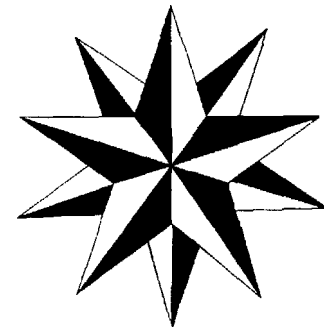


A SHORT ACCOUNT

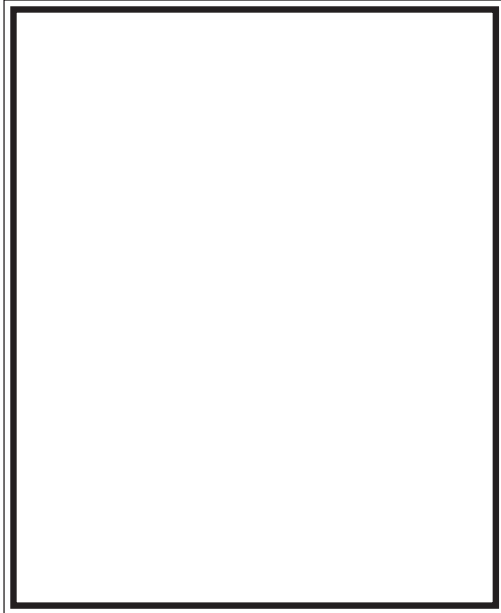
OF THE LIFE

OF

**Brother Joseph Clarence Riehm, F.S.C.
(Bertrand of Jesus)
1918-2003**



SIGNUM FIDEI



TOUR OF DUTY

- 1938- St. Nicholas School (Bernalillo, NM)
- 1941- St. Michael's High School (Santa Fe, NM)
- 1942- Hanson High School (Franklin, LA)
- 1947- St. Nicholas School (Bernalillo, NM)
- 1949- Cathedral High School (El Paso, TX)
- 1951- San Jose (Bluefields, Nicaragua)
- 1957- Retreat (Feb.) (Compton, Canada)
- 1957- San Jose Director (May) (Bluefields, Nicaragua)
- 1961- Missionary (Guatemala)
- 1977- Christian Brothers Academy (Dec.) (New Orleans, LA)
- 1990- St. Paul's High School (Covington, LA)
- 2003- Died on March 13th (Covington, LA)

**Brother Clarence Riehm
1918-2003**

The risen and glorified Christ remained on the earth for only forty days. But during this short time much was accomplished. Once again he instructed his followers and reassured them that he would not leave them alone. But more importantly, he stressed the essential missionary character of the Church. Shortly before ascending into heaven, Jesus commanded His followers: "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you, and behold I am with you until the end of the world." (MT 28:18-20) Essentially, Christ continues to say to all who would call themselves His disciple: "Go, make disciples, baptize and spread the good news of salvation to all men and women." (A Mission Study of the Church, p1). On March 13, 2003, Brother Clarence Riehm, a De La Salle Christian Brother for sixty-eight (68) years and Missionary in Central America for twenty-six (26) years, passed away at St. Tammany Hospital in Covington, LA. He was eighty-five (85) years of age.

Clarence Riehm was born in New Orleans, LA., on November 19, 1918, the son of Theodore Riehm and the former Leone Amodei, both deceased. He was preceded in death by his sister, Elvina Grayson. Brother Clarence is survived by a brother, Theodore Riehm, Jr., a sister, Lucia Smithey, and nieces and nephews.

It was in 1932, that Brother Clarence entered the Junior Novitiate of the De La Salle Christian Brothers in Lafayette, LA. When asked about what motivated him to become a Brother he responded: "I wanted to try and help out." (The Paper Wolf, The St. Paul's School, Vol. VI, issue 6). Upon completion of high school, Brother Clarence received the religious habit on August 14, 1935,

and received the name Brother Bertrand of Jesus. He made first profession of Vows on August 15, 1936. The next step in his journey "to try and help out" took him to the Sacred Heart Training College in Las Vegas, NM., where he received an education that prepared him to minister as a teaching Brother. In 1941, Brother Clarence received a B.A. in English from St. Mary's University in San Antonio, TX. Six years later in 1947, Brother Clarence received an M.A. in Education from the same university. On June 6, 1943, Brother Clarence made perpetual profession of Vows.

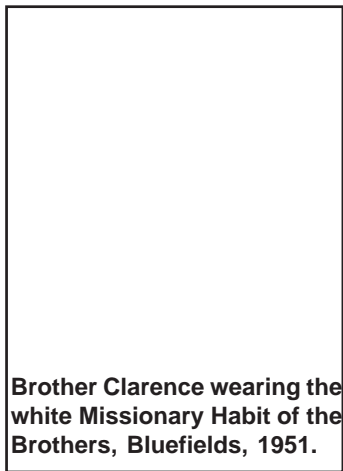
For fifty-two (52) years of his life, Brother Clarence was involved in the ministry of education. His first teaching assignment was at St. Nicholas School in Bernalillo, NM. Before volunteering to go to the Missions, he was assigned to St. Michael's in Santa Fe, NM, Cathedral High School in El Paso, TX. and Hanson High School in Franklin, LA. In 1951, San Jose School in Bluefields, Nicaragua became the place of ministry for this Brother who wanted "to try and help out." Brother Ephrem Hebert, a fellow missionary, gives the following remembrance of Brother Clarence in Bluefields, my four years stay in Bluefields, Brother

Clarence joined our community. He was a very generous confrere, an effective teacher and well liked by the students. He very quietly initiated and supervised games to occupy the leisure hours of the boys, He and I took long trips down the Escondido River to hunt and fish and teach Catechism to the natives.

When I left Bluefields to return to the states, I kept in touch with Brother Clarence for many years. His love of the students led him to build a gym so that they could play during the long rainy season. He had an architect plan for a gym for them without walls because of the stifling heat of the tropics, and someone provided the finances for building it of structural slat and corru-

gated roofing. Since most of these materials were not available in Bluefields, he asked me to purchase them in New Orleans, LA. and ship them to him on location. After receiving all the necessary materials, Brother Clarence supervised the construction of the gym himself. Since there was no welding equipment the steel members were bolted together.”

In February of 1957, Brother Clarence was assigned to make the hundred day retreat in Compton, Canada. He returned



Brother Clarence wearing the white Missionary Habit of the Brothers, Bluefields, 1951.

to San Jose School in Bluefields as principal and director in May. In 1961, Brother Clarence's ministry as a missionary brought him to Guatemala. In Huehuetenango, Chiquimula and Zacapa, Guatemala he again served as director and principal of the Brothers' schools in those cities. In Zacapa, he was responsible for organizing the Boy Scout troop which was the pride of the school and the

native community. He was also responsible for securing the finances for the construction of additions to the school building. Brother Phil Murphy gives the remembrance of Brother Clarence in Chiquimula, Guatemala:

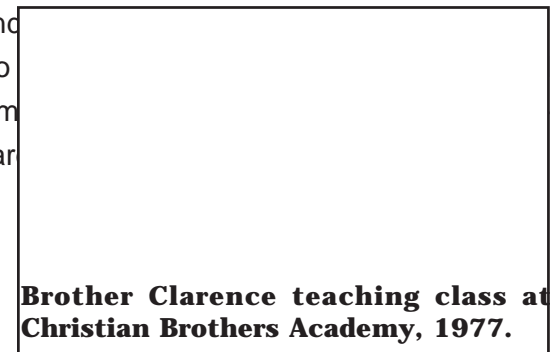
“Teaching one summer at Liceo La Salle in Chiquimula, Guatemala, was opportunity enough to form a lasting impression of Brother Clarence Riehm, or as the students called him, Hermano Clarin.

Proficiency was the first term that came to mind as I became acquainted with the school. The second and third terms were industry and professionalism.

That was before the community's daily stroll through the blessed cool of the morning on our way to Mass. Inspired by this and the equally blessed sound of sweet Spanish voices as the community of Sisters sang matins, I found much better than the secular virtues to ascribe to such a religious man as was Clarence. He had the Spirit of Faith, of Zeal. In fact, he was a Signum Fidei to everyone he met.”

While in Central America, Brother Clarence learned to speak three different languages. In fact, he learned them so well that he was able to make a few corrections to the Spanish textbook while in Nicaragua. Besides teaching, Brother Clarence served as Commissioner of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua, and also has served on the National Council of Scouting for that same country. He became acquainted with five presidents while under his Lasallian tenure, and also got to know many military governors and ministers of education. (The Paper Wolf, Volume VI, issue 6).

In 1977, Brother Clarence returned to the states. He was assigned to Christian Brothers Academy in New Orleans, LA. He was one of the Founders of the Academy. He was for students who were in a difficult situation. Brother Sam Riehm gives the remembrance of Brother Clarence:



Brother Clarence teaching class at Christian Brothers Academy, 1977.

“Brother Clarence was in charge of preparing the reading program for the students. His program be-

came the finest in use for improving the students ability to read. The students were happy at the success they were having in the ability to read. Brother Clarence was a pro-teacher who knew how to motivate the students and to reward them for their success. His use of good marks, a Lasallian tradition, spread to the entire school. Brother Clarence rewarded his students by taking them fishing in Bayou St. John.

Fishing was one of Brother Clarence's favorite past times . When he went fishing for the day, he brought plenty of food, ice and loads of fish bait. He would return home with limit-plus of fish and his booty was always shared with the community.

Brother Clarence was very faithful to promoting the works of missionaries. He took a keen interest in finding ways and means to get the schools in mission countries the things they needed. He instilled in his students a love for the missions and this paid off with students collecting money, clothes and supplies for mission schools.”

In 1990, Brother Clarence was assigned to the Brothers Assisted-Living Community at St. Paul's School in Covington, LA. Brother Ralph Baltz, who was Director of that community for twelve (12) years gives the following remembrance:

“He certainly showed a tenacious dedication to the work assigned to him, especially in the Missions. He was much appreciated by all who saw his work and benefitted from it. A number of testimonials and certificates of merit were found in desk drawers dating to his years in the Missions. Twenty-seven (27) years of his life were spent in Missions in Central America. During his retirement years he was devoted

to collecting funds for the Missions and he supervised the collections at St. Paul's for several years and almost to the time of his death.

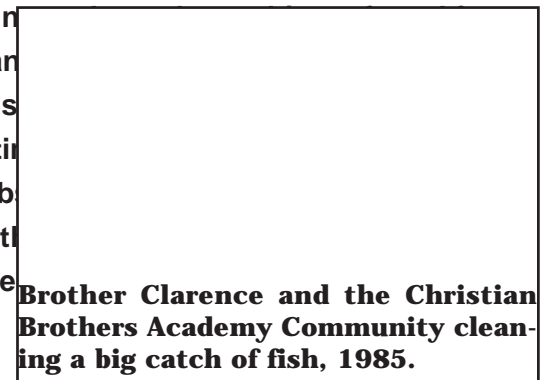
He was well-organized, judging by the large amount of files, folders, shelves of sorted lesson materials in several storage areas. His expert use of the computer in his last decade of life enabled him to be a source of information and answers for his confreres who went to him for help.

Brother Clarence was careful to be punctual for all community prayers, and he was assiduous in pointing out the proper rituals and observances.

Brother Clarence realized his need for times of relaxation and leisure that enabled him to remain sharp and alert. Fishing

of relaxation, and pleasures in his be a great pastime

I also observed communication with schedule of week



Sometime in 1998-99 Brother Clarence wrote a long letter to the brother-in-law of his cousin, Eugenie Cazalot. Brother Clarence reflected on his many years as a Christian Brother. To John Delard he wrote:

“Dear Johnny,

Last time you asked me a question which on the spur of the moment, I wasn’t ready to answer. Now, I am.

As a Christian Brother, I have had the chance of “Fulfillment” equal to none.

Spiritually: By means of daily Mass, prayers and mutual support I have drawn nearer to Christ and our Blessed Mother who have been an integral part of my life. Spiritual retreats, made annually have increased this closeness and I have placed myself entirely in their hands to be sure I am doing His will and not mine, a foretaste of future life.

Intellectually: My institute gave me the opportunity to earn a Bachelor of Arts Degree, and a Master of Arts in Education. I have assisted at educational conventions in many different areas and states. Two years ago I went to California for an International Reunion of Christian Brothers and took the opportunity to visit many areas of that beautiful state.

I taught all grades from second grade to eighth and most subjects in high school and even given courses in teacher training to future teachers.

I taught in Louisiana, Texas and New Mexico. In Panama, Nicaragua and Guatemala, I taught and directed schools and even had schools built according to my designs.

When needed, I became Band Director for Symphonic and Marching bands, Drum and Bugle Corps, Choir Master and Scoutmaster. I became one of the few scouts of Gilwell in Central America, served as Commissioner of the Atlantic Coast of Nicaragua and served on the National Council of scouting in the same

country, with free air travel in the line of scouting.

Socially: As principal of schools and being in administration for twenty (20) years, I took care of the poor and medium income and hobnobbed with the rich and mighty to be able to help the poor. I got to know presidents (5), Ministers of Education, Military Governors, Civil Governors, Mayors, Supervisors of Education, and whatnot.

Family: I have no blood children, but thousands of former students whom I have reached as a “Spiritual Father.” Not one or two, but thousands.

Writes Manuel: I am very happy to have news about one of my very special mentors, Edgar, now in L.A. You have produced great men who are now good citizens of God and country.

A former student, now a priest, said in a sermon in the cathedral of El Paso, when preaching on: to teach as Jesus did. Two great teachers stand out in my memory. Brother Amedy and Brother Clarence. He made his “Classes Come to Life.” This was told to me by another Brother who was present.

Most important were the students and friends who literally cried when I left Guatemala and Nicaragua.

Here in the states, many parents have written letters of appreciation for the help given to their children.

Educational Enrichment: Knowing other people and the way they live helps one to appreciate his own way of life and give ideas how to improve what we have.

Bermuda, Bahamas (In islands and Out islands) I have had occasion to visit. Included also are the Virgin Islands, St. Thomas, St. Croix, etc. I toured thir-

teen countries of Europe, including Holland, Belgium, France, Italy, Germany, etc. The five islands of Hawaii, and also the following countries of Central America, Panama, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, Honduras and Guatemala opened by eyes to other people's culture. Mexico and Canada also enhanced my education.

All in all, I have taught for fifty-three (53) years and at the age of seventy-one (71) learned computers and still continue to do so.

I still teach five classes a day, because I enjoy it and feel that I am still able to help youth and relate to them, and will continue to do so as long as God gives me the health and ability to reach the youth confided to my care.

If I had the chance to choose, to repeat the above, I would definitely do so, God willing. **No Johnny, No regrets!**

With St. Paul, I venture to say” “I have fought the good fight, I have run the race, I have kept the faith and now wait for the crown of the Lord. When he calls me to him.”

Beginning in 1999, Brother Clarence began to experience a number of health problems which greatly slowed down his physical activities. About a week before his death, he suffered a massive stroke from which he did not recover. He passed away on March 13, 2003.

When informed of the death of Brother Clarence, Brother Alvaro the Superior General of the Brothers sent the following remembrance:

“I knew Brother Clarence when as a young Brother I began teaching in Guatemala and when he was Director of Chiquimula. What struck my attention the most

was his seriousness, his dedication to his mission and the kindness of his regard. He had also been Director of Colegio San Jose in Bluefields, Nicaragua, and of our school in Zacapa, Guatemala.

Exactly one month before his death, February 13, he wrote me a letter reminding me that this day was also the anniversary of the death of Brother James Miller, thanking me for my last pastoral letter on Prayer and sharing with me his Personal Annual Program for 2003.

A wake and Mass of Christian Burial were held for Brother Clarence at St. Paul's School Chapel on Saturday March 15, 2003, another wake and Mass of Christian Burial took place at De La Salle Christian Brothers in Lafayette, LA, followed by burial in the community cemetery.

This short sketch of the life of Brother Clarence began with the ascension of Jesus and the emphasis placed on the missionary dimension of the Church. What prompts a person to want to go off to foreign lands to proclaim the good news of salvation? How does the missionary impulse take hold of the heart of these persons? The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches: "It is the Holy Spirit who is the impulse that leads a person on the missionary path." (842). In conclusion, it would be correct to say it was the Holy Spirit that prompted Brother Clarence to say: "I wanted to try and help out." When the religious Brothers, relatives, friends and former students remember Brother Clarence, the word Missionary, undoubtedly will come to mind.

Brother Louis Welker, Director
De La Salle-Christian Brothers
Lafayette, Louisiana

**EULOGY FOR BROTHER CLARENCE RIEHM
1918- 2003**

Our “Ambassador”

“Born in New Orleans in 1918, Brother Clarence decided early on how he would serve God. At the young age of fourteen (14) years, Brother Clarence left home to enter the Christian Brothers Juniorate in Lafayette, Louisiana. He accepted God’s call to the religious life and never regretted his decision of becoming a Christian educator. About a month before he died, while in retirement at St. Paul’s School in Covington, Louisiana, he mentioned to one of the students there that “as a Christian Brother I have had the chance of fulfillment equal to none.”

He began his teaching career by serving schools in the District at Bernalillo and Santa Fe in New Mexico, at Franklin in Louisiana, and at El Paso, Texas. In 1951 he accepted the call to continue his apostolate as a Missionary Brother. For the next twenty-six (26) years of his life, he devoted his time, talent, and energy to the education of youth in Nicaragua, Panama, and Guatemala.

Earlier, I referred to Brother Clarence as an ambassador. One of the definitions of ambassador is “a personal representative or messenger.” In this sense he was an outstanding messenger. He devoted himself to help improve the lot of his students who had little access to educational opportunities because of poverty and marginalization. He was truly a representative of the Christian Brothers in the countries where he served.

Brother Clarence learned to speak three languages. He was so well received that in 1957 he was named Director of San Jose in Bluefields, Nicaragua. When he returned to

the states in 1977 he was not ready for retirement. He offered his services once again to the District and was assigned to Christian Brothers Academy in New Orleans, where he worked with needy and at-risk students.

When he came to St. Paul’s in 1990, he continued to help out on campus. He was still active enough to get involved in some school activities. Perhaps his greatest hobby and means of recreation was fishing. Many people profited from the time he spent in his boat with his fishing equipment.

He never lost his missionary spirit. Almost to his last year at St. Paul’s he was the coordinator of the mission collections for the school. He knew first-hand the importance of financial help to our educational work in missionary countries.

Let us rejoice today that Brother Clarence has been given another assignment. He has now been called to be our ambassador, our official representative before the Lord. He will indeed continue his apostolate of watching over our Lasallian endeavors and begging the Lord to bless us and grant us the grace to persevere in our vocations as he did. He is our new Lasallian advocate in heaven. May he rest in peace.

Brother Clarence Fioke, Visitor

March 17, 2003

