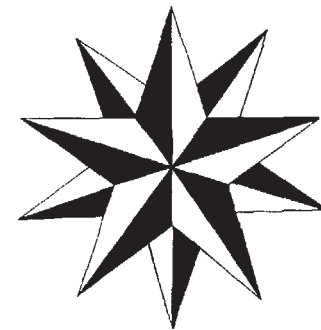


A SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE LIFE

OF

**Brother George Curtis, F.S.C.
(Christian George)
1911 - 1998**



SIGNUM FIDEI

Tour of Duty

- 1930 - Santa Fe, New Mexico (St. Michael's High School)
- 1931 - Franklin, Louisiana (Hanson Memorial School)
- 1932 - Lafayette, Louisiana (Cathedral High School)
- 1933 - El Paso, Texas (Cathedral High School)
- 1935 - Franklin, Louisiana (Hanson Memorial School)
- 1940 - Galveston, Texas (Kirwin High School)
- 1944 - El Paso, Texas (Cathedral High School)
- 1945 - Santa Fe, New Mexico (St. Michael's High School)
- 1948 - Galveston, Texas (Kirwin High School)
- 1950 - Covington, Louisiana (St. Paul's High School)
- 1951 - Santa Fe, New Mexico (St. Michael's High School)
- 1954 - Denver, Colorado (Mullen High School)
- 1959 - Galveston, Texas (Kirwin High School)
- 1961 - Vocational Director for the Western Section of the District
- 1964 - Opelousas, Louisiana (Academy of the Immaculate Conception) (Boys Section)
- 1965 - New Iberia, Louisiana (Catholic High School)
- 1967 - Covington, Louisiana (St. Paul's High School)
- 1969 - New Iberia, Louisiana (Catholic High School)
- 1976 - Sabbatical
- 1977 - New Iberia, Louisiana (St. Jude Center)
- 1983 - Santa Fe, New Mexico (College of Santa Fe Community)
- 1984 - (Sept.) New Iberia, Louisiana (Catholic High School)
- 1984 - (Nov.) New Orleans, Louisiana (Christian Brothers Academy)
- 1985 - Covington, Louisiana (St. Paul's Community)
- 1987 - Lafayette, Louisiana Community (Magnolia) -- Jennings Ministry
- 1988 - Houston, Texas (Marian Christian Community)
- 1989 - Lafayette, Louisiana (Cathedral-Carmel Community)
- 1989 - (August) Lafayette, Louisiana (Magnolia)
- 1991 - New Iberia, Louisiana (Catholic High School)
- 1991 - (June) Lafayette, Louisiana (Magnolia)
- 1993 - Lafayette, Louisiana (Oakwood Nursing Home)
- 1998 - Died December 14

In the Gospel of St. John, in the appearance of Jesus to the seven disciples (Chapter 21), we read: "Simon Peter said to them, 'I'm going fishing.' They said to him, 'We also will come with you'." A thing can remind us of a person. Many of us, when we remember those first followers of Jesus, think about fishing. Likewise, those who knew Brother George Curtis, will think about fishing. It was one of the things that he was very enthusiastic about; one of the many enthusiasms that contributed to his unique personality. Brother George passed away on December 14, 1998, at Oakwood Village Nursing Home. He was 87 years of age and had been a Christian Brothers for 71 years.

Brother George was born in New Iberia, LA, on February 22, 1911, the son of George Curtis and the former Camille Mestayer, both deceased. He was preceded in death by his sister, Mrs. Dean Mouret of New Iberia, LA, and his brother, Brother Alex (Jules) Curtis, FSC. He is survived by his sister, Sister Adelaide Curtis, DC, one nephew, Henry George Mouret and his wife Jeanette Mouret of New Iberia, LA, one great nephew and two great nieces.

When George was about a year and a half, his father drowned in a tidal wave that struck southern Louisiana in 1912. In fact, George's mother was carrying his younger brother at the time of Mr. Curtis' death. Their raising was left up to his mother and two sisters. The early education of the two young Curtis boys was under the direction of the Christian Brothers at St. Peter's College in New Iberia, LA.

On November 21, 1923, George entered the Christian Brothers Juniorate in Lafayette, LA. He was one of the first junior novices to enter this newly built house of formation. On November 3, 1973, the Brothers of the New Orleans - Santa Fe Province celebrated the 50th Anniversary of the opening of the Juniorate in the South. Brother George Curtis gave the following reflection of life in Juniorate:

It was hard to believe that 50 years ago I first set foot on Magnolia's soil! I still remember, as though it were yesterday, the very spot where my foot landed when we, the seven first juniors, cleared

(1)

out of the Gordon Hotel's bus, one of the few in Lafayette.

Brother Charles, our Director, Brother Albert Felix, our music teacher, Brother Martin, our economer, and Brother Joseph, our recruiter, were there to meet us.

Lester Aucoin and I were representatives of New Iberia, and five other boys represented Lafayette. Mr. Aucoin drove us to Lafayette. With him were his wife and my mother. They saw us to the dorm and arranged our belongings in our lockers with a mother's touch, probably the last such touch these lockers were ever to experience. The reassuring words of my mother as she kissed me good-bye took away the only lonesomeness that ever bothered me. Her parting words were: 'We'll be back to see you!'

We then had some time to explore our new home. The work on the Juniorate was incomplete. The chapel, which later became the north side dormitory, lacked a paint job, and the altar was a disappointment either because of a defective mold or because the mold had slipped away. The altar was now being destroyed. The ceilings throughout the building were unpainted.

Since electricity had not reached us out of Lafayette, a town of twelve thousand, for two years we used oil lamps. Gas likewise was not available until 1925, so we heated the place with pot-belly stoves fed with wood derived from trees cut from the premises.

The grounds were in a primeval condition. The

(2)

present part was a jungle of undergrowth. A few paths zig-zagged through the tall coffee weeds which served as a setting for our first recreation, a game of hide-and-seek in our front yard jungle.

A limited amount of farming was carried on by Francois, whose wife Eva, was our cook. As our dining room equipment had not arrived, our first meals were served on an improvised table made of planks supported by saw horses. Francois and Eva were to become an integral part of the personnel, at least in our young minds!

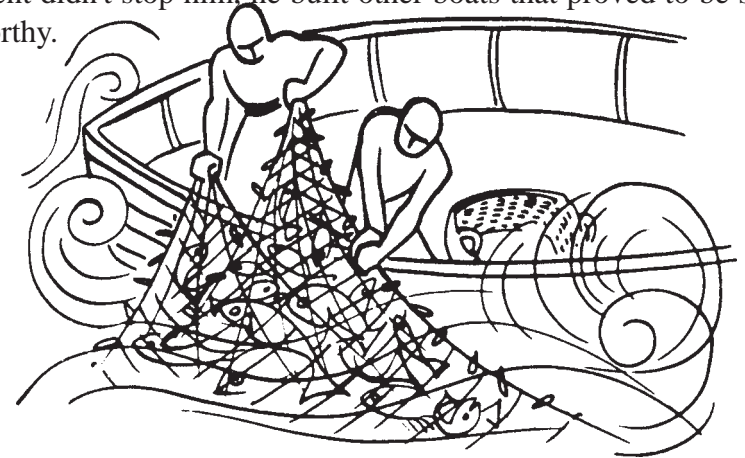
I cannot recall how long the original seven held together, but by 1924 new faces appeared and we were numerous enough to play baseball. Among these early arrivals were such characters as Ivy Reed (Brother Bernard, nick-named Hoover), Giles Simar (Brother Daniel), Howard LeBlanc (Brother Ambrose, nick-named Cuz), Harold Chauvin, Curley Reed (Hoover's cousin), and others, accounting for a respectable group of juniors."

In 1925, more Junior Novices arrived. This time Brother George's younger brother Jules was among them. The first class of Junior Novices in the South graduated in 1927. George entered the Novitiate on July 1, 1927, and was given the name Brother Christian George. On July 2, 1928, he pronounced first vows and a few days later traveled to Sacred Heart College in Las Vegas, NM, to take courses that would prepare him for the ministry of teaching. He received his B.A. in English from Mahattan College in 1934. On June 30, 1936, he made final Profession of Vows. His first teaching assignment was at St. Michael's High School in Santa Fe, NM. Throughout his long teaching career, Brother George was stationed in twelve Christian Brothers Schools in the New Orleans-Santa Fe Province. He held an M.A. in English from St. Mary University in San Antonio, Texas. He was

certified as a Guidance Counselor by the State of Louisiana in 1965. In addition, he served as Director of Vocations for the western section of the District from 1961 - 1964.

"Follow your bliss," advised Joseph Campbell in his famous interviews with Bill Moyers, stressing the importance to the spiritual life of cultivating our unique interests. He asked those in the viewing audience: "In what do you most delight? Where is your heart of hearts? What makes you enthusiastic? Where do you find yourself most unique? It is those places within us that give birth to enthusiasm. The word literally means 'God within us'." Brother George, as was mentioned had many things that he was enthusiastic about; many enthusiasms. Besides fishing, he loved teaching, coaching, traveling, and mountain climbing. He enjoyed sharing the stories of his adventures with others. Quite often he used the expression: "I wish you could have been there." You could feel his blissfulness; his deep gladness.

Even when Brother George built a boat too big to get out of the garage; he told the story in an enthusiastic way. The side wall of the garage had to be removed in order to get the boat out. To make matters worse, upon launching, the boat promptly sank. This event didn't stop him, he built other boats that proved to be seaworthy.



In 1976, after 46 years of teaching and several years of vocation work, Brother George was given a sabbatical to do some traveling. At the end of that year, he was assigned as a staff member at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church in New Iberia, LA. His primary duty was to work with the annulment tribunal of the Diocese of Lafayette, LA. In the evenings, he was involved in adult education in the parish, teaching English and Religion classes.



*Our Lady of Perpetual Help,
New Iberia, LA, where
Brother George ministered
from 1977 - 1983.*

On September 2, 1977 he was interviewed by *The Daily Iberian*, New Iberia, LA. Brother George spoke about the many projects he was involved in at Perpetual Help. He chuckled:

"All of that, and I'm supposed to be retired."

On October 30, 1977, Brother George celebrated his golden jubilee of entrance into the religious life. As was mentioned, he had an enthusiasm for mountain climbing. In an address to those gathered in Our

Lady of Perpetual Help Church he used the analogy of a mountain climber to describe his 50 years as a Brother:

"You may ask what it feels like to celebrate a golden jubilee. I feel like a mountain climber. At first the trail is green and inviting; the air exhilarating; the path winding and enticing; my footsteps are rapid and sure; my heart is sound and elated. The summit is far away and covered with snow. I envision the panorama that awaits me once the heights are attained. My voice fills the air with song and laughter; and all nature seems to chime in with my mood. Higher and higher I climb, leaping from boulder to boulder, crossing small cataracts that try to impede my way. The heights hold no fear for me. Onward I climb. I climb through the paths of youth and middle age. And after 50 years, the summit is still ahead; still covered with snow. The path seems steeper; the snow deeper and my voice is given to quiet. The air is chill and nature is still; I enter into a valley of silence. As I walk down the valley of silence, 'down the dark, dim, valley of silence alone, I hear not the sound of a footstep save God's and my own; and the hush of the place is as holy as hovers where angels doth dwell!' I feel as one who treads alone a banquet hall 'whose lights are fled, and garlands dead and all but he deserted!' But the snow covered trail still leads on to the heights that I must reach. The air is thinner; my footsteps less certain; my voice is more silent and I can sit and view the long trail behind me with its curves and steep descents. Along this trail are the faces of thousands of boys who still seem to smile at me, and in my ears an enthusiastic 'Good morning, Brother' still rings. But I must go on until I reach the summit whose glory is God's own presence.

"

Brother George remained at Perpetual Help Parish until 1983. After that, his assignments took him to New Mexico, Texas and back to Louisiana in 1991. In 1993, it was decided that he should join the retirement community at De La Salle - Christian Brothers in Lafayette, LA. During his stay at De La Salle, it became increasingly noticeable that his hearing was almost gone and he was showing general debility. He suffered a series of small strokes which impaired his speech. In December of 1993, it was suggested by his doctor that he be placed in a nursing facility where he could receive around-the-clock attention. Brother George became a resident of Oakwood Village Nursing Home in Lafayette, LA. He remained there for five years. At first, he was able to visit the Brothers at De La Salle every weekend, but with the on set of dementia, that became impossible. He never left the nursing home except to go to the doctor. Yet, the Brothers who visited him heard wonderful stories of his most recent fishing trip. As usual, he used the expression:

"I wish you could have been there."

During the night of December 14, 1998, a phone call came from the nursing home saying that Brother George was near death. At 2:40 a.m., he passed away. A Mass of Christian Burial was held at De La Salle - Christian Brothers in Lafayette, LA, on December 17, 1998. Interment took place in Christian Brothers cemetery in Lafayette, LA.

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



(7)

*Brother George
(second from left),
on vacation in
Key Largo, Florida
in 1985*



*Brother George with Football Team
at Kirwin High School
Galveston, Texas, 1940*



*Brother George
(front row, left),
attending
Kirwin Reunion
in 1986,
Galveston, Texas*

(8)

Brother George Curtis, FSC
(Christian George)
February 22, 1911 to December 14, 1998

Eulogy given by Brother Clarence Fioke, FSC, at the Mass of Christian Burial.

We are here today, gathered together, to celebrate the Christian burial of Brother George Curtis. We are all aware of the painful last few years of George's life, as he suffered through Alzheimer and other ailments. He and his brother Jules, known as Brother Alex, shared a room at Oakwood Village Nursing Home for many years. Brother Alex preceded his brother George into the next life, having died on August 5, 1997.

We extend our sympathy in a special way to Sister Adelaide Curtis, a Daughter of Charity, who is the sister of Brother George and to Mr. Henry George Mouret, a nephew. It was pointed out to me recently what a coincidence it was that Brother George died on December 14. It seems that he was named George after the first President of our nation since he was born on George Washington's birthday, which is February 22. Isn't it coincidental that he died on December 14th, which is the anniversary of George Washington's death.

Those of us who knew Brother George and lived with him, very quickly learned that he was a person of great activity. Just take a look at his "tour of duty." From the time he began his teaching career at St. Michael's in Santa Fe in 1930, he was a constant dynamo of energy, continuing this mode of life until he needed nursing care in 1993. He taught in almost every school of our Province. He also served as Vocation Director for the Western section of the Province for three years. His teaching assignments took him into the states of Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, and Colorado. His other projects took him far afield -- as far away as Alaska, where he and other volunteer workers aided the bishops of the missionary territories there build church structures so that Catholics could worship properly. The volunteer projects were usu-

To Brother George:

In all the whole wide world,
Beneath our sky so blue;
I know no other friend could be
More close to me than you.

Cause ever since we met,
Somehow, it seemed I knew;
To lose a friend so dear to me
Would be like losing you.

The time will someday come
When we'll be far apart;
But I will not let time nor space
Steal memories from my heart.

I always will remember you
In a special sort of way;
Cause I found out, what a true
friend was
When I met you that day.

By: Roy Champagne
New Iberia, LA, 1977

Brother George was very much like Martha, who in the Scripture, is described as being "busy about many things." He, like Martha, was a person of action. So many things needed doing and he was the one to do them. Not only did he teach full-time, but he also undertook many other education-related duties. He was interested in sports and served as a coach and an athletic director in a number of places. He saw sports as another method of teaching his charges about life. He was rugged in his insistence that his teams perform well.

He was also Mr. Fix-It in the communities. He was comfortable with a hammer, a saw, and a wrench. Rather than wait for a maintenance man to show up to fix a broken structure he would often undertake the project himself.

He was never one to sit still for long. He always managed to be involved in some activity or other. At times, his superiors had to caution him about slowing down and taking his time in doing things. Like Martha, he saw the grace of working for a living and did it in the spirit of St. Paul, who claimed he was never a burden on others and always earned his keep.

Because of his active nature, it was devastating to him when his disease no longer allowed him the mobility to which he was so use. When he was a resident at Oakwood, it was painful to him to be "confined."

Through all of his many active years, and even through his last years of suffering, Brother George persevered. His faith in God and his devotion to the Institute helped him achieve that final crown of glory which St. Paul assures us will be ours also, one day, if only we persevere to the end.