

A SHORT ACCOUNT

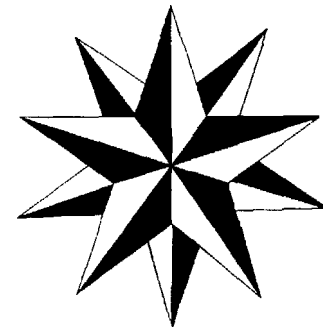
OF THE LIFE

OF

Brother Christopher Ferdinand, F.S.C.

(Adam Jenschke)

1915 - 1999



SIGNUM FIDEI

TOUR OF DUTY

- 1938 - Bernalillo, New Mexico (St. Nicholas School)
- 1945 - Bernalillo, New Mexico (St. Nicholas School -
Principal/Director)
- 1950 - Rome, Italy (Second Novitiate)
- 1951 - Santa Fe, New Mexico (Director of Scholastics)
- 1956 - Santa Fe, New Mexico (St. Michael's High School)
Director
- 1958 - Franklin, Louisiana (Hanson Memorial High School)
- 1959 - New Iberia, Louisiana (Catholic High School)
- 1960 - Santa Fe, New Mexico (Juniorate)
- 1962 - Santa Fe, New Mexico (College Community)
- 1999 - Santa Fe, New Mexico (St. Michael's High School
Community)
- 1999 Died on April 16, 1999

Brother Ferdinand Jenschke
1915 - 1999

Thank you, Brother!

"Thank you": sometimes the hardest words to say. "Thank you": the words you forgot to say. "Thank you": an expression of gratitude to those who have in some way touched your life in a positive way; helped you stand alone. Dr. Albert Schweitzer once wrote: "The art of thanksgiving is thanksliving. It is gratitude in action." On April 16, 1999, Brother Ferdinand Jenschke, FSC, entered into eternal rest. He was kind, loving and personally supportive to all. Throughout his long teaching ministry of 47 years, he helped hundreds of young people stand alone. Brother Ferdinand was 83 years of age and had been a Christian Brother for 65 years. He was thankful for his vocation as a Christian Brother and rendered the sacrifice of his life in service to others. This short biography is an attempt on the part of some of his confreres to say: "Thank you, Brother Ferdinand" for a life lived completely for God and others.

Brother Ferdinand (Adam) was the son of George Jenschke and the former Lina Kunz, both deceased. He was born at Fredericksburg, Texas, on December 15, 1915, into a large devoutly Catholic, and hardworking family of Germanic descent. He was preceded in death by two sisters: Frieda Crenwelge and Rosa Jenschke; and three brothers: Alex, Herman, and Max Jenschke. Among his surviving siblings are five sisters: Armanda Novian, Sister Ferdinand Jenschke, Emma Jenschke, Helen Stehling and Josephine Vargo. He is also survived by four brothers: Albert, Arthur, Jerome and Benno Jenschke.

After high school graduation in Fredericksburg, Texas, in 1934, Adam entered the Christian Brothers Formation program in Lafayette, LA. Upon completion of the Postulancy program, he received the religious habit of the Brothers on December 24, 1934. He was given the name Brother Christopher Ferdinand. He pronounced First Vows on December 25, 1935. He pronounced

final vows in 1941.

Having completed the Novitiate, Brother Ferdinand began his teacher training at Sacred Heart College in Las Vegas, NM. He remained at Sacred heart College until 1938. Brother's first teaching assignment was at St. Nicholas School in Bernalillo, NM. He remained at St. Nicholas for the next twelve years and in 1945 was named Principal/Director. Brother Ferdinand earned a BA in English and a BSC in General Business from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas.

Our first **Thank You, Brother** comes from Brother Edward DeReyna who was stationed in Bernalillo, NM, during the time that Brother Ferdinand was Director/Principal.

"I first met Brother Ferdinand after I completed my scholasticate in August 1946. I was assigned to St. Nicholas School which was about twenty miles north of Albuquerque. He was the principal of the school and the director of eight Brothers. Bernalillo was a small town. I soon realized that he had a good knowledge of the town and how to run a good elementary school. He had been in Bernalillo a few years before I was assigned there. He was rather strict on the Brothers, but he was fair. A week before he died in our community of St. Michael's, I told him that he must have been over worked because during the three years that I was there he was the principal of the school, director of eight Brothers, and the full time teacher of the eighth grade. He told me: 'Not really because I had a good group of Brothers with me!' The school had no secretary.

In Bernalillo I learned how to teach, because we had few distractions that high schools have

with their many activities and sports. Brother Ferdinand saw to it that we became good teachers who prepared our lessons well and carefully corrected the assignments and tests.

One incident stands out in my mind. Because Bernalillo was a small town, local news got around very fast. The Brothers were interested in voting so we had to register at the courthouse, which was about a mile from the school. Brother Ferdinand instructed us not to name our political party because the Republicans and Democrats had about equal strength in the county. One year a new Brother, who did not know about this rule, registered as a Democrat. The very next day Brother Ferdinand told the Brother to go and change his registration to independent, because the people were saying that the Brothers were Democrats.

When New Mexico started the public school system during the last quarter of the 19th Century, there were not enough teachers who were willing to teach in the rural communities. So the Sisters and Brothers were encouraged to conduct public schools. In our rural county there were only three high schools. All of them were run by Sisters. In 1948 the Masons decided to make a court case, called the Dixon Case, to get the Sisters and Brothers out of the schools in the state. This must have hurt Brother Ferdinand very much because he was called to testify in Santa Fe and he realized that our school was in danger. In early 1949 the Masons won the case and all the Brothers were convicted of teaching religion in a public school. All of us were changed to other schools. Brother Ferdinand

tried to keep the school going with a completely new faculty of Brothers. However the many restrictions that were imposed on the faculty made it very difficult to run a Catholic school. So in 1950 St. Nicholas School was closed after having been in existence for over seventy-five years."



*As a Second Novice,
in front of St. Peter's Basilica,
Rome Italy, 1950*

Brother Ferdinand spent the Academic year 1950-51, at the Brothers' central house of studies in Rome, Italy. In August of 1951, he returned to the United States to serve as Director of Brother Scholastics at the newly founded St. Michael's College, a post which he held for the next 5 years.

Our next **Thank You, Brother** comes from Brother René Clerc who was a scholastic and first year teacher at St. Michael's in Santa Fe, NM under Brother Ferdinand from 1956 - 1958.

Brother Ferdinand was the first of three directors I had in the Scholasticate. Being young in the religious life, I took little notice of his nervousness and apparent tension. After a half year, he was transferred to St. Michael's High

School, and a year later, I was assigned there as my first community. Brother Ferdinand was the Sub-Director.

Because of questions of enrollment, I was not told what my assignment would be or given a classroom or keys until right before spiritual reading the day before school began. Right after supper, I met with the other eighth grade teacher to divide the students.

The only textbooks in my classroom were a religious text and a speller. I was sitting in panic at my desk at about 8:00 p.m., when Brother Ferdinand came over to check on me.

At once, he helped me find some textbooks in the attic, and helped me organize my day. After school, he noticed I was not in the dining room having coffee with the Brothers. He came looking for me. I was in shock in the community room. I felt the day had been awful.

I remember him telling me that either I or the students were going to run the class, and that if the students were going to run it, I might just as well leave now.

He showed me how to plan and organize my lessons in meaningful segments, and gave suggestions about activities and assignments. He found a well organized math program (Strathmore) and had it ordered for me. During the year he was always there if I needed help, suggestions, or encouragement.

This endeared him to me in a very special way,

especially after I felt more comfortable with my classes. This endearment was especially true when I realized that his sophomores were leading him a merry chase.

I don't think I'll ever forget this caring, loving, observant man who took me under his wing and helped me so much. I was too ignorant and proud to realize I had no idea what was going on.

Thank you, Ferdinand, my brother. God bless you. Rest in peace.

For shorter periods of time, Brother Ferdinand had teaching assignments at Hanson Memorial High School in Franklin, LA, and St. Peter's College in New Iberia, LA. In 1961 he returned to Santa Fe, NM, where he was a faculty member at St. Michael's College (College of Santa Fe) until his retirement in 1985.



*Brother Ferdinand with
the young men in his Homeroom,
Hanson High School,
Franklin, LA., 1958*

Brother Louis Welker, provides the next **Thank you, Brother:**

"On September 7, 1963, I arrived with a new group of Student Brothers to begin teacher training at St. Michael's College. I can remember the first time I saw Brother Ferdinand. He was standing outside of Benilde Hall talking to one of the dorm students. You might ask: 'What is so remarkable about that?' Well, this scene was repeated over and over: Brother Ferdinand was very present to the student body. He made himself available to help the students with their studies and to listen to their problems. He was a highly respected member of the St. Michael's College Faculty. Also, he took an interest in the Student Brothers by frequently coming around to chat or to take part in our activities. In a formation system that tended to keep the Student Brothers isolated, Brother Ferdinand was always a smiling face and a helping hand. **Thank you, Brother Ferdinand** for being there."

Brother Richard Segura provides the following **Thank you, Brother.** It covers a span of many years and activities:

"Brother Ferdinand was a very excellent teacher from the time of his first assignment at St. Nicholas school in Bernalillo to his business classes (especially accounting) at the College of Santa Fe. He often spoke of his experiences in school with pride and enjoyed visits by his former students. He was available in his office for consultation and help between classes as also in the afternoons and often at night. When he retired from teaching (he had lost most of his voice) he was honored with the title of Professor Emeritus

tus of Business. A scholarship was established in his name at the College some five years ago.

Brother Ferdinand was bursar for the Community for many years. He was also very helpful as a cook on weekends and important feasts. Besides preparing excellent dinners he also often baked pies, cakes and cookies. He made jams and jellies in his later years and sold these to help the District Retirement fund. His cooking talent also was appreciated in Alaska where for several summers he prepared meals for the volunteer Brothers working on church buildings.



Church of St. Therese in Skagway, Alaska, that Brother Ferdinand helped build in the late 1970's

Brother Ferdinand helped Brother Regis White (who was in charge of the kitchen) by shopping for basic needs. Often he would prepare grapefruit or canteloupe as extras for breakfast. He insisted on shopping even when he was hardly able to walk and couldn't drive any longer because of vertigo. Some Brothers, especially

Brother William Seibold, wouldchauffeur him. For years he was in charge of the College Post Office and later continued to take charge of the mail for Brothers.

One of his favorite recreations was fishing. For many years every Saturday he would drive out to one of the lakes accompanied by Brother Daniel Simar, Brother Richard Segura, and others. In winter he would often go ice-fishing.

His most enjoyable hobby and one in which he took much pride was his rose garden. It was admired by all when it bloomed in June and most of the summer. He had over one hundred bushes with roses of varied colors and sizes. He delighted in bringing roses to our housekeeper and our cook as well as to secretaries and staff members of the College. He also raised many other flowers and potted plants to brighten up our patio and residence. Every summer he raised a vegetable garden that provided fresh produce for our meals and for freezing or canning. Brother William and other Brothers helped him in his later years and prepared vegetables and fruits for canning.

He was a serious and devout religious committed to the Lasallian mission of education in a spirit of faith and zeal. In spite of his infirmities, especially in his later years, he joined the community in morning prayer, meditation, and Holy Mass (in the early morning). For years he had little sleep at night and suffered severe pains in his legs that kept him awake.

I have known Brother Ferdinand since the Novi-

tiate and Scholasticate and especially in the many years he spent at the College. Although he was demanding of the Brothers who helped in his work because he wanted things done his own way, he was the first to help with his services to the community as long as he could. He was patient and resigned in his last illness and received the Sacrament of the Sick with fervor. He had a great devotion to Our Lady and prayed his rosary even in his last days."

In early April 1999, due to failing health, Brother Ferdinand was transferred to St. Michael's Community in Santa Fe, NM. Brother Samuel Martinez, Director of the community, gives his **Thank you, Brother**. It is filled with lessons that can be drawn from the life and death of Brother Ferdinand:

"It was my privilege to have spent the last two weeks of Brother Ferdinand's life with him. It was during these few days that the true character of Brother came out. He was very kind with his comments about his Brothers with whom he lived.

Brother was a very sick person when he came to stay with us. The nurses at the hospital told me that he had a short time to live. Upon his release from the hospital, Brother was taken into our retirement home for care. Heritage Hospice Service was asked to help us out. Soon his room became a hospital room, with bed, etc.

Doctor David Gonzales came to the house to inform Brother that he could offer no hope for a recovery. The doctor was very clear in informing Brother that his heart valves were leaking and that nothing physical could be done to help him. Brother took his advice and later on we

talked about his health. With my help, we set up arrangements to prepare for his final end. Brother was asked to arrange his personal life and to settle any accounts he may have had. Brother Brian, Director, came to spend time to settle his community matters. Father Cronin was called in, and Brother received the Sacrament of the Sick and the Sacrament of Reconciliation. It was at this time that Brother was at peace.

His sister and family were informed of the his condition. His sister and niece came and spent three days with him. They saw his condition and were resigned that the end was close. His brother Albert came to see him and to have some kind of reconciliation. It was a very touching experience.

Brother told me how he loved his vocation and how he worked hard for the District. His first love was his work in Bernalillo, New Mexico. He was Director/Principal teaching the poor children of the city. He said he had the best faculty of Brothers.

In his suffering he did not complain nor did he offer any sign that he was displeased with the help that he was getting. The nurses came and gave him reasons to try to get better. He was taught how to get out of bed and to sit in a chair. He was proud that he could do this. As he got weaker, his frail body just started giving up. It was painful for him to sit, to eat and be in just one position in bed.

It was at this time that our prayer together became very intense. He would recite prayers af-

ter me. I asked him how he felt and if he was comfortable. His reply was always positive. He even told me of one of his hiding places for his jellies. With this assurance that I knew the hiding place, he informed me that the jelly was for me because of the care I gave him.

Brother had a funny side to him. Sweepstakes were a passion to him. He was so convinced that he was going to win, that daily he would demand to see his mail. 'It costs only 33 cents for the millions I will get.' It will all go to the District for the Retired Brothers.

On the morning of Friday, April 16, 1999, Brother requested to get up from the bed. In the process of trying to get him up, Brother's body gave up and he fainted. Upon calling the nurse, we were told to take Brother Ferdinand to the hospital. When the Medics came Brother had suffered low blood pressure and rapid failing of his heart. Brother was admitted to the hospital. Once in the hospital, the Doctor informed me that Brother Ferdinand was not going to make it because his heart was giving up.

Around 4:30 p.m., Brother Steve Armenta and I went to spend time with Brother in his room. It was during this time that I spoke to Brother that it was okay to let God do His thing. After I spoke to Brother Ferdinand he closed his eyes, held my hand, and we watched him slowly go. It was like the wick of a candle when it gives its last effort. Brother died peacefully and in the presence of God.

Brother taught me that with trust and love all

things are possible. Sometimes people will misunderstand us, but God will stand firmly with us. Brother was caring and loving in his own way. The many people who came to see him when he was sick are a testimony to his LaSallian tradition of 'TOUCHING HEARTS.'"

One last **Thank you, Brother** from Brother Nicolas Gonzalez, Director of the Cathedral Community, El Paso, Texas:

"I met Brother Ferdinand on my first day of college in 1980. Being a timid teenager, I was feeling rather overwhelmed by the whole idea of being on my own among so many strangers. One of the tasks of the day was to go get a mailbox from Brother Ferdinand. I recall being irritated by how long each waited out in the hall for him to simply assign a box. Finally, it was my turn and I walked into the cluttered office of a tall handsome man with a congenial smile. He spent about ten minutes asking me where I was from, what I wanted to study, which professors to take (him) and which to avoid (not him). He helped me to feel genuinely welcome and, without having to come out and say it, helped me believe that I could survive the first awkward days of college. I've never forgotten that lesson: a few minutes with someone can make a huge difference.

Later, after I joined the Brothers community, I often worked with Ferdinand in the garden. I value the hours we spent out there. He would reminisce about his youth and all of his assignments. He seemed especially proud of his work in Bernalillo and he never hesitated to tell you how hard he had worked while there. Ferdinand

would sound like a proud grandfather as he spouted off what alumni were doing now and how he had helped them to persevere when they had wanted to give up. One story I always enjoyed was the one about his vocation. He had been a rather sharp student and a very responsible young man so he was often put in charge of the older kids. He felt that perhaps he had a knack for teaching. One day, he was looking at some sort of book on education. In it was a picture and the story of John Baptist De La Salle. 'In that instant,' he would say, 'without ever seeing a Brother, I decided to become one.' He wrote to the vocation director and was told to report. At the train station, he recalled that his parents told him that he could return if it didn't work out. 'I knew that I would never return', he said.

Ferdinand was definitely of stubborn German stock. Yet it was precisely that tenacity which kept him alive. He wasn't about to let a little heart problem keep him down. There wasn't anything he couldn't will himself to do. Ferdinand would tell me that he had never been permitted to go off to study, but he had taught himself everything he could about business. He once told me that he'd always been a poor student in French but that while on his second novitiate, he had understood every word. It was a miracle! With every visit, I noticed he'd be slower and harder to hear when he spoke but that didn't stop him. Even when he finished teaching, he started making jellies and jams to sell at bingos. He never wanted to be unproductive. NEVER, despite the purple legs which suggested a painful lack of circulation, did I hear him complain. On occasion, he would joke with me and tell me never to get old but he was always very upbeat.

I used to think of Ferdinand as the toothless tiger. He loved to roar and tried to sound tough and gruff, but he was a pussycat. His affection and concern for students was legendary. I know of at least one case where he took money out of his own pocket to help a young couple get started. He possessed a great faith in the potential of young people and, I feel, was very much young at heart himself. I watched him at picnics which the Brothers hosted for the graduate school. He was so animated and loved talking about his own work. The stories were ALWAYS about kids who had overcome adversity. I suspect that he, who had overcome so much physical adversity, sensed a kinship with such students.

Many a late night during college, while I was working on some paper, he would appear quietly at the door. He would typically tell me a joke (usually pretty awful), offer me some food, and give me that solid advice that sleep was probably more important than the paper. When I reminded him of those visits years later, he smiled broadly and said, 'I knew that you were going through a tough time and I thought you needed the interruption.' He was right.

I had the great privilege of living with the College community for two and a half years. Those years were full of grace, thanks to the generous men who formed me, but Ferdinand will always stand out for me because he adopted me. I learned to keep an eye out for the runt who doesn't quite fit in. He was always an example of the hard working brother I aspire to be. When he left the classroom with a quiet dignity, I

learned that it doesn't matter what you actually do, it's how generously you do it. Teaching typing, shopping for the Brothers, cooking for them, selling jellies: they are all expressions of love; a real and masculine love which requires no verbal expression. I shall miss him."

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Wednesday, April 21 at 12:00 p.m., at St. Michael's Chapel on the College of Santa Fe campus. Interment took place in the Brothers plot in Rosario Cemetery.

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



Thank You Brother Ferdinand!

For:

- Thanking God for the gift of life by having lived your life so well.
- Thanking God for your talents and abilities by using them for the good of others.
- Accepting your vocation as a Christian Brother.
- Striving to make others happy.
- Your beautiful rose gardens which were admired by many.
- The proceeds from your jam and jelly sales which were given to the Brothers Retirement Fund.
- The faith and zeal you showed as a Lasallian Educator.
- Your devotion to community prayer, meditation, the rosary and Mass.
- Being there for struggling young teachers.
- Listening to the needs of your students.
- Wanting to win the big Sweepstakes in order to take care of the retirement needs of the Brothers.
- Being Brother.