

A SHORT ACCOUNT

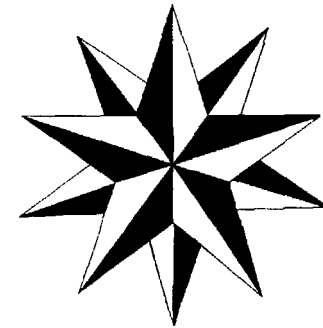
OF THE LIFE

OF

Brother Thomas Gerald Kane, F.S.C.

(Benjamin Alfred)

1922 - 1995



SIGNUM FIDEI

TOUR OF DUTY

- 1943 - Lafayette, LA (Cathedral High School)
- 1944 - New Iberia, LA (St. Peter's College)
- 1947 - Covington, LA (St. Paul's College)
- 1948 - Lake Charles, LA
(Landry Memorial High School)
- 1952 - Lafayette, LA
(De La Salle Juniorate -- Sub-Director)
- 1954 - Rome, Italy (Second Novitiate)
- 1955 - Lake Charles, LA
(Landry Memorial High School - Director)
- 1959 - Santa Fe, NM (College)
- 1972 - Santa Fe, NM (Hilary House Community)
- 1973 - San Diego, CA (Special Apostolate)
- 1977 - Santa Fe, NM (Formation)
- 1978 - New Orleans, LA (Benilde Community)
(Director of Education)
- 1979 - Covington, LA
(St. Paul's)
(Director of Continuing Education)
- 1981 - San Diego, CA (Seminary)
- 1984 - (Jan.) Washington, D.C. (Human Development)
(Dec.) Rome, Italy (American College)
- 1985 - Denver, CO (Vocation Director for the West
until 1988)
Faculty member after 1988
- 1992 - (Jan.) Lafayette, LA (Provincialate)
Secretary to Brother Visitor
- 1995 - Died suddenly on plane trip from
San Diego, CA where he had
gone to be present at a funeral
of a dear friend.

Each day holds a surprise. But not all surprises bring good news. And so it was on the night of October 2, 1995, when the Brothers of the New Orleans-Santa Fe Province received the news that Brother Tom Kane had died in flight from San Diego, California, to Dallas, Texas. He was returning from the funeral for the brother of a priest friend. Brothers were on their way to Moisant International Airport in New Orleans, Louisiana, to pick him up. The surprise of his untimely death gave way to disbelief, and disbelief gave way to celebrating the events of his life.

Celebration, what an appropriate word to use in presenting a sketch of Brother Tom's life. What does the word celebration mean? The word celebrate comes from the Latin "celebrare," which means to mark an event or occasion by suitable observances; something Brother Tom did very well. He knew how to celebrate; how to mark an event or occasion in an appropriate way. It had to be that way, he was Irish.

Thomas Gerald Kane was born in Denver, Colorado, on May 22, 1922, the son of James H. Kane, and the former Helen Gray. His mother died when he was four years of age. His father, James lived well into his nineties. He is survived by his two brothers, Benjamin Kane of Tucson, Arizona, and Robert Kane of San Mateo, California, and a sister, Mary Helen Burke of Tucson. He was preceded in death by his brother, George Kane.

Tom, as he liked to be called, entered the Christian Brothers Junior Novitiate in Las Vegas, New Mexico, in 1935. While in the Juniorate, on an outing, he fell off of a cave at Kearny's Gap and broke his right leg and hip. As a result of this, he walked with a slight limp for the rest of his life.

He received the habit of the Christian Brothers in Lafayette, Louisiana, on August 14, 1938, and made first profes-

sion of vows a year later. Like all the brothers of his era he traveled back to Las Vegas, New Mexico, for his collegiate experience. He finished his B.A. studies in 1943 with a degree in English. In August of 1943 he was assigned to Cathedral High School in Lafayette, Louisiana. He was a natural born teacher. From the very beginning he was at home in the classroom. For Brother Tom, lack of discipline or good order were never a problem. His care and concern touched the hearts of his students. He made final profession of vows on July 12, 1947, and received his M.A. in English from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, Texas, in 1949.

In the next 29 years, Brother Tom taught in six Lasallian schools in the New Orleans-Santa Fe Province. He served as principal of Landry High School, in Lake Charles, Louisiana, from 1955 until 1959. One of his great loves was choral music and he trained under Fred Waring of Erie, Pennsylvania. Many of his choirs took first place in city and regional competitions.



His longest stay in a Lasallian Institution was the College of Santa Fe from 1959-1972. During this time he ministered as Dean of Men. It was the College of Santa Fe which held a special place in his heart. Even after being assigned elsewhere, he kept in close contact with the Alumni Association. Many of the so called "tough-guys" from the East Coast owe their college success to Brother Tom's care and guidance. The staff of the PALADIN, the College of Santa Fe Yearbook, made the following dedication to Brother Tom in 1973:

"Big Daddy" and "B.K." That's the way we like to think of you. We feel you won't be offended because we have been so informal in this dedication. In fact, we know you won't

be offended because you are a great man and because you will be able to see in the nicknames a sincere compliment. You know something, we don't know where your home town is, what your degrees are, what your teaching assignments have been, and once again we don't care. What we care about is you, our "Big Daddy," and the care you have shown for us. It takes a man such as you to know and realize that the College of Santa Fe is not brick and mortar, it's not classes and schedules, it's not term papers and exams. It's the students who are the College of Santa Fe. Don't take us wrong. We are proud of our campus, our administration, and our faculty. But we are also proud of ourselves. And this is a pride which you have taught us because you have always taken a genuine interest in us. To you we have always been the most important. To you we have always been the best. To you we have always been worthy of every one of your efforts. You have helped and inspired us in that enriching struggle of leaving the boy behind and taking on the man. How much this means to us we can never convey. But we can dedicate this yearbook to you and it is with the greatest pride that we do so. You are no longer Dean of Men, but you are still associated with the College of Santa Fe in a very important capacity and for this we are happy. The PALADIN Staff wishes you the best of everything in all your endeavors and also with this dedication goes the fond hope that we will always have a place in your pleasant memories of the past few years.

After leaving the College of Santa Fe, Brother Tom became a counselor at the Seminary in San Diego, California. While there, he earned an M.A. in Career Counseling from the University of San Diego. In 1977, he was asked by the Brother Visitor to return to the Province in order to serve as Director of Continuing Education for the Brothers. The year 1981 saw him back as a Counselor at the Seminary in San Diego. In 1984 he traveled to Rome, Italy, to work as a Counselor at the American College and he also worked at the Center for Human Development in Washington, D.C. Father James H. Morse gives the following testimony to Brother Tom's work at the Center for Human Development:

Your ability to stay calm under a great deal of pressure was truly appreciated by the staff and myself at the Center. As you know, the deadlines and demands that characterize the Center's work continually put us all under stress. Your ability to stay calm and support the staff was a true gift to us.

Your concern and care for the staff members went beyond the affective level and translated into helping each individual develop their personal talents and skills. The workshop on Career Development that you gave us was a great help to all. I hope you will be able to use your talent and skill as a workshop presenter in whatever ministry the Lord calls you.

Your ability to relate to people is certainly a wonderful gift from God, and I believe, an important element in any leadership position. Your gentle soft-spoken manner had a calming effect on us all during those pressure-filled days of deadlines and demands. I am

sure that whatever ministry you take on, God's love will be manifested through your special gifts.

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From 1985 until 1988, Brother Tom was Vocation Director for the Western sector of the Province and later a faculty member at Mullen High School in Denver, Colorado. In 1992, he was asked by the Provincial, Brother Donald Mouton, to serve as his personal secretary. He also worked for the Diocese of Lafayette, Louisiana, in the Office of Catholic Schools, evaluating elementary and high school principals. For many years he helped in the area of Career and Life Development for religious and priests. His sister, Mary Burke, summed up his life in these words:

He had a long and distinguished career in the service of the Lord.

His brother Ben Kane on learning of his death said:

He was on one flight and God pulled him off and put him on another.

Brother Donald Mouton in the funeral eulogy stated:

At thirty thousand feet altitude he got a good jump start to Heaven -- he probably told the Lord that having got that far up, why turn back.

In Brother Tom's files we found the recommendations that the theme of his Mass of Christian Burial be HOPE and CELEBRATION. On Monday, October 9, 1995, Brothers, relatives, friends, and former students gathered to say good-bye. The reception hall and chapel were too small to accommodate the large crowd that attended. Over and over, the words were heard, "We loved Brother Kane".

In the eulogy Brother Don pointed out:

Of all the Brothers in the District, few stand out as Tom does for the genuine admiration and love that students, alumni, and friends have for him. Whenever we planned a gathering of alumni in both the southern and western sectors of the District, Tom was the first we'd ask to be there. We knew if he was present, the gathering would be a success.

Brother Donald continued:

I guess I feel like telling Tom we'll get along without you, but it won't be as much fun. Today in a special way we celebrate Brother Tom's entry into new life -- that is the core of our faith -- we know that the purpose of life on this earth is eternal union with God -- yet the moment of passing to eternal life brings sorrow to those left behind -- today and afterwards we must support one another in our faith and in our sorrow.

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A good friend of Brother Tom's, Donnie Mouton, has given the following impact that Brother Tom had on his life:

When I went to Denver in the summer to study, Brother Kane greeted me at the airport... and provided me with much needed emotional support during my studies. He was my family in Denver. When I returned to Louisiana he wrote me often to check on my progress. Years later when I was going into final exams there was a message on my answering machine telling me,

I'm on my way to the chapel with some of the Brothers to light a candle and pray for you. We'll be with you during your exam." I will never as long as I live, forget that message. Five years later when I again faced a difficult hurdle he called to say he'd be with me - 3,000 miles away, he and the Brothers had the candles going for me again. It was my toughest exam and my highest grade. I can't help but think his encouragement set the wheels in motion. He was there when I needed him.

He loved the beautiful culture of the deep South -- the charm, the people, the food! We'd be sitting in the Rockies amidst streams and magnificent scenery and he'd start talking about St. Martinville or Mamou or something! It's no small wonder that he jumped at the chance to return to Louisiana.

Brother Kane touched us all -- he's had a huge impact on my life. I feel so privileged to have had such a rare, wonderful person in my life.

How did Brother Tom celebrate life with others?

Brother Louis Welker, who lived with Brother Tom for six years, describes him as follows:

He was a happy man and a great deal of fun to be around. Brother Tom viewed every phase of life as a gift. He would say, "Celebrate life; live it to the fullest."

Tom loved being with people and being a part of their lives. He shared with others their joys as well as their sorrows. Quite often he would tell me about a wedding or baptism that he attended for the child or grandchild of a former student. He was always very detailed in his descriptions, probably so that I could share in some way in his happiness. Once he told me about a man who had lost his wife to cancer, and how late into the night he stayed with his friend in an effort to offer comfort. One great gift of Brother Tom's was that he listened with, and comforted from, his heart.

Brother Tom loved St. Patrick's day. In my mind's eye, I can still see him on a float at the College of Santa Fe throwing cabbage, carrots, and Irish potatoes. I'd be a rich man today if I had a nickel for every time I heard him sing: When Irish Eyes Are Smiling.

He loved birthdays. Every Brother in the community received a card from Tom on his birthday. A birthday for him was a time for one to celebrate being alive. Also, it was an opportunity for others to affirm a person's life. Jubilees and anniversaries were another reason for celebration. He loathed a triumphalistic approach to these occasions. He saw them as opportunities to be grateful for the gift of life, not for what we have accomplished or who we know.

His laughter was contagious. Whenever his funny-bone was tickled, he could be heard

all over the community. About the only thing louder than his laugh was his snoring. I don't think any brother celebrated living in the room next to Brother Tom.



How would Brother Tom want us to view his passing? Shortly before his death he gave a workshop on Grief offered by the Office of Justice and Peace of the Diocese of Lafayette, Louisiana. The following is an excerpt from his talks on that occasion:

Grief is one of life's heaviest burdens, not only because of the tremendous sense of personal loss which accompanies it, but because it can also challenge the very depth of one's faith. Grief means that our lives will be permanently changed. Often we wish that it would go away; we try to forget. But our prayer should be, "Thy will be done," for once we lose someone we love, it is in remembering, rather than in forgetting, that they continue to live among us. If God could forget, we would never have been saved. Why forget? The Eucharist is a remembrance of the passion and death of our Lord Jesus Christ. The reunion of our beloved departed is one of the goals of Christian Life. When our faith is really strong, when we are God-centered in Faith, we can believe that our loved ones live.



In his office, Brother Tom had a plaque which reads:

**Some people come
into our lives and
quickly go
Some stay for awhile and
leave footprints in our
hearts
And we are never the same.**

Brother Tom was not only an excellent Lasallian educator who touched the hearts of others; he left footprints.

In conclusion, the Christian Brothers celebrate the work that has been completed by Brother Tom Kane. We rejoice and are grateful for the good that he accomplished in the name of Christ. May his life serve as an example to us to work with even greater enthusiasm and confidence as we strive to build the Kingdom of God.

Following the Mass of Christian Burial, Brother Tom was laid to rest in Christian Brothers Cemetery in Lafayette, Louisiana.

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