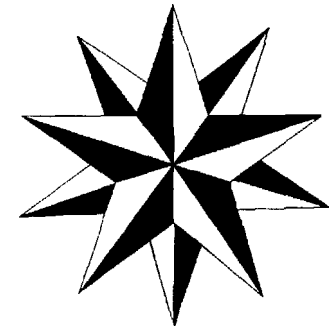


A SHORT ACCOUNT

OF THE LIFE

OF

**Brother Robert Adolph Kvas, F.S.C.
(Augustine Andrew)
1921 - 1996**



SIGNUM FIDEI

TOUR OF DUTY

- 1942 - Santa Fe, New Mexico
(St. Michael's High School)
- 1943 - Bernalillo, New Mexico
(St. Nicholas School)
- 1949 - Franklin, Louisiana
(Hanson Memorial School)
- 1950 - Lake Charles, Louisiana
(Landry Memorial High School)
- 1953 - Covington, Louisiana
(St. Paul's High School)
- 1954 - Lake Charles, Louisiana
(Landry Memorial High School)
- 1961 - New Iberia, Louisiana
(Catholic High School)
- 1965 - San Antonio, Texas
(La Salle High School)
- 1968 - New Iberia, Louisiana
(Catholic High School)
- 1971 - El Paso, Texas
(Cathedral High School)
- 1972 - (Jan.) Santa Fe, New Mexico
(St. Michael's High School)
- 1973 - Lafayette, Louisiana
(De La Salle Christian Brothers)
- 1975 - (Jan.) Lafayette, Louisiana
(Cathedral-Carmel School)
- 1976 - (Aug.) Lafayette, Louisiana
(De La Salle Christian Brothers)
- 1996 - Died March 14

On March 9, 1996, Brother Augustine Kvas of De La Salle Christian Brothers in Lafayette, Louisiana, suffered a rather severe stroke. He was taken to Our Lady of Lourdes Regional Medical Center for treatment and from all outward appearances seemed to be responding in a positive way, feeding himself and taking physical therapy. On the morning of March 14th while he was preparing to go to physical therapy, he peacefully passed away. Two Brothers, who were paying him a visit, had just left his hospital room and had to be summoned back. Brother Augustine, who loved to travel, had embarked on the greatest journey of all. Like all of us, he was a pilgrim on the way, moving from here to there, seeking and sometimes finding, asking and sometimes receiving.

Robert Adolph Kvas began his earthly journey in Denver, Colorado, on December 23, 1921. He was the son of Rudolph Adolph Kvas and Mary Lesser. His father was a native of Zadrazica, Yugoslavia, and his mother was from Ribinici, Yugoslavia. He is survived by two sisters, Mrs. James Tucker and Mrs. J. Primozych.

In his memoirs Brother Augustine wrote:

I planned to entitle my autobiography A Planned Life. I saw fit to do this because almost every change was deliberate. At least my major decisions were. It seems to me that so many persons are knocked around in life from pillar to post. Someone else is always suggesting the way. They just follow somehow.

Brother Augustine's early years were filled with all the usual things of a young boy: friends, bike hikes, camping, swimming, sibling rivalry, correction from his father, fishing, drawing, and Catholic School. For a while he lived with his

maternal grandmother when her daughter Molly left to become a nun. He mentions his grandmother as being very influential in his religious formation. He wrote:

She always got me up in the morning to go with her to daily Mass. Grandma was the natural counselor for our neighborhood. Every night we had friends over to discuss something. My ears remained open. When something more personal came up, the conversation got lower and my antennas would go up also. Not much homework got done under those circumstances.

Of his boyhood Brother Augustine wrote:

I think that part of my life was unplanned. Then came the time when Brother Joseph of the Christian Brothers told me about the Brothers' life, and what I would be doing if I went to be a Brother."

After receiving a little resistance from his parents he entered the Christian Brothers Junior Novitiate in Las Vegas, New Mexico, in June of 1935. His memoirs state that this was a happy time filled with many interesting experiences.

After completing the Junior Novitiate, Brother Augustine traveled to Lafayette, Louisiana. He writes:

The next thing in the plan of my life was my time in the Novitiate.

On August 14, 1938, he received the habit of the Chris-

tian Brothers and received the name Brother Augustine Andrew. Life in the Novitiate for Brother Augustine was difficult and he found himself hanging on trying to survive. He comments:

I guess some people would say that I made a poor Novitiate, but I did what I could. We had so much silence, praying, reading and listening. I just hung on. Also, Brother Visitor Arsenius said one thing about me that was true. He said I had a lot of stick-to-itism. I always found a way to get what I wanted even if it took a mighty long time. Finally, the Novitiate was over.

On August 15, 1936, he made his first profession of Vows.

After completing the Novitiate, Brother Augustine traveled back to Las Vegas, New Mexico. As he put it: "Now it was college time." It took him three years to finish his studies. The Scholasticate Brothers studied year round; the schedule changed very little. He remarked:

Our training was tough, you might say. We could have called ourselves the Marines.

He received his B.A. in English in June of 1943 and his M.A. in Education in August of 1968.

Brother Augustine began his teaching career in 1942 at St. Michael's High School in Santa Fe, New Mexico, in the grammar grades. On August 14, 1946, he made his final profession of vows. In all, he taught in twelve Lasallian Schools

in the New Orleans-Santa Fe Province. His happiest years seem to have been spent at Landry Memorial High School in Lake Charles, Louisiana. He wrote:

I think the Landry days were some of my best teaching years. I made a lot of friends. We were poor, but we were happy.

It was in 1961 that Brother Augustine tried to make the transition from the grammar grades to high school at Catholic High School in New Iberia. He succeeded fairly well for a few years, but he began to have disciplinary problems which only worsened in the succeeding years. It was impossible for him to make the transition from the middle grades to the upper classes. This experience greatly damaged his self-esteem and he became depressed.

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Brother Ephrem Hebert made the following comments at the eulogy for Brother Augustine:

When he finally came to the realization that he could not teach again, he eagerly decided to launch a new career, or rather a double career. First of all he enrolled in classes for several years at the University of Southwestern Louisiana leading up to the degree of Licensed Practical Nurse so that he could be of assistance to the elderly Brothers. At the same time he decided to continue a summer camp at De La Salle Christian Brothers which had been started by Mr. Bob Morgan. He continued it in 1981 as "Camp Bob White," and for the next 10 years he was the Camp

Director, turning over a hundred thousand dollars to the community during that time period. As Camp Director, Brother Augustine really came into his own. The little children loved him. He took them on walks around the property, drawing on his knowledge of biology to explain the many wonders of nature. He even set up a small glass beehive so that the children could see them making honey. But his forte was showing them how to fish in our lake. He dug the worms in the barnyard, showed them how to bait a hook, and sat patiently by as the children had their very first experience of fishing with a pole. And when the kids had a little luck, there was Brother Augustine with his scaling knife and frying pan ready to cook the fish on the spot. This was instant gratification at its best! When he gave up the Camp Directorship to Brother Martin Swonke, in 1992, it was because he wanted to try something new.

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It was stated that Brother Augustine loved to travel. While he was stationed in San Antonio, Texas, he first had the idea of taking students to Europe. He found a program that allowed him to get eight students and receive a free trip as their supervisor. This trip to Europe was an experience that he would repeat many times in coming years, as well as trips to a number of South and Latin American countries; he was always looking for a new opportunity to travel. Mrs. Catherine Clerc (mother of Brother Rene Clerc) gives the following remembrance of Brother Augustine on a trip to the Holy Land:

In March, 1978, my cousin, Marie Mayer and

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I went on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. Brother Kvas was on the tour and looked out for us "old ladies." All our purchases, souvenirs for friends at home, and our fruit to eat at night were carried by Brother.

Coca Cola was extremely scarce, but we liked a little refreshment in the afternoon, and we would send Brother in search of some. He always came back with the soft drink, never disappointing us.

Marie recalls that we were waiting to board the plane when she realized she had left her purse with money and her tickets in the lobby. Brother ran, retrieved the purse, and boarded the plane.

Marie lived in New Orleans, and frequently when Brother would go to New Orleans to visit friends, he would stop by and visit with her and her husband, Clifford.

In 1993 he still thought of a new career, this time as a missionary, and he set out on a month-long tour of Central America. He was smart enough to realize that such a hard life was not for him. He then settled down to a life of leisurely retirement at De La Salle Christian Brothers.

Brother Ephrem Hebert explains Brother Augustine's retirement in these words:

It meant a fishing trip every week or so, a weekly lesson in painting, and membership in the AARP of Lafayette. He was very faithful in responding to calls on his charity,

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particularly from elderly people who knew he would drive them to the doctor, to church, or wherever. He was an excellent driver and he drove innumerable Brothers and friends to the doctor, to another community, or even twelve hundred miles to the other end of our district."

Brother Martin Swonke gives the following remembrance of Brother Augustine as a confrere:

His sense of humor and camaraderie were especially striking and appreciated. He was always ready to do anyone a special favor such as cutting one's hair at a moment's notice. His relaxations were generally taken with his confreres or the community.

Brother Augustine had an uncanny ability of making friends. All of them were intrigued by his good humor and affability.



His depression was a cross to him, but apparently over the years he learned to live with it despite failing health. Brother Daniel Duplantis writes as follows about Brother Augustine:

He stands tall among us in more ways than one. He's a big one. If you see him coming toward you and you don't know him, you'll probably step aside instinctively; but, don't fear -- this is only "Gus"; once you strike up a conversation with him you will realize that he's one of the nicest "guys" you've ever met.

He is tough though. "Roughing it up" is his middle name when it comes to the out of doors; he loves the smell of the swamp or the smooth glaze of a quiet lake at dawn on a cold, winter day, waiting in the blind for those ducks to come around; he relishes the odor of fish, the sound of a boat motor, and the feel of a hook grasping something "out there" and wondering what it will be when he brings it out of the water. He thrills at the sight of mountains, waterfalls, forests, wild animals, and birds. He'll work in the hot sun, freezing rain or snow, if necessary; he is always ready to meet any emergency that presents a challenge to him.

But, he is so gentle. This is the same "Gus" who will gently stroke a growing African violet and show it to his friends with pride; he will kneel at the feet of Brother Ernest to take care of an arterial ulcer on his leg while at the same time speaking motherly words to this elderly confrere; he will chide "Jake" (Brother Edgar Blanchard) about eating too many cookies and crackers while serving him a hot meal in the cafeteria or his room; he will joke with old Joe about his being in the wrong room and telling him every day that he has to look for that little Christmas light near his cell to make sure he gets into the right "stall". He will strike up a conversation with "Pedro" (Brother Peter Sotomayor) just to get a few words of wisdom from the old timer, or to hear him tell about how he used to be able to raise his head up so high. And, so it goes with the care of the sick, the old, and the infirm. Being infirmarian has be-

come a real challenge for Gus, but it has not destroyed his sense of humor in the least."



Brother Augustine's earthly journey of 74 years was filled with highs and lows; a journey of discovery and faith. The spiritual author, Henri Nouwen makes the following comments about life: "Traveling, this is what life is all about. It is being sent on a trip by a loving God who is waiting at home to see our pictures and slides." What are the pictures and slides that Brother Augustine has left us of his earthly journey?

Brother Daniel Duplantis presented these pictures and slides in a tribute to Brother Augustine on December 31, 1974, when he was transferred to Cathedral-Carmel School to again try his hand at teaching:

Gus: As one who had shown real compassion and affection for Brother Edgar Blanchard in his affliction.

As the Brother who took time out to express his artistic ability by his paintings of the Old Church.

The Brother who raises African violets and cares for goldfish and bees.

The helpful hand around the community.

The Brother who decorated for Christmas and two years later the decorations are still up for all to see and enjoy.

An expert fisherman and hunter who brought back delicious fish, rabbits, and ducks for the table.

A good religious who was regular, obedient, kind, and jovial in his dealings with others. We will miss his melodious voice in our chapel singing. We will often picture him as a Brother who gave himself to the community, especially his love, kindness, joy, understanding, sympathy, tolerance and forgiveness -- true gifts upon which no material value can be put -- since they are the most precious gifts in the world.

A wake and mass of Christian Burial were held for Brother Augustine on March 18, 1996, at 1:20 p.m., followed by interment in Christian Brothers Cemetery in Lafayette, Louisiana.

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