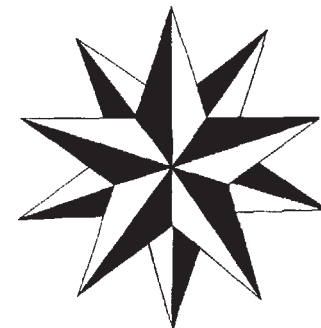
OF THE LIFE

OF

Brother Richard C. Burwitz

(Augustine Richard)

1911 - 1998



SIGNUM FIDEI

Tour of Duty

- 1939 - Lafayette, Louisiana (Cathedral High School)
- 1940 - New Iberia, Louisiana (St. Peter's College)
- 1944 - Lafayette, Louisiana (Cathedral High School)
- 1945 - New Iberia, Louisiana (St. Peter's College)
- 1948 - Bluefields, Nicaragua (Missionary Work)
- 1952 - (Feb.) Galveston, Texas (Kirwin High School)
- (Aug.) Philippine Islands (Missionary Work)
- 1956 - El Paso, Texas (Cathedral High School)
- 1964 - Santa Fe, New Mexico (St. Michael's High School)
- 1966 - Denver, Colorado (Mullen High School)
- 1975 - Santa Fe, New Mexico (St. Michael's High School)
- 1988 - (Jan.) Houston, Texas (Marian Christian High School)
- 1988 - (Apr.) Denver, Colorado (Mullen High School)
- 1988 - (Aug.) Santa Fe, New Mexico (St. Michael's High School)
- 1998 - - Died on December 18

"What will the Brothers think of me when I'm gone?"

This question was posed to one of the Brothers by Brother Richard Burwitz shortly before his death. Probably, every human being thinks about this question at some time in his/her life. This question can be put in other words: "What will they say about me?" or "How will I be remembered?" The man who posed the question, passed away on December 18, 1998. In this brief biographical sketch, some of his religious Brothers will provide the memories to answer the question.

Richard Burwitz was born on March 22, 1919 in Denver, Colorado, the son of Otto T. Burwitz and the former Margaret Coyne, both deceased. He is survived by his step-sister Anita Haggerty and her husband Raymond, his cousin June Peterson, and the Christian Brothers of the New Orleans - Santa Fe Province.

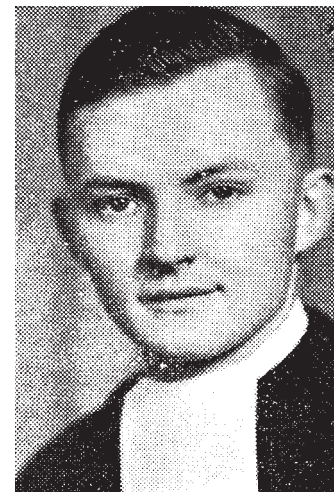
Part of his grammar school days were spent at Sacred Heart School in Denver, Colorado. When his family moved to Boulder, Colorado, he attended St. Gertrude's School. Later, after returning to Denver, Colorado, he completed his grammar grades at Cathedral School in 1932. The first two years of his secondary education were at Cathedral High School in Denver, Colorado.

In 1934, at age 15, he entered the Christian Brothers Juniorate in Las Vegas, NM. Upon completion of the Juniorate, he traveled to Lafayette, LA, to prepare for entrance into the Novitiate. On August 14, 1936, he received the Religious Habit of the Christian Brothers and was given the name Brother Augustine Richard. On August 15, 1937, he made first Profession of Vows and returned to Las Vegas for his collegiate years.

Brother Richard's first assignment was at Cathedral High School in Lafayette, LA. During his sixty-two years as a Christian Brother, he taught in eight schools in the New Orleans-Santa Fe Province, as well as schools in Bluefields, Nicaragua, and the Philippine Islands. In 1942, he earned a B.A. in Social Studies from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, TX.

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In addition to social studies he taught English, math, chemistry, physics, French, Spanish, bookkeeping, physical education and driver's education. He also took a keen interest in plant maintenance.



*Brother Richard,
St. Peter's College,
New Iberia, 1943*

From 1948 - 1952, Brother Richard was a missionary in Bluefields, Nicaragua. Brother Ephrem Hebert gives the following remembrance of those years:

"I lived with Brother Richard for four years in our mission community of Colegio San Jose, in Bluefield, Nicaragua. Brother Richard taught next to me in school. I taught second grade and he taught fourth. Brother Richard had good command of his classes, and he was loved by his students. His command of Spanish was marginal, especially his pronunciation, but somehow he managed to make himself understood. Whatever he undertook, he put forth all his energies, and he was never discouraged by failure. Brother Richard was especially imbued with a deep love for his pupils, their parents, and everyone engaged in Catholic missions. He was sometimes

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rather abrupt in his dealings with people, but he was never uncharitable. He loved hunting and fishing, and spent a good part of his free time in a boat on the river."

In February 1952, Brother Richard returned to the United States to replace a Brother at Kirwin High School in Galveston, Texas. In August of that year he left the United States to do missionary work in the Philippine Islands. He would remain in the Philippine Islands until 1964. From 1953 - 1960 he served at La Salle school in Bacolod, as fourth grade teacher for one year, and then as Principal for six years. Brother George Dartez, who was also a missionary in the Philippine Islands, gives the following remembrance of Brother Richard during those years:

"In 1952, the year Brother Richard went to the Philippines, the Brothers opened a school in Bacolod. The land given for the school was not very well drained. The football fields needed to be turtle-backed. Brother Richard spent hours and hours leveling with a borrowed bulldozer. Nothing was too tiresome or difficult for him."

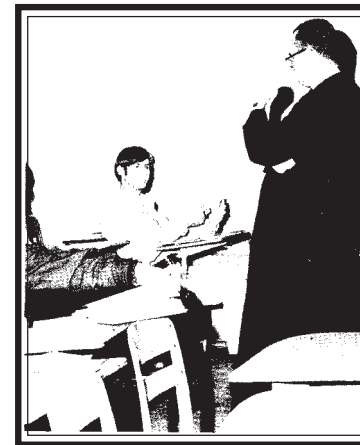
Brother Felix Masson, still a missionary in the Philippines, in a letter written in 1996, reminded Brother Richard of the good work he had accomplished in the Philippines:

"Thank you for writing. You didn't say what you are doing these days, but of one thing I'm sure: 'They can't keep a good man down!' And you are one of the hardest working Brothers that I know. It's a hallmark of your District, I feel. Brothers Manuel, Cletus, and you certainly gave a marvelous example to us, especially to the 'young ones.' Add Brother Dan Ortiz to the list of good examples.

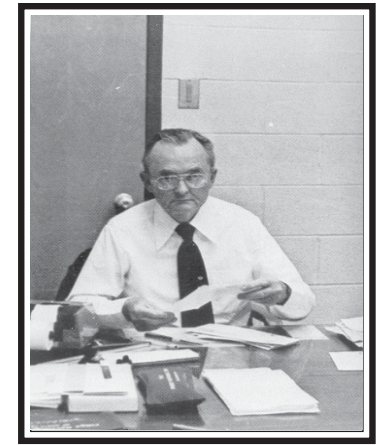
When I was in Bocolod recently, I admired the beauty of the campus. The trees are so beautiful and lovely. Remember, who planted many of

them. When I see the various levels of the different buildings, I remember how you would get out there with bulldozers and earth movers and really change the face of the earth. Remember, Richard, you were one of the men who helped to lay a solid foundation here."

Brother Richard's tour of duty in the Phillipines also took him to Illigan and Manila. In 1964, he returned to the United States. The remainder of his life would be spent in the western part of the New Orleans-Santa Fe Province. Mullen High School in Denver, Colorado was his home from 1966 - 1975, and St. Michael's High School in Santa Fe, New Mexico, from 1975 - 1988. In both schools he worked in the Business Office and taught driver's education. He was one of the first Brothers to learn how to use the computer for scheduling and accounting. For a number of years he traveled north, south, and east helping our schools in New Mexico, Colorado, and Texas set-up computer programs for accounting.



*Teaching accounting,
Mullen High School,
Denver, Colorado, 1974*



*Business Office,
St. Michael's High School,
Santa Fe, NM, 1978*

Brother Richard would take vacation time to do some traveling around the United States. Brother Rene Clerc, who lived with Brother in Denver, Colorado, gives the following remembrance:

"During the year-and-a-half that I lived with Brother Richard in Denver, he never ceased to amaze me by his energy. He certainly did not retire from life. He was a real 'Road Warrior.' He loved to travel with Brothers going to Santa Fe and would offer to accompany them and help with the driving. A trip from Denver to Santa Fe was a presentation of part of his history -- the place where a wheel came off a bus he was driving, his alertness to areas of congestion along the way, particularly where there were "honky tonks" where people might have been drinking and pulled out on the road without proper warning. He mastered the intricacies of the Denver Bus System and enjoyed hours of recreation visiting points of interest in the area. With his knowledge of bus schedules and transfer coupons, he was even able to visit Colorado Springs. At the evening meals he would regale us with stories about what he had seen that day.

Another enjoyment was his annual vacation. A rental car would appear in the parking lot one afternoon, and Richard would leave the next morning. In two weeks he would return full of enthusiasm and stories about where he had been and what he saw. Motel 6 has suffered a great loss."

In 1988, Brother Richard returned to Santa Fe, New Mexico, to help in the running of the San Miguel Mission. It was only in 1996 that he formally retired from active ministry. Brother Richard underwent surgery in early January 1998. December 1998 saw a great decline in Brother Richard's health.

Brother Samuel Martinez, Director of St. Michael's Community, gives the following remembrance:

"Brother Richard Burwitz was sick during the past year. He had surgery in early January. The surgery on his kidneys and related cancer was a source of great concern for Brother. He seldom spoke about it, but he was troubled. He spoke to me about the difficulty of not being able to drive. In general, he was resigned to what was to come. The doctors recommended that he go on dialysis; this idea he quickly rejected.

Early February saw Brother back with the doctors. He suffered a mild set back he began to lose his balance and sometimes his memory. He did not remember what happened nor how he ended up in the hospital. During all this ordeal he started to change his attitude and became submissive to the Care Giver. He was grateful for what was being done for him.

For the remainder of the months, his condition began to get worse. The last visit to the doctor was not a very happy occasion for Brother. The doctor informed him that nothing could be done for him. The doctor told him to take it easy and to walk slowly. This caused Brother to become concerned, but he began prayerfully to reflect on what would happen next. Toward the end of his life, he was filled with peace and serenity.

In late November, the big test came. Richard began his journey to his eternal rest. He became bed ridden and Sangre de Cristo Hospice was called in to assist Brother. He suffered in silence and in a prayerful way. His main concern was

that he was becoming a burden for me. I assured him that he was not, and that I was very happy to help him. This gave him some peace of mind. His surviving sister visited with him. His reaction was one of concern for her. His sister assured him that it was worth coming to see him. She prayed with him and they communicated with each other. This was the last time that they would see each other."

On the morning of December 18, 1998, Brother Richard entered into eternal rest.

Question: "What will the Brothers think about me when I'm gone?"

Brother Richard followed the words of Jesus: "Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock." Not only did Brother Richard lay the foundation for new schools, he was instrumental in the foundation of three new schools in the missions. Today, these schools are still in existence.

Like Our Lady, Brother Richard said "Yes" to his calling. Mary said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to your will." In his "Yes" to God, Brother Richard declared:

"I promise to go whenever I may be sent and to do whatever I may be assigned."

Like St. Joseph, Brother Richard was a builder: he designed schools and assisted in their construction.

Like St. La Salle, Brother Richard was zealous for children, especially those in poor countries. "The spirit of their Institute consist in an ardent zeal for the instruction of children." (St. De La Salle)

Like St. Paul, Brother Richard spread the Gospel by teaching, building and carrying the word of Jesus to foreign lands.

Brother Richard loved those entrusted to his care. "**Brother Richard was especially imbued with a deep love of his pupils, their parents, and everyone engaged in the Catholic Missions.**" (Brother Ephrem Hebert)

He loved to travel. "**He certainly did not retire from life.**" (Brother René Clerc)

"Toward the end, he was filled with peace and serenity." (Brother Samuel Martinez)

Hopefully, Brother Richard's question has been answered! But there is still one more response to his life, and this most assuredly came from Our Lord Jesus: "**Come, you who are blessed by my Father. Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.**" (Matt 25:34)

On December 21, 1998, a rosary was said at 7:00 p.m. at Christian Brothers Chapel on 100 Siringo Rd., Santa Fe, New Mexico. The Mass of Christian Burial was held the next day, in the Christian Brothers Chapel. Interment took place in the Brothers plot in Rosario Cemetery in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

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

Brother Richard Burwitz, FSC
March 22, 1919 - December 18, 1998

Eulogy given by Brother Daniel Ortiz, FSC, at the Mass of Christian Burial.

On one of my visits to Brother Richard prior to his death, he asked me a curious question, "What will the Brothers think of me when I am gone?" The question caught me by surprise and I am embarrassed to say that I did not give him a very good answer.

That night on thinking about his question, I came across a short poem by Carl Carter that showed that other people besides Richard were bothered by the same question:



What will they say about me
Those who I hold so dear?
What will they best remember
When I'm no longer here?

Will they recall mistakes I've made
Battles I've never won?
Moments of pain I've caused them
Things I have left undone?

Will they censor my human failings?
And wish I'd been noble and strong?
Will they scoff at the hopes I nurtured
The dreams that somehow went wrong?

Or will they be moved by compassion
Directed from heaven above
To temper their judgment with kindness
And soften their memories with love.

-- Carl Carter

Fair minded people who know Richard will think of Brother in three ways:

1) As a true and solid religious Faithful to prayer, duty and mission. Not perfect by any means for at times he could be called aloof and impulsive.....hence his nickname "Rough-house." But then who among us can throw the first stone?

2) A missionary of the old school tough, adaptable and creative. I emphasize OLD SCHOOL for being a missionary in his day, carried no perks. In Bluefields, one of his missions, the town had electricity only five hours a day and the men there had long hours dealing with both day and evening students. There were no restaurants, movies, and the town was surrounded by swamps. In the Philippines, things were better, but Richard had to deal with people of a different culture and way of doing things.

3) A Founder of Schools in the La Sallian style. Richard was instrumental in the foundation of three schools One in Bluefields and two in the Philippines La Salle Bacolod and La Salle Lipa. The latter two are now Universities and very successful.

I had the good fortune to have been assigned to Bacolod after Richard returned to the United States. I saw first hand the wonderful educational work of Richard in Bacolod where he had been the founding father . Teachers still remembered Brother as a hard-working, well-organized and fair administrator. They remarked how he started his day at seven in the morning, greeting students and faculty, and was in his office till five in the afternoon, returning at seven in the evening to his office to meet any parent that would need to see him. On Saturdays he worked with the construction workers, putting additions on school buildings.

On his return to the states he spoke with great enthusiasm of the work of the Brothers in the Philippines. Many in later years remarked that he left his heart there.

I made it a point to visit Brother every three years when I came to the US for home leave and speak to Brother of his former students and teachers. He always would use the occasions to recount his stories about the Philippines.

After his tour of duty in the missions, Richard taught in El Paso, Denver, and Santa Fe. In Santa Fe he was the Curator of the San Miguel Mission.

We can therefore summarize Brother's life by saying that he was:

- 1) A serious religious**
- 2) A missionary of the old school**
- 3) A founder of three La Sallian Schools**

And I may add: He did everything as Sinatra had sung: "My Way."

