

Alumni *Notes*

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ST. MARY'S, NORTH EAST & ST. ALPHONSUS COLLEGE, SUFFIELD

The AECR/CCR: zero degrees of separation

By Charlie Wilkinson

Bill O'Hara and the founding fathers of the cyber community of the AECR could not have dreamed how their simple chat site would evolve and reconnect former Redemptorists and Redemptorists themselves far beyond TampaTown. Over the years the CCR (Cyber Common Room) has grown, deepened, and become, among other things, a powerhouse of prayer.

Tampa morphed into a "pseudo vice province," becoming the site of annual gatherings called The Sammys, due to the fact that Bill (Sam) O'Hara instigated and hosted the earliest mid-winter get-togethers. Someone else may write the history of this unique phenomenon; I can recount only my own experience.

Isolated in Chicagoland, I was something of a latecomer to the group. My classmate and very close friend, Frank Hoerner, sold me on The Sammys when we reconnected after many years. Arriving at the O'Haras' the following February was both a time-warp and an epiphany. So many faces, so many memories, and immediate healing of long-buried feelings of shame/guilt on leaving Suffield and the C.Ss.R. Something about the sense of community—and continuity! The weekend flew by but stayed

indelibly with me. I became part of a virtual community that transcended time and distance.

A few years later I used that community to help me through recovery, sharing my pain and experience online, holding myself accountable and deepening the sense of connection I found in Tampa. That's been over 10 years ago. Since then we have all aged, losing some to death, while others seemed to thrive on the CCR's unique energies.

There have been long online conversations about faith, God, the Church, aging, death, health issues, our formation years, and transition stories. There have been gatherings at West End, Esopus, and North East. The Finale at The Mount was undoubtedly the most emotional and memorable. Someone should publish Frank O'Rourke's something-much-more-than-a-homily at the outdoor Mass on that occasion.

Since then memories continue to grow, along with the number of members. There is daily activity online: requests for prayers, birthday/anniversary celebrations, advice on all levels, humor, shared views, and articles about every topic except politics—but mostly memories and stories told and retold that together with the C.Ss.R. are the binding force and spirit of all involved. ■

The class of '65 reunion



Here are some members of the class of '65 at Ground Zero in Lower Manhattan. Our classmate, Matt Ryan, '65, FDNY chief, died in the collapse of the South Tower.

From left to right, they are John Gallagher; John Toomey; Jim Wal-

ters; John Brolly, '66; Edgar Adamson; Rich Wachter; Paul Akins.

We gathered for pizza and coke on Friday night; had breakfast and were off to Manhattan on Saturday morning, then had dinner at New Corners, a great Italian restaurant

in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. We had Mass on Sunday morning with breakfast and a talk by Jim Link from the advancement office and our Provincial, Father Paul Borowski, '78.



Father Paul Borowski, Provincial, talks with Father Eric Hoog, '65. Eric is now the civilian chaplain at the Naval Academy in Annapolis.



On the left is Mrs. Warnke, Bob Warnke's mother. Bob died in September, and on October 3 a memorial Mass was held in Brooklyn. Also pictured are Tom Costello, '59, and Edgar Adamson, '65.

The choir: Father Wendel's pride and joy



Here is a picture of the choir in 1967. Check it out. There are many familiar faces but too many for me to name.

From left to right, members of the double class of '64: Jim Gilmour (spent almost 20 years in Paraguay and just finished as co-director of Hispanic ministry in the Metuchen Diocese), Dennis Kane (communications major who was involved in public relations and later went into teaching; he is presently retired, living in Colorado, married to Gail, with three children and some grandchildren), Tom Fitzgerald (has been a Navy journalist, English teacher, director of advertising at a New York City publisher, Latin teacher for 16 years in Newburgh, N.Y., administrator, consultant, founder of Newburgh Prep, a charter high school now in its third year), and Jerome Kilker (died many years ago).

Father Jim Gilmour, '66, was recently appointed pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Brooklyn. The office of



pastor and rector are split here in Brooklyn, in Ephrata, and at St. Peter's in Philadelphia.



The choir from an earlier age. I recognize Fathers Maceda, Brinkmann, and McGarrity.

How many can you identify?



All the seminarians are from Brooklyn in 1955. An authentic Rule Book to whoever can identify the greatest number.



From left: David Spacht, Rick Morrocco, Arthur Fairthorne, Dan Breen, Father Anthony Michalik, Father Paul Borowski, Richard Michalik, Ralph Nofi, Jim Seeberger, '70 (married to Sue for 38 years, with three daughters and two grandchildren; Jim is

VP of Human Resources for Baltimore Life Insurance Co., where he's worked for 37 years), and Father Denis Sweeney (Brooklyn boy, ordained in 1981, parish priest for 23 years at

St. Michael, Baltimore; St. Gregory, North East; St. Gerard, Lima, Ohio; St. Mary, Annapolis; presently Formation Director).



Here is another picture of Father Anthony, Tommy Ruth, Arthur, and Ralph, working on a stage setting. They were painting the flats for the 1970 McGowan-Wendel Easter Show: "Did You Hear the Movie I Saw," a collection of songs from movies (not just musicals) of the '50s and '60s. Ralph is wearing his class jersey (number 88), which was designed by Mike Ronaldson.