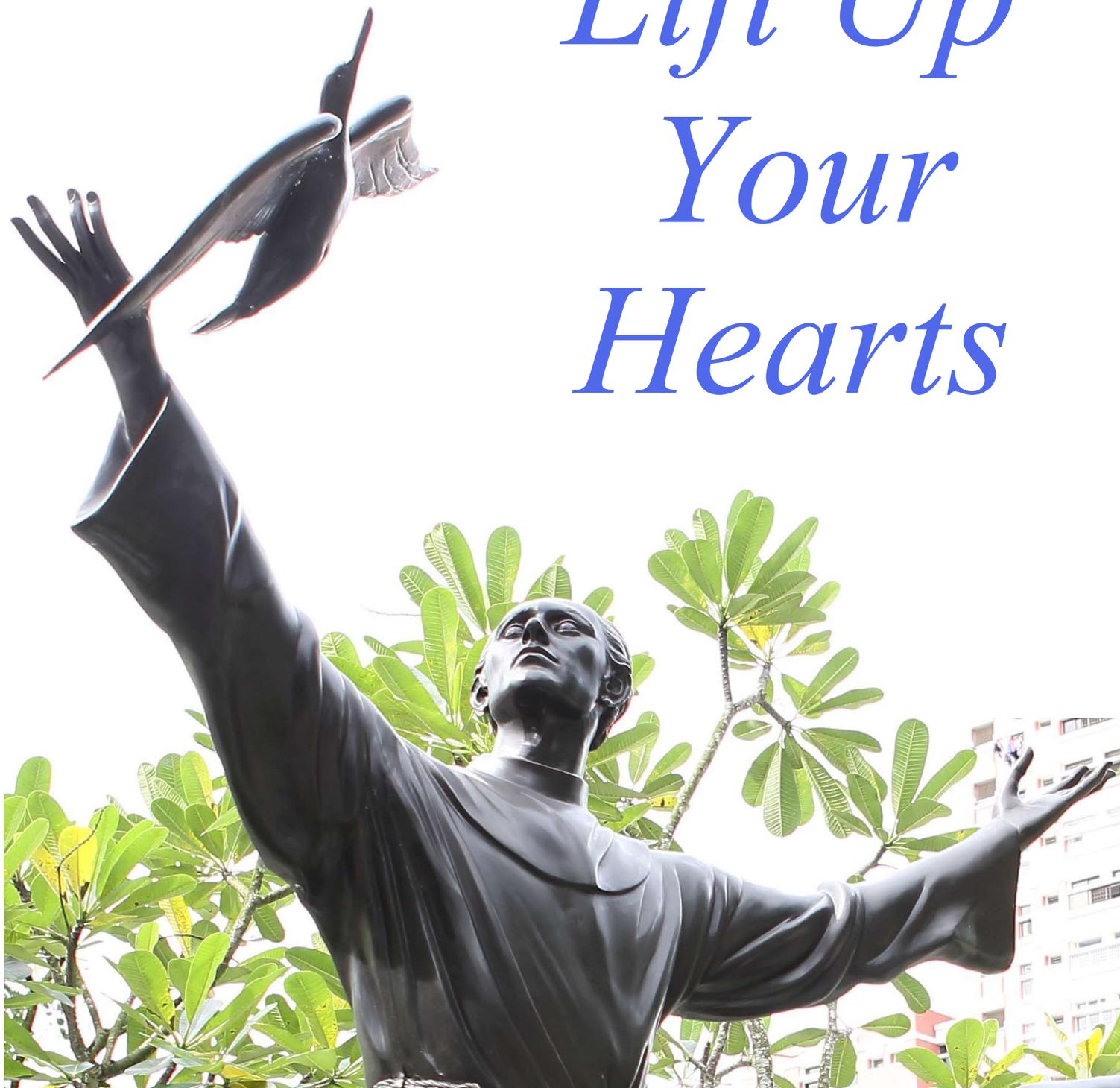


# *Lift Up Your Hearts*



*An Autobiography  
Carl Schafer OFM*

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*Part Two*

# LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS

## *An Autobiography*

Friar Carl Schafer OFM

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## **CHAPTER NINE: ASSISI 1984 – 1997**

### **First Visit**

In 1984, Fr Benet was keen to get me to work as Vice General Spiritual Assistant to the Secular Franciscan Order, and to translate urgent French documents, but he also wanted to take me to Assisi for the first time. We stayed for two days at the huge Convento of the Porziuncola, where you could drive a bus down the corridor. We walked up Monte Subasio, to the Hermitage of the Carceri in the bitter cold. The snow was powdery, so that we could see on our mantle the perfect starry shape of every single snowflake.

### **OFM General Chapter 1985**

Our General Chapter was held in Assisi from 12 May to 22 June 1985, and I was one of four Minutes Secretaries in the Plenary Sessions.

Fr John Vaughn OFM, from California, was re-elected as our Minister General. That was an eye-opening experience. Before the Chapter, Fr John did not enjoy full approval because some felt that not he, but his “California Club” were running the Order. Furthermore, the Italian Provincial Ministers wanted the American out and one of their own in. The Vatican’s representative at the Chapter, Archbishop Faggiolo supported them. They celebrated their impending victory before the election day. When the Chapter members discovered the Italian plot, the majority rallied mightily and re-elected John Vaughn.

In May 1987, I attended the wedding of Enrico Preziotti and his American bride Maria Arnone. I knew Enrico’s uncle, Giovanni Boletta, in Auckland, who had referred me to his family in Assisi. From then on, I was “family” and enjoyed lots of friends in Assisi.

In 1992, I attended the meeting of three hundred selected Araldi, Franciscan Heralds, aged 10 to 14, and Araldini, Junior Heralds, aged 5 to 9. The noise in the dining room was like a Jumbo Jet revving up in a hangar, but it didn’t seem to matter to them.

In February 1993, with two other General Assistants, I attended the annual Convention of the Spiritual Assistants of Italy, held in the Cenacolo, Assisi. Eighty Assistants attended from all four Franciscan Orders of friars (OFM, OFM Capuchin, OFM Conventual, and the TOR Third Order Regular). We were shocked by the death of Fr Luigi Monaco OFM Cap, who left the meeting early and was killed on the tangential highway in Naples.

On 27 February 1996, I made a lightning visit to Assisi and accompanied Emanuela De Nunzio, the SFO Minister General, at the annual meeting of at least fifty Franciscan Ministers Provincial of Italy, representing the four Orders. I can’t say that I felt like cool-cat Daniel in the lions’ den, but more like an early Christian in the Circus Maximus. However, the lions were nice to me and concentrated on Emanuela.

### **OFM General Chapter 1997**

Another General Chapter was held in Assisi in 1997. Fortunately, I was

not involved in that one. On the day of the election of the Minister General, Fr Giacomo Bini OFM, I left for Canada to visit the SFO and their Spiritual Assistants and would return two days after the Chapter. Then I would have to wait until my successor was appointed as SFO General Spiritual Assistant. I was already planning to go to the Holy Land at the beginning of January, for a year of sabbatical studies.

## **Spiritual Assistance to the SFO**

Much of my fourteen years in Rome as General Spiritual Assistant to the Secular Franciscan Order was spent on Visitation to the National Fraternities and in official Pastoral Visits to them, as well as official witness at their National Elective Chapters. All four of us General Spiritual Assistants made Pastoral Visits. So, we visited all the National Fraternities in time. Whenever possible, we made these Visits together with the Fraternal Visitor who was the OFS Minister General or his/her Delegate.

That raises the question of spiritual and pastoral assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order that a reader would need to know about before delving into my **VISITS**.

The friars of the three branches of the Franciscan First Order and the Third Order Regular (TOR) have always had particular relations with the lay people who were attracted to St Francis and his way of life. Friar Thomas of Celano, who knew St Francis, wrote about it:

“... many, casting aside earthly concerns, gained knowledge of themselves in the life and teaching of the most blessed father Francis and aspired to love and reverence for their Creator. Many people, well-born and lowly, cleric and lay, driven by divine inspiration, began to come to Saint Francis, for they desired to serve under his constant training and leadership. through his spreading message, the Church of Christ is being renewed in both sexes according to his form, rule and teaching, and there is victory for the triple army of those being saved. Furthermore, to all, he gave a norm of life and to those of every rank he sincerely pointed out the way of salvation.” (FA:ED, vol. I, p.216)

The General Constitutions of all four friar Orders spell out our duties to the OFS in virtue of our common Franciscan origin and our share in God’s charismatic gift to St Francis. The friars recognize that the Church committed our Orders very early to the spiritual and pastoral assistance of the Secular Franciscans.

The General Ministers of the friars exercise their spiritual assistance to the OFS through canonically establishing the local Fraternities and through their pastoral visits to them, either personally or through a delegated General Spiritual Assistant.

The purpose of both the Pastoral and Fraternal Visits, simply stated, is to strengthen the unity of the OFS and to promote the Order’s insertion into the Franciscan Family in the Catholic Church. The friars carry out the Pastoral Visit at every level of the OFS, at the local

and regional levels at least every three years, and at the national and international levels at least every six years.

The General Constitutions of the OFS specify what is to be done in an official Visit. The Visitors write a report of their Visit that they present to their General or Provincial Minister and to all who were involved.

Another aspect of Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance is the presence of the General Spiritual Assistant in the National Elective Chapters of the OFS as a witness of the communion with the First Order and the TOR.

## **CHAPTER TEN: VISITS 1984 – 1997**

The years 1984 till 1997 were filled with attendance at Fraternities at every level and with canonical visitations of the National Fraternities. Over those years, I visited some places often and other places only once.

“Have Habit – Will Travel” is an apt summary of my years as the General Spiritual Assistant to the SFO and as the Secretary of the OFM General Chapter in 1991.

With many flights to all corners of the globe, I amassed a collection of Frequent Flyer membership cards, but didn't fly often enough in any one carrier to claim a free ticket, until only three times in my last years in Rome.

Travelling by plane is no great thrill, just as well. I can recall only three notable incidents, one of which was in a flight from Rome to Sydney that headed first for Mount Isa, Queensland. That seemed to be unusual. Approaching Mount Isa, a technician in overalls appeared from the cockpit, ambled down the aisle, and knelt halfway, to listen at the floor, and returned to the cockpit. The passengers were too engrossed in watching the movie to notice when he appeared again and repeated his pantomime. As we approached Mount Isa airport, I noticed firetrucks and ambulances lined up at the end of the tarmac. There was no announcement, such as “Fasten your safety belts”, and the plane landed safely. After a long delay, we resumed our flight to Sydney. We heard later that the casing of a wheel had jammed.

I haven't written anything about the contents of the numerous meetings that I had to attend, or about the contents of the pastoral visits to National Fraternities. I left all of that for my official reports to the Conference of General Assistants and to the SFO International Council, where I included nothing about the tourist titbits or personal comments that I have included in my autobiography.

Chapters were meetings in the various levels of Fraternity, whether Local, Regional, National, or International (General). A Chapter is the highest level of authority in a Fraternity. The General Chapter is the highest governing body of the OFS with legislative, deliberative, and elective powers at the general level. It can make legislative decisions and give norms in conformity with the OFS Rule and General Constitutions.

The National Chapter is the representative organ of the National

Fraternity. It has legislative, deliberative, and elective powers at the national level. The Regional Chapter is the representative organ of all the local fraternities existing within the confines of the Regional Fraternity, with elective and deliberative power at the regional level. The local Fraternity Chapter includes all the professed members of the local Fraternity with power to elect the local Minister and Council.

I shall try to present briefly in a readable form all the more important visits that I made over a period of fourteen years as Vice-General and General Spiritual Assistant to the Secular Franciscans. I realized at the time that I could not remember all the national fraternities visited without writing regular letters home and keeping a record of photos and postcards, with commentary that eventually filled over sixty albums.

Fasten your safety belt! I'm going to be like the tourist guide who gasped, "... there, on your left, I haven't time to tell you, look to your right ...."

### **In Italy 1984 - 1997**

#### **1984**

***Florence:*** I had to go to Florence to learn Italian at the Scuola Lorenzo dei Medici and try to avoid outrageous mistakes. Florence was fabulous and the language course was a delight, but I could stay for only two months of the three-months' course in 1984.

***L'Aquila:*** I attended an annual reunion of Secular Franciscans in L'Aquila at the Basilica of St Bernardine of Siena that contains his grave. Fr Benet had been invited to attend as General Assistant of the SFO but delegated me as the Vice General Assistant. I celebrated the Mass with a homily and spoke to the local Fraternity. The local Minister was peeved that Benet had sent his Vice and gave a spiritual input at great length before me. I visited the Convento di San Giuliano and the original tiny friary of St Bernardine's friars of the Observance. They certainly lived poorly.

***Nocera Inferiore:*** In November 1984, I enjoyed a Neapolitan Christmas in Nocera Inferiore. It was another Italy, another language, and another world. Fr Tommaso OFM was a great support during my years in Rome.

#### **1986**

***Bologna:*** On 17 September 1986, I celebrated the Stigmata of St Francis with the lively local Fraternity of St Anthony and spoke the next day to a Seminar of the Franciscan Family of Emilia-Romagna. For the first time, I met the Franciscan Children, called Heralds (Araldi). I told them that I was a kangaroo who had just hopped over from Australia. That reduced them to hysterics.

#### **1992**

***Padua:*** Straight from Prague in 1992 to Padua in Italy, where the Presidency of the SFO International Council (CIOFS) met for a week. We stayed in the Pilgrims' House near St Anthony's Basilica. Padua is a most interesting and friendly town. One afternoon, we had a guided tour of the Baptistry, the

Scrovegni Chapel, and the medieval market hall, the town hall, and the palace of justice, all in the Palazzo della Ragione. Our guides, two young women architects, spared no pains to tell us about it. Usually, I can take no more than two hours of concentrated sightseeing, but this was a special treat.

**Verona:** In August 1992, the hot summer was ideal for the “European March of Franciscan Youth”, in Verona, Italy, and for the EUFRA-Vacanze (Holidays) of Franciscan Europe, in **Rieti**.

**San Severino:** I participated also in 1992, in a week of formation sponsored by The Franciscan Movement, in the Sanctuary of San Pacifico, at San Severino, in the Marches of Ancona, and stayed on to make my annual retreat.

**Montefalco:** Italy’s SFO that was constituted and assisted by our OFM friars, held their so-called “National Chapter” in Montefalco in September 1992. This arrangement was not in accord with the 1978 new Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order, which unified the four separate SFOs attached to the four Orders of friars. The Italians took years to cope with the unification of the one Secular Franciscan Order.

**Milan:** Capping 1992, I was very much occupied in meetings with the Italian friars who were Spiritual Assistants to the SFO. I met them in Milan late in November, in **Foggia** and **Bari** early in December, and in **Naples** just before Christmas. These meetings were occasioned by the recent publication of the *Statutes for Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance to the Secular Franciscan Order*.

**Sant’Onofrio:** I enjoyed a visit to the Friars of the Atonement at their Convento and Church of Sant’Onofrio (Saint Humphrey!), famous as the resting place of Cardinal Mezzofanti, who spoke and wrote thirty languages and understood thirty more. I prayed that his cloak would fall on me, as I could do with some cast-offs from his extensive linguistic wardrobe.

Franciscan places in Italy are picturesque at any time, but under lightly falling snow, **Pignataro Maggiore** and **Materdomini di Nocera** were enchanting. There, I met the SFO Spiritual Assistants of the Provinces of **Naples** and **Salerno**.

**Vico del Gargano:** The First Seminar in Krakow in 1993 created the need for another seminar the next year, for the friars and Sisters working as Spiritual Assistants to the SFO in the former Soviet Union. I set to work, with Emanuela de Nunzio, at Vico del Gargano in Puglia. In less than a week, we not only finished the planning but also visited three famous places nearby.

**San Giovanni Rotondo** was attractive only because the stigmatized Capuchin, Padre Pio, was buried in the church there. Nearby was the Sanctuary of **San Matteo**, an ancient monastery of my Order, and, in the other direction, was the Benedictine Monastery of **Monte Sant’Angelo**. Vico del Gargano retained its old-world ways of life. In this congested medieval town, the animals were kept in the basement at street level, the owner rode his overloaded donkey side-saddle down the narrow alleys, the men congregated in the evenings to play ancient card games, while the wizened old women observed all from their crannies on the balconies.

### 1993

**Osimo:** In Rome, the heat was fierce, but Summer broke on 29 August 1993. I prepared for a week with the Conference of General Spiritual Assistants. We went to Osimo for this annual solid work-out, as guests of the Conventual Franciscans in the Sanctuary of St Joseph of Cupertino. Osimo boasts of a splendid Romanesque cathedral, its columns pilfered from ancient Roman temples. In our Franciscan church in Osimo, St Joseph of Cupertino achieved his mystical flight from the choir loft to the altar.

**Loreto:** On the last morning of the Conference in Osimo in 1993, we were given a guided tour of Loreto, the Crusaders' fortress-sanctuary. The Angeli, a Crusader family, had brought some stones from the site in Nazareth traditionally known as the house of Mary, mother of Jesus. To house the stones, they built a sanctuary in Loreto, dedicated to the Incarnation. This sober explanation doesn't satisfy the pious, who prefer the legend of the angels transporting the Holy House intact from Nazareth to Loreto.

**Sorrento:** September 1993 was the month for ploughing through office work, apart from the three weekends I spent in Sorrento, supplying Masses in English for the end-of-season tourists. The British are particularly fond of Sorrento, and I have to admire their choice. I took the bus from Rome and back, and never tired of the scenery along the Gulf of Naples, from Vesuvius to Sorrento. Once, I got lost in reading a good book and was carried on to **Positano**, but that was a bonus. The Amalfi coastline was exquisite.

**Voghera:** I came home to Rome for Christmas 1993 to recuperate in Advent, but first to Voghera, near Genoa, to present the Triduum in honour of St Elizabeth of Hungary. The scenery was just like one of those Christmas cards that Aussies insist on giving to one another in midsummer: loads of snow outside, a roaring fire inside, and candlelight in the window. I envied my family and friends in Australia the traditional heatwave and an esky, packed with beer and ice, on the beach.

### 1995

**Castelluccio:** Less than a week after my return from Africa in 1995, the Conference of General Spiritual Assistants met in Assisi for our annual meeting of four days. We took off afterwards for Castelluccio, a tiny village in a vast crater, high up in the Marches of Ancona. Those who saw "Brother Sun, Sister Moon" would have been struck by the colour-drenched crater, full of flowers. I had thought that they were a fiction of Fellini's art, but they bloom in Spring, in Castelluccio.



Mr Schafer, Headmaster of Katoomba Primary School, and my Teacher in Fifth and Sixth Class 1948.



The Australian Third Order National Congress., 1971



Hoisting the Papal Flag at the Apostolic Delegation when Pope Paul VI visited Australia, 1970



Being presented to Pope Paul VI at the Apostolic Delegation, North Sydney, 1970



Greeting Pope John Paul II after attending his Morning Mass in the Vatican, 1995



YouFra International Gathering and World Youth Day, Paddington, 2008



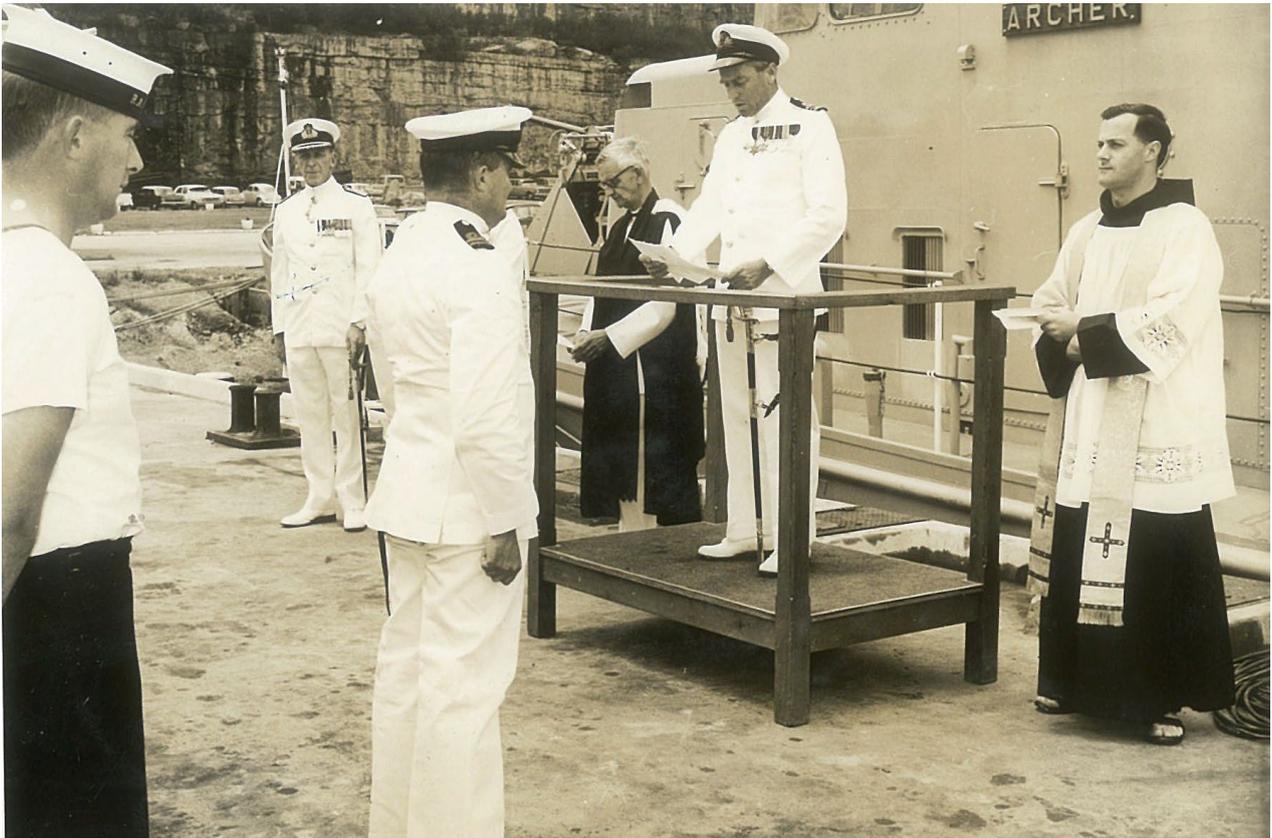
Greeting the re-elected Minister General, Fr John Vaughn OFM, at the OFM General Chapter, Assisi, 1985



Chapter Secretary and the Secretariat of the OFM General Chapter in San Diego, California, 1991



Officers Indoctrination Course, "Knives and Forks", in HMAS Cerberus, 1967



Commissioning and Blessing the Patrol Craft HMAS Archer, in HMAS Watson, 1968.



Annual Training as RC Chaplain RANR in HMAS Albatross, RAN Air Station, Nowra, 1969.



Celebrating Mass on deck of HMAS Sydney, in Exercise Coral Sands, 1968.



Mass in Auckland Cathedral, New Zealand, on the Feast Day of St Anthony of Padua.



Farewell from the Serra Club in Auckland when I left New Zealand for Rome, 1983.



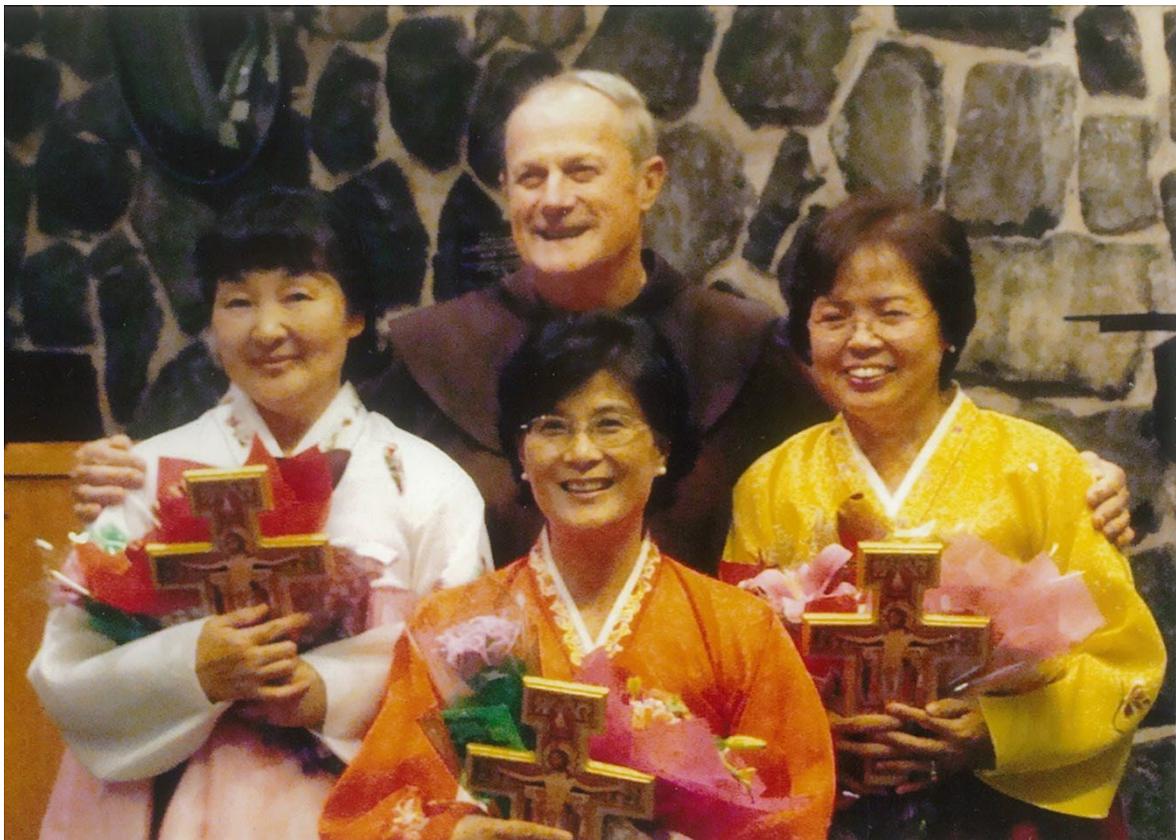
Attending a meeting of St Anthony's SFO Fraternity, Bologna, 1989.



Addressing the SFO Fraternity at Materdomini di Nocera, Italy, 1984.



Participants from Eastern Europe at the First Seminar conducted by the SFO Leaders from Rome, 1993



The Profession of three members of the Korean SFO Fraternity, Silverwater NSW, 2009



P&O: Jack Tier's group



Dancing with the Mariachi at the OFS General Chapter, Mexico, 1993

**Caserta:** Once a year, this time in 1995, the fraternity of the OFM General Curia hires a bus and visits some place of special interest. In Caserta near Naples, we visited the splendid Royal Palace of the Two Sicilies. In *Afragola*, we attended Mass in the Sanctuary of St Anthony of Padua and celebrated the VIII Centenary of his birth. In *Casoria*, we visited the house of Saint Ludovico and met the Congregation of Franciscan Sisters that he founded. The visit was all done in one day, without any rush.

**Salerno:** With a pleasant change of pace from 6 to 8 May 1995, I accompanied the OFM General Postulator for the Causes of Saints, to Salerno and Nocera, for a Symposium on Filomena Genovese, Franciscan Tertiary, the old name for Secular Franciscan. This was the first time when I went somewhere without having to prepare something to say, except for a brief interview on TV.

**Fermo:** In 1995, I spent the Feast of Christ the King at a regional gathering of the SFO in Fermo, over in the Marches of Ancona. “Marche” in Italian and “Marches” in English means “Boundaries”, as in the Marches of Scotland and the Marches of Wales. I always enjoyed visiting “le Marche” that are important in the history of the Franciscans and were the setting of many of *The Little Flowers of Saint Francis*.

## 1996 - 1997

**Foligno :** The Secular Franciscans in Italy in 1996 were a long way from achieving the unity of one SFO National Fraternity of Italy, in accord with the Pauline Rule of 1978, regardless of the particular Order of Friars who assisted them. In September, the Secular Franciscans assisted by the Friars Minor held their “National” Elective Chapter in Foligno. I attended the Chapter in the 14th Century friary of St Bartholomew, the cradle of the Franciscan Observance reform, hoping to steer the Seculars towards unity, but without success.

**Camerino:** Our reconstituted Conference of General Spiritual Assistants held our sixth annual long meeting in November 1996 at Camerino, the cradle of the Capuchin Order, in the Marches of Ancona. The original Convento and the museum brought to life four hundred years of Franciscan history. We enjoyed an outing to the limestone caves at nearby *Frasassi*, a “must” for anyone visiting the Marches.

**Cittadella:** I suddenly realized that I had to take advantage of two free air tickets on points that I had accumulated over fourteen years. A free ticket with Alitalia to anywhere in Italy was due to expire on 30 June 1997, so I visited friends in Cittadella, near Padua. I managed to fit in three days, but what a fabulous time we had, visiting the Dolomites and motoring through Veneto, Trent, and Bolzano.

**Arezzo:** In 1997, I had my last annual “long meeting” with the Conference of General Spiritual Assistants, this time in the Convento of the OFM friars in Arezzo, in November. Arezzo is a famous centre of the arts and of Italian history, but we didn’t see anything outside the walls of the friary, which was often the case when I visited SFO Fraternities.

## **In Western Europe 1984 - 1997**

### ***Spain***

**SFO General Chapter, Madrid, 27 April – 3 May 1984.** My first attendance at a General Chapter of the SFO was with Fr Benet in Madrid, in April 1984. This was an overpowering experience just after my arrival in Rome. I represented the Spiritual Assistants of Oceania. Manuela Mattioli was re-elected, not as International Minister but as her self-styled Minister General.

In June 1990, I made my annual retreat with the friars of our Madrid Province, in the Arenas de San Pedro, Avila, then spent a week's holiday with three Spanish friars who were my close friends in the Philippines. They were as agile as mountain goats and were hard to keep up with.

I visited Madrid from 5 to 10 May 1994 for the National Elective Chapter of the SFO in Spain, on 7 and 8 May. On the other days, thirteen Spiritual Assistants discussed the *Statutes for Spiritual Assistance*, and I met the local Fraternities in Madrid.

The Spanish are proud that the original name of the southern continent was “Austrialia del Espiritu Santo”, named by de Queirós, a Portuguese navigator in the service of Spain, and meaning “the Land of the Austrian House of the Habsburgs and of the Holy Spirit.” The Habsburgs were the kings of Spain at the time, around 1596. Our Australian school history textbooks omitted the Spanish connection *and* the Holy Spirit.

### ***France***

In 1986, I visited the National Council of France in Limoges. Before 1978, when Paul VI promulgated the Rule of the SFO, the Spiritual Director of the Third Order in France, Fr Leon Bedrune OFM, was the paramount promoter of the new Rule. But the French pressed for more radical changes, which made them difficult to accommodate. They were not impressed by the General Spiritual Assistants who followed Fr Leon, namely, Fr Benet, an American, then me, an Australian.

In August 1990, after Egypt and a three-hour transit in Rome, I proceeded to Brittany in France to attend the March of European Franciscan Youth.

In 1995, the French SFO National Council met for elections in Lille. I stayed with the friars in rue Marie-Rose, Paris. We visited the National Centre in rue Sarrette and a group of young people in Fontenay-sous-Bois. We walked to Notre Dame Cathedral, Les Invalides, the Eiffel Tower, the Left Bank, and the Champs-Élysées, where a pot of tea, two cups, cost US\$7.00. I needed the exercise and relished the tea.

### ***England***

I headed to England for their National Elective Chapter in 1988. In London, I retraced the fateful steps of my great-great grandfather William Grady, from Shepherd's Market to Grosvenor St, where he was seized despite the objections of the bystanders, then hauled to the Court in Marlborough Street. Whether the seventeen-year-old ever stole that timepiece from a gentleman was a guess even then in 1821, but he was condemned to death. After some

time in the rotten hulks of ships in the Thames, he was deported to Australia. William always claimed that he had been arrested by mistake

From 6 to 11 September 1995, I visited Great Britain's SFO National Council in Mill Hill, London, as well as the Northeast Regional Fraternity in Up Holland and the Scottish Regional Fraternity in Glasgow.

I think that William Grady deserves a fuller account of his unfortunate life, so I shall include something here. William was born in London in 1803 out of wedlock. His mother was Rosetta Grady, a Cockney and a Catholic. His father's name is not recorded. His trade is listed variously as "Whitewasher" or "Carpenter" or "Wheelright."

At about eighteen years of age, he was tried at a court in Middlesex. The Proceedings of the Old Bailey feature "William Grady, Theft With Violence: Highway Robbery, 24 October 1821."

London in October 1821 must have been fairly dark, as the gas lamps were lit. Shouts go up: "Stop thief", as three persons later testified.

The chief witness for the prosecution, one Josiah Walden, testified: "On Saturday evening the 6<sup>th</sup> of October, about a quarter before eight o'clock, I was in James-street, Oxford-market, walking home, the prisoner came up to me under a very large lamp, he looked me in the face, and struck me a violent blow in the chest, with his fist, he then snatched my watch out, and ran away with it, I pursued him down Chandler-street, and saw him go from there up the steps into Grosvenor-market, I there lost sight of him – I saw him in custody within three or four minutes after, two men had taken him, I am confident he is the man. There was a crowd about him, I afterwards saw him at the watch-house, my watch was found by Mrs. Stanfield, I went to her house, and she gave it to me. I have it here, the glass is not broken."

It is hard to imagine today that such testimony would lead to a verdict of guilty of "Theft With Violence: Highway Robbery", let alone a death sentence, later commuted to Transportation for Life to Australia. Would a pick-pocket choose to look into his victim's face under 'a very large lamp' before launching a frontal attack on a man to steal a watch? True, Mr Walden claims to have been robbed of a watch valued at 11 pounds, a seal (one pound), a key (5 shillings), and a piece of ribbon (2 pence). Nevertheless, the watch was recovered, even intact, and nothing but a small knife was found on William Grady's person.

A policeman testified: "William Medbury, I am an officer, I searched the prisoner at the watch-house, and found nothing but a little knife on him, next morning as I was taking him to Marlborough-street, I asked him if another lad, named Chitty, was not in it; he said, nobody was with him at the time." The prisoner's defence, in contrast, was very short: "I am innocent. I never saw the gentleman before I was taken."

Similar stories probably exist for the approximately 162,000 convicts transported to Australia between 1788 and 1868. Penal transportation to Australia peaked in the 1830s.

William was transported on the ship Asia I, survived the voyage and arrived in Sydney in July 1822. In 1830, he was issued a Ticket of Leave and was allowed to remain in the District of Sydney.

William married Jane Carney on 13 August 1833 in St Mary's Cathedral. William and Jane had nine children. Their daughter Ellen married Heinrich Schafer, my great grandfather.

In 1837, my great-great grandfather William Grady was granted a Conditional Pardon. His family moved to Sharps Creek, near Adelong NSW, where he died at the age of 85, on 15 April 1888.

### *Ireland*

August 1989 found me on a pastoral visit to Ireland and a lightning tour of twelve centres around the rim of the Emerald Isle. We tried to pinpoint the problems that the SFO was facing and to come up with solutions. Compared with other pastoral visits, which are not intended to be a tourist's delight, this one was fairly relaxed. I had lunch with a second cousin, Pat Brady, but I regret that his mother Roseann had died on the very day that I had arrived in Ireland. I didn't manage to go to Ballyjamesduff, Co. Cavan, where Roseann had lived in the same cottage where my grandfather was born.

### *Belgium*

My appointment as Secretary to the OFM General Chapter at the end of August 1990, called for a few days' visit to Fr Edmund Dougan OFM, Secretary of the previous Chapter in 1985. He was a Parish Priest in Brussels, Belgium. Fr Ed gave me an overall picture of the job, and I did some initial planning with him.

In 1995, it took me three nights and two days to travel from Asunción to Brussels, with transit stopovers in Montevideo, Buenos Aires, New York, Washington, and in Rome for a few hours. I asked the friars to bring my accumulated correspondence to the airport, as I needed some letters before the visits to France and Belgium. After the visit to France, I caught a fast train back to Brussels. I stayed with the friars in Michelin. Belgium provided a double dose of visits and elective chapters. The French-speakers held theirs in Mons, and the Flemish in Halle. I was treated to the beautiful sights of Brussels and Michelin.

### *Sweden*

From 8 to 10 August 1988, I made a Pastoral Visit to Sweden. The first local Fraternity was about to be established in Linköping. I stayed with the Dutch and Swedish OFM friars. The Dutch Provincial Minister paid for my entire trip to Scandinavia.

### *Finland*

From 11 to 14 August 1988, I made a Pastoral Visit to Finland. In Helsinki, I met the Fraternity at St Hendrik's Cathedral. There have been no Franciscans in Finland since the Reformation. The Dominicans at the Catholic Study Centre were my hosts. My only previous awareness of Finland was from a mention in a Sydney newspaper, of two Finns who wanted to see kangaroos in the wild. They drove out to the country where a kangaroo slammed their car and slumped on the road. The jubilant Finns propped the roo against a tree, donned him with a hat and sunshades and flashed a photo. The roo had only been stunned by the collision but the flash revived him, and he bounded away with hat and sunshades.

### *Norway*

From 14 to 17 August 1988, I made a Pastoral Visit to Norway. In Oslo, I visited the lively Franciscan group developing in Lille Strom, and also the Fraternity in Bergen that was connected with the original Fraternity established in Oslo in 1930. I met another group in Drammen, at the top of a spiral tunnel carved from solid rock inside a mountain.

### *Portugal*

I set off for Fatima in Portugal to attend the SFO General Chapter in October 1990. I was present on 13 October, the anniversary of the last apparition of the Blessed Virgin to the three children, when thousands of pilgrims descended on Fatima. Their liturgy and their piety were in the old style, with an excess of bishops having their hands kissed, but I found the Portuguese unsophisticated and wholesome.

In 1993, I put in a super-concentrated week of work in the Office before flying to Lisbon. My guide, Fr Virgilio, gave me the Royal Tour, from the house where San Fernando da Lisboa, alias St Anthony of Padua, was born, to the pier from where the Navigators cast off to discover the New World. I climbed every staircase of the Arab Section of Lisbon and limped all over the Saracen fortress. Fr Virgilio was eleven years older than I was but in incredibly good shape. I think he had plans to compete in the Sydney Olympics.

### *Germany*

The OFM Minster Provincial had invited me to the triennial meeting of the Spiritual Assistants in Altötting, Bavaria. It was my first meeting with the German friars assisting the SFO. Thank heaven, some of them spoke English. I felt keenly my inability to speak German.

From 14 to 20 August 1995, I attended the meeting of EUFRA, Franciscan Europe, in Hopsten, Germany. One hundred attended this annual two-weeks' course of ongoing adult formation. Eleven countries of Eastern Europe and seven Western European countries were represented. The program included outings to Osnabrück and Tecklenburg.

I was making heavy weather of German while preparing to visit in April 2007 my great grandfather's town of Fritzlar, in Hessen Kassel. I had met a Swiss couple of Secular Franciscans who spoke German, English and French. In 2007, they met me at Düsseldorf, and drove me to Fritzlar, where we stayed for a week in search of the Schafers. I found no living relatives, but I'll report fully about this later.

The Germans are not impressed by someone who carries a name as common as Carl Schafer and can't speak the language of the Fatherland. I also carried an Irish passport to save the expense of visas and of waiting in endless queues at Passport Control, behind some hapless African. A friar with a thick accent inquired: "Vy koodent you haff kot a Cherman vun?" I hadn't thought of it.

### *Malta*

In April 1997, I visited the SFO and their Spiritual Assistants in Malta and Gozo. I walked from our beautiful old friary in St Paul Street, Valletta, and caught the ferry to Mgarr

on the island of Gozo. The pace of Gozo was much slower than the bustling tempo of Malta, but both islands boasted splendid parish churches filled with treasures of art, even in tiny villages. Mosta church avoided destruction during World War II in 1942, when a German aerial bomb landed on the church, but the bomb didn't explode. It is displayed in the church.

### *Netherlands*

I still had an important job to do for the SFO in Germany and the Netherlands, where the National Councils wanted to complete the work on their National Statutes. I worked with them from 18 to 23 December 1997, just before I left Rome.

### *Denmark*

From 18 to 22 August 1988, I made a Pastoral Visit to Denmark. I crossed by ferry from Oslo to Frederikshavn. The National Elective Chapter was held in a lovely conference centre way out in the country. There were no friars in Denmark, but the Secular Franciscans were very much alive and competently led by Marianna Powell.

### *Croatia*

In my first visit to Croatia, the European Secular Franciscans, EUFRA, held their meeting in 1984 in Zaostrog.

The 1989 National Chapter of the SFO in Croatia was held at Samobor from 6 to 8 October, after which I visited the SFO in the five OFM Provinces in sixty places and in twenty days. I spent a night in the exquisite island-noviciate of Visovac, and several days in another noviciate on the island of Kosljun, near Trieste.

On Easter Monday 1997, I left for Zagreb in Croatia, then went to Nasice, to attend the week-long EUFRA-Meeting of SFO National Leaders. We saw no signs of the recent war, except that the church's steeple had been destroyed by a Serbian rocket. In a brief outing to Đakovo, we visited the famous Cathedral, which had also been used for target practice. We called in at the stables of those magnificent Palomino white horses that perform in Vienna's Riding School.

September 1997 found me in Rijeka and other places nearby. I was invited to give a Conference on a Day for Secular Franciscans and Franciscan Youth, celebrating 550 years of the presence of the Franciscans on the tiny island of Kosljun in the middle of a lake on the island of Krk. I had the chance to see Opatija, Malinska, and many hideaway places on Krk, as well as Plitvice National Park, the war-devastated area, and Cetingrad, where the church had been dynamited by the Serbs, and Trsat Marian Shrine, where I had another meeting with the Secular Franciscans and Franciscan Youth.

### *Austria*

In September 1985, the SFO Presidency met at Sankt Pölten. Five or more languages were used in the meetings of the Presidency of CIOFS, that is, the International Council of the SFO. We had to rely on off-the-cuff translations of the languages that were unfamiliar to us.

## ***Poland***

The Franciscans in Poland held a Symposium at Łódź (pronounced “Woodge”), in 1987. It proved to be an excellent introduction to the friars of the three branches of the Franciscan First Order (OFM, OFM Capuchin, and OFM Conventual), in nine Provinces. In three weeks, I visited the four OFM Provinces. If all this sounds complicated, never mind. it *is* complicated! No other place affected me so much as Auschwitz. How do you manage to saunter past a mountain of suitcases, another of spectacles, another of hairbrushes and combs, not to mention the ovens, and not be appalled by it all?

After Easter in 1992, I flew to Warsaw for a meeting that planned a two-weeks’ Seminar, to be held in July the next year, for up to fifty persons from the former Soviet Union. From Warsaw, I took a train to Katowice then a car to Wisła, , where the EUFRA, European Secular Franciscans, held their annual meeting that attracted people from Eastern Europe as well.

Poland held an SFO National Chapter in Kalvaria Zebrzydowska in October 1992, which I attended officially. Kalvaria is an extensive complex of shrines and facilities for large meetings and pilgrimages.

### **SFO First Seminar in Kraków**

The knock-out event in July 1993 was the two-weeks’ Seminar in Kraków, Poland, for potential leaders of the SFO in the countries of the former Soviet Union. We had prepared for it for fifteen months, and it was a great success, thank the Lord. Forty-five persons succeeded in getting there, from Lithuania, Ukraine, Belarus, and St Petersburg, and even from Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. These last-mentioned travelled by train for five days and returned by the same way. Others, from Latvia, Estonia, Moscow, and Siberia, couldn’t make it, regretfully. The SFO Minister General, Emanuela De Nunzio, and the four General Spiritual Assistants presented the Conferences in Italian, which was translated into Russian and Polish. After private reflection, the participants discussed the material in work groups according to their country, then in general sessions.

We put in two weeks of solid work till 17 July 1993, but we took time off for a day-pilgrimage to Czestochowa, another to Kalwaria Zebrzydowska and Wadowice, the birthplace of Pope John Paul II. On a Sunday afternoon in Krakow, we celebrated Mass at the tomb of Blessed Angela Salawa, a Polish Secular Franciscan. We also visited her village, Siepraw, where there was the finest modern church that I had ever seen. After the Seminar, Emanuela and I visited the Wieliczka salt mine and its caverns of sculptured life-sized figures, - and the Cistercian Monastery at Nova Huta. We ran out of time. I still didn’t see the modern church of Nova Huta that had been built secretly (how?!) in the middle of the Communist “model community.”

### **SFO Second Seminar in Kraków**

The Presidency of CIOFS - the SFO International Council - held a second Seminar in Kraków from 9 to 19 July 1994, for friars and Sisters working with the SFO in the countries of the former Soviet Union. Despite all the difficulties in contacting them and in their getting there, twenty participants succeeded, from St Petersburg, the Ukraine, and Kazakhstan. We heard heart-rending accounts that made us marvel how anyone could survive there without

damage to their person. Even though the Communist system had collapsed from within, the same bosses still controlled daily life. Little children who showed any interest in the Sisters had to stand up in class and face the derision of their atheistic teachers. One eight-year-old replied, “We respect you as our teacher and thank you for what you teach us, but we never hear from you the beautiful things that the Sisters tell us about.”

In August 1997, I went to Ustron in Poland, where a hundred European Secular Franciscans attended EUFRA-Weeks, a happy combination of ongoing formation and German-style holidays. It was a good opportunity to meet persons from Eastern European countries, such as Latvia, Lithuania, Russia, Rumania, Hungary, Byelorussia, and the Ukraine. I had met some in their own countries and could catchup on the latest developments of the SFO in each country.

### **Collapse of the Soviets 1989**

I had noticed in Croatia the serious political unrest coming out of Slovenia and expected a blow-up. But Yugoslavia, and even Poland, had hardly featured in the news since the eruption of **East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Rumania, and Lithuania**. I was enthralled by the newspaper accounts and the television coverage of events during November and December 1989. From then on, I would have to assist the Secular Franciscans in Eastern Europe also, who had all been suppressed under Communism and out of contact.

#### *Slovenia*

After Easter in 1993, I took the overnight train from Rome to Trieste, from where the Slovene friars drove me to Nazarje, to the meeting of EUFRA, the European leaders of the SFO. Slovenia is a tiny country that has everything of natural beauty, and it is my favourite after Italy, enjoying independence after centuries of foreign domination. On 24 April 1993, I left the capital, Ljubljana, for Frankfurt.

In November 1997, I was again in Slovenia, attending the SFO National Elective Chapter, held at Nazarje, and making a pastoral visit to the Spiritual Assistants in Maribor and Ljubljana. From Brezje, I was driven to the airport through a wonderland of freshly-fallen snow. No wonder, the Europeans love to have these scenes on their Christmas cards.

#### *Transylvania*

The Minister Provincial of our Province of Thuringia had invited me to spend a holiday in Fulda in 1993, and to visit Kassel, close to the home of my great grandfather. At the same time, I joined the OFM German-speaking Provincial Ministers in their visit to Transylvania, which is Hungarian-speaking Rumania. We travelled by minibus from Fulda to Vienna, then to Budapest, and Szeged (“Seg-et”), then into Rumania. The roads were narrow and in bad shape, used by oxen-drawn carts, gypsy caravans, slow farm vehicles, and flocks of sheep, as well as by huge heavy trucks and fast cars by-passing Yugoslavia. The danger was good for the spiritual life: I made many acts of perfect contrition. I left the Provincial Ministers at Deva and visited the Spiritual Assistants and Secular Franciscans in Csíksomlyó (“Cheek-shom-lyo”), then returned with the Provincial Ministers to Fulda, after three days of driving in perfect Spring weather. Loads of correspondence awaited me in Rome, but the month away was a tonic.

## *Ukraine*

In June 1996, while visiting local SFO Fraternities in large cities and in out-of-the-way country places, I traveled by a battered car from Lviv to Kiev, and stayed with the Conventuals, Capuchins, and my own OFM friars, as well as with Secular Franciscans, a moving experience. I made a lifelong friend in Lviv, Larisa Dubrovska, a Roman Catholic Secular Franciscan, who kept me in touch with Ukraine. “Lviv”, in Ukrainian, is “Lvov”, in Russian.

## *Russia*

In Russia, in 1995, I visited three of our friars and a community of Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, and the SFO Fraternity emerging in Saint Petersburg. The leader of the Secular Franciscans worked in The Hermitage Museum and arranged a guided tour for me.

In September 1996, I was invited to attend a Seminar on St Francis sponsored by the Moscow Aviation Institute’s Department of Philosophy, familiar to the Russian astronauts, and reserved until a few years ago to military air force personnel. We bussed to Kaluga, the city of the first astronaut, Yuri Gagarin, where we attended the consecration of a tiny, humble wooden structure, the new Church of St George and St Francis.

Moscow traffic was hectic, aggressive, and terrifying. The metro underground train system was excellent and architecturally splendid. The escalators were very fast. It was worth visiting Moscow just to see the churches of the Kremlin, founded in 1147. Although they were now only museums, nothing could deprive them of their spiritual inspiration. Many visits would be needed to take them all in. After a few hours of immersion in this kind of thing, I couldn’t take any more.

## **In Eastern Europe 1984 - 1995**

### *East Germany*

The Franciscan Family of East Germany held their Chapter of Mats in Bautzen in September 1984 and invited me as the OFM General Assistant of the SFO. I needed the approval of the German Bishops’ Conference and the permission of the Communist government of the DDR, the German Democratic Republic, to attend.

I could never succeed as a secret agent or a spy, as my entry into the Federal Republic of Germany demonstrated.

I had contacted the friars in Berlin Pankow friary, up against the infamous Wall, and gave them the details of my arrival at Berlin Schoenfeld Airport and asked them, please, to meet me at the Entrance Gate.

Everyone who entered the Gate passed a banknote to the attendant, but I let that pass. After the Gate was cleared, I looked for a contact, but no one was waiting for me. After a while, I found a phonebooth.

Anyone who has tried to use a foreign phone system will agree how difficult and confusing it is. I managed to speak to a friar who spoke only German. My grasp of the language was practically nil, but I thought he said that a friar was waiting for me at the Gate. I returned to the Gate, not a short distance, but on the way, I thought I heard my name, “Carl Schafer”, over the loudspeaker in the hubbub of the airport.

I searched for an Information Desk and inquired, but they said there was nothing to report. I made my way back to the Gate. No one but an elderly man was seated there, dozing. I startled him awake and told him who I was. He was flustered and asked how I got there.

In the process of quietening him, I heard again my name over the loudspeaker. He was scared stiff, but I told him that I must check it out. I found the Information Desk and inquired again. The attendant returned and handed to me my address book, wallet, passport, and air ticket, all left in the phonebooth!! Somewhat rattled, I returned to the old friar, now in a worse state of nerves, and reassured him that everything was all right. We left the airport and had to cross over a maze of railway lines to a train siding, where I caught the train to Bautzen.

I had to report immediately to the Police. A friar, Michael, accompanied me to a forbidding grey building with a policewoman’s office at the end of a long empty corridor. She was the caricature of a buxom virago. She snatched my passport and read “Schaffer!” I corrected her pronunciation: “Scha(y)fer. We don’t write the *umlaut* in English.” It was as though I had slapped her face! She stormed out of the office with my passport and stomped to the other end of the corridor. I asked Michael, “What’s she doing?” He answered, “She’s checking whether you can *leave* the country.”

Throughout my visit, Michael accompanied me, and chided me for speaking “too freely” to the Secular Franciscans. When investigators opened the archives of the Stasi secret police of East Germany, my friar accompaniment proved to have been an informant for the Stasi. There was nothing that they didn’t know about the Franciscans.

### *Hungary*

I spent December 1987 in my first Pastoral Visit to Hungary. From 1950, the two OFM Provinces were allowed only to conduct two schools. The Theology students did military service in the Front Line as gun fodder with gypsies and prisoners and were screened by the Army for future reference. I was impressed by my Interpreter, a student, Jacob Varnai, who was elected years later as General Definitior, a counsellor to our Minister General.

The SFO in Hungary held their National Elective Chapter in Esztergom in August 1992. The Franciscan Third Order fraternities that existed before Communist suppression could be accepted as Secular Franciscan Fraternities if they adopted the Rule of Paul VI of 1978. According to Canon Law, Canon 120 #1 and #2, a Fraternity that was directed by the Franciscan friars before 1978 (therefore, considered as a juridical person canonically erected) remained in existence for a hundred years after the death of the last surviving professed member.

### *Czechoslovakia*

On 2 May 1992, after the EUFRA Meeting in Poland, I travelled with the French by car to Prague. The countryside was splendid in late Spring. Despite the deplorable neglect of buildings throughout Czechoslovakia since World War II, Prague was a very beautiful city. I also needed to visit Plzen in Bohemia, Brno in southern Moravia, Ostrava and Olomouc in northern Moravia, and Bratislava in Slovakia. My visit ended with the SFO Chapter in Prague, on 16 May 1992. The Slovaks presented me with a precious relic of the Order under Communism. It was a small chart that represented the local Fraternities on the horizontal branches of a vertical tree. The members were represented by tiny heads with a personal symbol, so that no outsiders could identify them. The signage, when translated literally by Google Translate reads: "On the first Friday of the month, only those meetings will be held that last 1600 hours." Did that mean, "that end before 4 p.m."?

### *Lithuania*

After Pentecost in 1992, my interest was divided between Eastern Europe and South America. I often had great difficulty with visas and air tickets. For example, the travel agent routed me through Moscow for Lithuania. As an Australian, I had to pay \$US 250 for a visa to pass from one airport in Moscow to another. Emanuela De Nunzio, an Italian, paid \$US 60, which was bad enough. Fortunately, I quickly forgot the agonies of finding Consulates, getting visas, being caught up in strikes, and being ripped off by money changers, etc.

In mid-June 1992, I accompanied the SFO Minister General, Emanuela, at the VI Congress of the Secular Franciscan Order in Lithuania, at Kretinga. The last Congress had been held in 1938, when the Third Order members numbered 70,000. Despite the total ban during the Communist regime, 700 members persevered in fourteen local Fraternities. Thousands came to celebrate not only the rebirth of the SFO but also the resurgence of the Lithuanian Nation, and their religious freedom, regained after fifty years of severe oppression.

I was deeply moved by this visit. It was like stepping back fifty years in time, as though the years from 1938 to 1992 had never happened, and the people took up life again from the moment when they stowed their splendid banners, Franciscan habits, monstrances, thuribles, candles and rose petals. How they were going to cope with the modern secularized church left me wondering and concerned about the enormous task that lay ahead of the Church in Eastern Europe.

### *Latvia*

Late in May 1995, I visited Riga in Latvia, where a group of laity inspired by St Francis had developed spontaneously. Mara was a gynecologist in the Latvian Soviet Government who had become thoroughly sick of performing abortions and had converted to the Catholic faith about ten years previously. After reading a Russian translation of Jørgensen's *Life of St Francis*, Mara set about providing overnight shelter for abandoned children, and initiated a group of laity, inspired like her by St Francis, with the Gospel to guide them, but without Franciscans of any kind until two Capuchin friars arrived. The children's shelter, *Ave Maria*, was the cradle of a Franciscan movement that had spread to three areas of Latvia. I visited one where Mara's daughter was rebuilding a deserted manor house and running an orphanage. Mara took me to a former Russian naval hospital. The

Russian officials had just moved out and the Latvian Government handed it over to Mara and to a group of nurses, paid \$20 a week, to take care of elderly and limbless servicemen. With the Archbishop's permission, I blessed the whole complex, *Stella Maris*, in an improvised chapel, in the presence of Catholics, Lutherans, Orthodox and non-believers. Some wept openly. Others stayed on for a long time to pray. I spoke Spanish with the Vice Minister of the lay Franciscans, who invited me to meet his family, Catholic gypsies, who were settled in Russia and Spain.

### **In Asia 1984 - 1997**

The friar National Spiritual Assistants and the Secular Franciscan leaders in Asia made sure that it wasn't all work for me in my Pastoral Visits to their National Fraternities. I had a feast of oriental cultures and cuisines and loved every minute of it. In most of my Pastoral Visits, I accompanied the Secular Franciscan Fraternal Visitor who was either the SFO Minister General or a member of the Presidency of the International Council (CIOFS). We contacted the Bishop in every place, but often the Bishop was not available during the short time of our visit.

#### ***The Philippines***

Fr Benet let me cut my baby teeth in conducting a Pastoral Visit to the SFO National Council of the Philippines, from 9 to 23 October 1984.

In 1986, from November 9 till December 12, I made a Pastoral visit to the National Executive and Council of the Philippines and three Regional Executive Councils: Manila, Bulacan, and Cavite. I also visited four other areas with the prospect of forming four more Regional Councils, two in the south (Calbayog and Daraga) and two in the north (Betis and San Jose). In Manila, I met the Franciscan seminarians at Novaliches, ran a day seminar with the Spiritual Assistants, and spent a day with the Franciscan Youth leaders of the Philippines.

In April and May 1996, I visited again the SFO National Council of the Philippines.

I met many old friends at the Fifth National Elective Chapter and avoided getting my toes crushed by the bamboo poles when we danced the tiniklin. I attended also the SFO National Reunion and delighted the young YouFra members by singing "Dahil Sa Iyo", Imelda Marcos's love song to Ferdinand. They gave me a Rock Star reception!

#### ***India***

My first visit to India was in 1984, shortly after my arrival in Rome. As Vice General Spiritual Assistant, I accompanied the SFO Minister General, Manuela Mattioli, in a combined Fraternal and Pastoral Visit to the SFO in Bombay. For me, it was essentially an exercise in cutting teeth.

The Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was assassinated on 31 October 1984 at her residence in New Delhi by two of her Sikh bodyguards. Sikh bus drivers were attacked. I was visiting our OFM Noviciate at Palmanur and was stranded until the uproar died down and travelling by bus was safe.

The Capuchins in Mangalore, India, invited me to attend a Seminar for Spiritual Assistants in October 1984.

I left for India on 30 December 1996 to attend in Bangalore the National Assembly and Elective Chapter of the SFO. The Fraternal Visitor and I stayed with the OFM friars at Hosur Road. We attended the New Year Midnight Mass and prepared for the Chapter with the National Minister and the OFM Spiritual Assistants. For the Chapter in January, we moved to the Franciscan Institute of Spirituality, conducted by the Capuchins. The Institute's chapel was special, using natural outcrops of rock for the altar and the lectern.

### *Hong Kong*

In 1985, I made a Pastoral Visit to Hong Kong, but did not take notes apart from the official report of the Visit, very likely because our national visits were made too closely together. I attended SFO elective chapters and worked on their National Statutes. I called on Bishop Dominic in *Macao*, who showed great interest in the SFO.

### *Taiwan*

In 1985, I made a Pastoral Visit to Taiwan, but I didn't take notes at the time. I visited Bishop Hsu whom I had known well as Fr Leonard Hsu OFM in Waverley NSW. His "Hailie, Holie, Queenie" pronunciation of English was delightful. Fr Leonard was so popular with the friars that we presented him with a Digger's slouched hat when he left for Taiwan.

### *Korea*

In 1985, I made a Pastoral Visit to Korea. I worked on the National Statutes and spoke at many assemblies, especially in Seoul, Pusan, Dae-Jung, and Kwangju, where we celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the SFO in Korea. I tried to dissuade the Secular Franciscans from wearing the religious habits of the friars and the Sisters, which they were doing at the time. They had not fully adopted the SFO Rule of 1978.

I left Rome on Christmas Eve 1994 and arrived in Seoul, Korea, in time for Midnight Mass with the Franciscan Family. In the last week of December, I met the OFS Regional Fraternities in Pusan, Dae-Jung, and Seoul, accompanied by the OFM National Spiritual Assistant and an excellent Interpreter. The SFO in Korea was a vibrant National Fraternity, one of the best.

### *Sri Lanka*

On my return trip from Sydney to Rome in 1989, I visited what I had expected to be a local fraternity of the SFO in Colombo, Sri Lanka. Regretfully, it wasn't like that. A local man was doing his own thing under the guise of the SFO. After three days in oppressive heat, I wasn't well, but it was an excellent cure for losing weight as I had gained a stone, six kilos, in New Zealand and Australia. I recommend a diet of plain tea and toast. I stayed and recovered with the Franciscan Missionaries of Mary in Colombo and visited the Poor Clares in Badulla.

## *Japan*

From 19 to 30 April 1994, I visited the Secular Franciscans and their Spiritual Assistants in Japan. It was late cherry-blossom time, and the azaleas were in full bloom. Peter Keogh, an old friend from Sydney and SFO International Councillor, presided at the SFO National Elective Chapter. The Japanese displayed their professional expertise with computers.

Many memorable events were not connected with Secular Franciscan business. In Tokyo, I walked with a friar in the late evening to the Imperial Palace. The Franciscan Chapel Centre at Roppongi made us welcome at Morning Mass.

With Bernardine Inaba, since then a dear friend, I toured the Buddhist Temple Asakusa-Kannon. Bernardine had been orphaned in the bombing of Tokyo. He told me that, as a ten-year-old, he roamed among the desolate people and sang happy songs to lift up their spirits. When he asked me to explain the Perfect Joy of St Francis, I pointed out that he had already lived the perfect joy of St Francis as a little boy in the rubble of Tokyo.

In Nagasaki, I enjoyed the trip to Mount Inasayama and the scary descent in a tiny, suspended cabin. We were guests of the Conventual Centre, founded in Nagasaki by Saint Maximilian Kolbe OFMConv, Martyr of Charity in Auschwitz.

## *Vietnam*

I expected to be in Vietnam from 21 February till 16 March 1994. Vietnam's Socialist Government had relaxed a little. I presented myself as a tourist at the Vietnamese Embassy in Rome. I had to stay at a designated hotel in Hochiminville (Saigon) for one night. A representative was to pick me up at the airport and drive me to the hotel. The first snag was that Thai Airways had cancelled my flight from Rome.

I arrived a day late in Ho Chi Minh City and took a taxi to Bong Sen Hotel. While I was checking in, the government representative was right there beside me. The hotel turned out to be a buzzing Security post. It cost US\$120 for the first night, then I was "free" to leave. The rep. conveniently organized a rickshaw man (employed by Security) to take me to my "friends." I proceeded in all naivety to contact the SFO Spiritual Assistant at the OFM Provincial House. The rep. must have been quickly convinced that this babe in the woods wasn't a serious risk. The friars declared my presence at once to the Police near the friary, to avoid a severe censure and a fine. But, of course, the Police knew everything about me.

I went to Vietnam knowing little about the Secular Franciscan presence. Imagine my amazement when I discovered a fully functioning National Fraternity of the SFO under cover. They referred to the hard years since 1975 as: "Our members lived in the Franciscan spirit and loved one another in Christ." I met one member whom the Communists crippled because she had secretly housed a Catholic priest.

The Minister of a local Fraternity invited me to his home, which was a square room with a ledge around the walls. We spoke in French, but he pointed out a battered elderly woman who spoke English. She had been an Interpreter for the American Forces who made a hasty exit and abandoned her to abhorrent Viet Cong treatment. She pleaded with me, "Please, don't recognize me after you leave this room."

### *Singapore*

I reached Singapore on 7 February 1997, Chinese New Year, and stayed with our friars at Bukit Batok. I had a fabulous time with them and the Secular Franciscans and with my old friends since 1975, when I was stationed there. I flew to Rome on Ash Wednesday, determined to do something during Lent about losing some weight, and in time to celebrate my 60<sup>th</sup> Birthday on 14 February. “Not a good age to be carrying weight!”, warned my doctor in Sydney. Thank heaven for Lent.

### **In Africa 1986 – 1996**

#### *Zimbabwe*

In 1986, I made four official visits to the Secular Franciscans, first, in Zimbabwe in the east, and then in three countries in West Africa: Togo and Ivory Coast, and Burkina Faso. In Zimbabwe, our OFM friars introduced me to the Secular Franciscans in Harare. They were a large group and provided an Interpreter, who was a very animated man, dressed in a friar’s habit, and effortlessly translated my words, so much so that I had to upgrade my own enthusiasm to match his. I remarked to the National Spiritual Assistant how impressed I was with the lay Interpreter, but he assured me that the man had not translated anything that I had said. Rather, he made up a spiel of his own. The Franciscan Missionaries of the Divine Motherhood (FMDM) Sisters conducted me in Victoria Falls, Hwange, and Bulawayo.

#### *Togo and Ivory Coast*

In West Africa, I switched into French. Lomé in Togo and Abidjan in the Ivory Coast were hot and humid. I made Pastoral Visits to the SFO in both countries in 1987 but didn’t make notes of the Fraternities that I visited apart from the official records of the Pastoral Visits. In fourteen years of constant traveling, my tummy failed me only twice. That was in Togo and once in India. The culprit was probably contaminated drinking water.

#### *Burkina Faso*

I visited Ouagadougou in 1987. Near the southern edge of the Sahara, it was cold at night but hot and dry by mid-morning. Fine dust pervaded everything. Although the people are among the world’s poorest, I had to admire their dignity and wholesomeness. The Secular Franciscans were a delight to meet. The Jesuits accommodated me.

#### *Egypt*

In July 1990, I made a pastoral visit to the Secular Franciscans in Egypt as guest of the Coptic Catholic friars and the Custody of the Holy Land. We travelled the length of the Nile, from Cairo to Aswan, for a three-day National Convention of the SFO in Etsa-Al Minya. I was deeply impressed by the way of life of the Coptic friars, who identify with their people and live poorly.

### *Congo*

In September 1990, I visited the SFO in the Congo and in *Zaire*. Travelling vast distances by car made me ill, so we had to fly to our destinations. In the Masses, I was most impressed by the singing accompanied by drums and rhythmic clapping and stepping, not really dancing. The Africans must be appalled by our cold formality and lack of involvement in our style of liturgy. After an African Mass, “worship” and “participation” took on a new meaning.

### *South Africa*

The Republic of South Africa and the United States of America are poles apart, but that’s where I found myself after the OFM General Chapter in 1991. The Secular Franciscans of South Africa held their National Elective Chapter in Cape Town in September, with delegates from the Cape, Natal, and Transvaal. On 4 October, I celebrated St Francis’ feast day with the Franciscan Family in Transvaal and enjoyed the Zulu choirs at Sunday Mass in Sharpeville. The countryside reminded me of the south-eastern States of Australia. The English-speakers have much in common with the Australians, except when they call a barbecue not a barby but a braai.

### *East Africa*

In 1994, I set out on a six-weeks’ safari in East Africa, again to visit the Secular Franciscans and their friar Spiritual Assistants. This was planned for a number of years and couldn’t be postponed any longer. I visited *Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, and Malawi*. I was about to enter *Rwanda* when that shocking conflict broke out between the Hutus and the Tutsis.

I spent three weeks with the National Spiritual Assistant in Tanzania and made brief visits to the other Fraternities. We crammed into public buses, onto the back of utilities or on the pillion of a motorbike, while enjoying the scenery of Lake Victoria and Mount Kilimanjaro.

I’ll always remember Bongu, a four-year-old leper child at Nyabange in Tanzania, who had baffled medical science that maintained that leprosy had an incubation period of ten years. Bongu already displayed the white patches on his little pot-belly, but he would be completely cured by modern drugs. I taught him to catch a soccer ball. After that achievement, the look on his face was ecstatic.

### *Tanzania*

From 29 September till 16 October 1994, I visited the SFO accompanied by the National Spiritual Assistant Fr Valerio, the Provincial Spiritual Assistant, and an Interpreter in Kiswahili. There were 4,500 Secular Franciscans in eighteen Regional Fraternities. From 20 to 24 October, I met the outgoing National Executive, attended the National Elective Chapter, and met the new Executive in the Capuchin Spiritual Centre, Mbagala. Chloroquine and buckets of mosquito repellent saved me from malaria.

## *Uganda*

From 16 to 19 October 1994, I was welcomed by the friars and the local SFO Fraternity at Kashekuro and visited six local Fraternities in formation. I spoke about the SFO to the Poor Clares at Mbarara and to the OFM novices at Kakoba. I met the Fraternities of Kampala at Nsambya.

## *Kenya*

Fr Valerio OFM, and I stayed in Nairobi on 19 October 1994, with Fr Giacomo, Provincial Minister of the Vice-Province of St Francis, which included all the countries visited at that time. From 24 to 26 October, I was in Nakuru, where I had a day with seventy Secular Franciscans representing twelve local Fraternities. I called on Bishop Raphael, a Secular Franciscan.

## *Malawi*

About 500 members in twenty-six local Fraternities-in-formation were organized into three Regional Fraternities. From 26 to 30 October 1994, I stayed in Dowa and spoke to Mother Clara, Poor Clare in Lilongwe, who had initiated interest in the SFO in Mzuzu diocese in 1983. I spent a day with twenty-two SFO leaders from Central and Northern Regional Fraternities. At the end of my visit, I met the Dowa local Fraternity.

## *Madagascar and Mauritius*

In 1996, I discovered two long-established and little known SFO National Fraternities, in Madagascar and in Mauritius, and I was greatly impressed by them. The good Lord certainly started something when he put St Francis on the road. The Botanical Garden of Pamplémousses in Mauritius earned my Franciscan admiration.

## **In North America 1985 - 1993**

### *United States of America*

In 1985, I attended the National Congress of the SFO of USA at San Diego, California, where 440 delegates participated.

On holidays in 1987, I explored the old Spanish Missions of the Franciscans between San Diego and Sacramento. No Californian holiday would be complete without a visit to San Diego's Wild Animal Park, Disneyland, Universal Studios, the Queen Mary, and the Spruce Goose at Long Beach.

In Albany N.Y., in 1988, I met my second cousin, Loretta Carney, who was single. My grandfather James Brady and her grandmother were brother and sister. At the time, I was trying to find proof that my grandfather had been born in Ireland. Loretta warned me that I would not receive any help from the family in Ireland lest I prove that I had some title to

owning land! I eventually found proof of my grandfather's birthplace on his death certificate, issued in Melbourne. Loretta kept in touch and visited me later in Rome.

### ***OFM General Chapter, San Diego 1991***

#### **Remote preparations**

As the Secretary, I spent November 1990 in California, preparing for the Chapter, to be held in the University of San Diego, in 1991.

I had a week in Oakland with three friars of Santa Barbara Province who would be members of the Secretariat. It was good to share their enthusiastic support and to get things moving. In Old Mission San Luis Rey, the Guardian was also a member of the Secretariat. Fr Evan did a great job over the past eighteen months in liaison with the University. The two liturgists of the Chapter spent the last two days with me at the Old Mission.

In February 1991, I combined the commitments of my two present jobs, as SFO General Assistant and Secretary of the Chapter, and took off for the USA and Mexico. In Scottsdale, Arizona, I spent a weekend at the Franciscan Renewal Centre and explored the SFO Rule with other Assistants and Secular Franciscans.

#### **Proximate preparations**

I spent the rest of February 1991 in the Old Mission San Luis Rey, travelling each day to the University of San Diego to continue preparations for the General Chapter, then I flew to Rome.

I left Rome for San Diego on 20 May 1991. In Frankfurt, I missed my connecting flight to USA because the travel agency had not allowed enough time between flights, so my suitcase was lost with all the documents and preparations for the Chapter. I managed with what I stood up in for four days until my luggage was delivered. Customs in Frankfurt had destroyed the lock on my suitcase, looking for drugs, but nothing was disturbed, thank the Lord.

I was driven to Old Mission San Luis Rey, where the advance team of the Secretariat was accommodated. Twenty of us went down to the University of San Diego each day until 28 May, when we moved into accommodation on the campus. Much translating and printing was done in that week. The Chapter worked in seven languages that were simultaneously interpreted, and in six languages that were translated in writing. We had an excellent team of twenty Interpreters and another twelve Translators, but only three knew all five major languages. I could cope with four, but the fifth, German, escaped me.

#### **OFM General Chapter 1991**

On 30 May, the 150 Chapter members and the remaining thirty members of the Secretariat arrived at the airport from early morning till late at night. We drove them to the University and showed them their accommodation. This was the first Chapter in fifty years when all the Provinces were represented, including Vietnam and the Eastern European countries, Albania, Rumania, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia. Most of these friars suffered a mighty dose of culture shock.

The outgoing Minister General, Fr John Vaughn, had planned the agenda of the plenary sessions on having all the reports of the Provincial Ministers translated and ready for distribution in the aula, the Chapter hall, when called for, but there was an embarrassing holdup in the work of the Secretariat. Some of the Provincial Ministers had not written their Report in time or not had it translated. Fr John's agenda was inconveniently delayed till all the Reports were ready, which elicited a public rebuke of the Secretary. I didn't explain to Fr John the reason for the delay.

### **Election of OFM Minister General**

Cardinal Jerome Hamer presided at the election of the Minister General, Fr Hermann Schalück, from the Province of Saxony. Fr Gilles Bourdeau, from Canada, was elected Vicar General. Fr Maurice West, till then Australian Minister Provincial, was elected General Definitor, that is, a counsellor of the Minister General, representing Southeast Asia and Oceania. Someone noted with surprise that there were five Australians present at the Chapter. Someone else commented that we sounded more like fifty.

### **Outings**

The Chapter sessions were really hard work, but we did have some enjoyable outings that I had organized for the Sundays: to Tijuana in Mexico; to San Diego's Sea World; to the Old Mission San Luis Rey; to the Papa Reservation; and to the Benedictine Monastery at Oceanside. We were also royally entertained on several evenings by the Italians, the Germans, and the Latin Americans. I was amazed at the talent in a chance grouping of friars.

The five major Masses were memorable for the musical accompaniment, especially the trumpet. The daily Masses were celebrated in language groups, and these also were well done. The English-speaking group had the use of a beautiful modern chapel in the San Diego Seminary, built in the round, like a gem.

As the Secretary, I didn't have a spare moment, but I enjoyed good health, I slept well every night, and coped as best I could with the impossible. Not until it was all over, did I succumb to fatigue for a few days. The Chapter ended on the evening of 1 July 1991. Everyone was out by 2 July. I stayed at San Luis Rey until 9 July, finishing off secretarial work, which was still far from completed. I returned to Rome on 10 July and, thankfully, did not suffer jetlag that time. It must have been my friends' prayers that got me through the ordeal so well.

### ***After the OFM General Chapter 1992***

On 21 October 1992, off to the USA to attend the SFO National Elective Chapter. The flight was three hours late out of Rome and most things didn't function: earphones, reading lamp, video movie, toilet flush. I missed my connection in New York and reached Cincinnati by a roundabout route a day late. The Chapter was held in Mount St Francis, Indiana, painted in autumn reds and gold. I celebrated my first Halloween at Oak Brook outside Chicago, with Fr Benet Fonck OFM, who was the General Spiritual Assistant before me. He was convalescing after two serious operations.

A free ticket, with TWA enabled me to attend the Fifth Quinquennial Congress of the SFO in the United States, held at Newark, Delaware in July 1997. About 600 Secular Franciscans attended this well-organized Congress, some of whom I knew already, especially

a wonderful group of Mexicans from El Paso, Texas. I was very much impressed by the development of the SFO as a result of the national unification of the Order in USA through their successful formation of Regional Fraternities.

I had wound down travelling assignments but had more commitments before the end of the year. The National Elective Chapter of the SFO in the USA, was held in St Louis USA, in October in 1997. The National Fraternity had achieved national unity after seven years of working towards that goal. After having been very much involved in the process, I was deeply impressed by the outcome.

### *Canada*

In June and July 1988, I made a Pastoral Visit to Canada, from Toronto to Vancouver, and including Quebec. I attended the National Elective Chapter in Toronto. In Vancouver, I attended the West Canada Regional Council. Then over to Montreal with the Spiritual Assistants of Quebec and the French-speaking Secular Franciscan Fraternities.

This was the first and only time when I lost my temper with a Secular Franciscan. The lady was an aggrieved Québécoise. I should have realized that immediately. There was a historical background to her rant. In 1760, a British invasion force led by General James Wolfe defeated French troops under the Marquis de Montcalm, leading to the surrender of Quebec to the British. She went on and on about my addressing the meeting in English despite the fact that both English and French are the official languages of Canada.

On 13 June, I celebrated my 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination in Vancouver with Fr Clarence Laplante OFM, National Spiritual Assistant. It was on special occasions like this that I missed celebration with the friars of my Australian Province, but the Canadian friars made sure that I celebrated. I would catch up later with celebrations in New Zealand and Australia.

On 14 May 1997, I arrived in Canada and visited some of the SFO fraternities in the Province of Quebec, in the heartland of the French-speaking separatists. The Québécois accent was a tough test of my French but, unlike the continental French, they didn't mind if I massacred their language. Spring had reached Ottawa where the SFO National Elective Chapter was held. The Dutch Queen Beatrice's tulips were resplendent everywhere. These were her gift to the country that had harboured her family during World War II.

### *Mexico*

In April 1989, I made an extensive pastoral visit to Mexico, including the Annual Assembly of the SFO National Council and the three OFM Provinces. The *tour de force* was the four-day National Congress of JUFRA, the Franciscan Youth Movement, where I tried to cope with the exuberant Mexican youth. After a week, I could celebrate Mass in Spanish and after ten more days I presented my own homilies and talks that I had prepared already.

Having Italian was a help, and the rest of the battle was won by sheer hide. I had come to realize that facility with languages depended mainly on opening my mouth and talking, no matter how frightfully I spoke. All the Mexicans wanted was to hear my trying.

They were generous to excess and literally smothered me with affection.

In Querétaro, Mexico, 1991, I continued to work with the liturgists for the OFM General Chapter. The Third National Chapter of the SFO in Mexico was held in Tlalpan, Mexico City, from 14 to 17 February. I didn't tell anyone about my birthday anniversary on 14 February lest the Chapter be diverted into a fiesta! The SFO Regional Fraternity of Michoacán planned five days of visits to five centres. I spoke in each centre, first to about two hundred Assistants and local Fraternity Ministers, then to groups of about a thousand representatives of the local Fraternities. Several local Fraternities boasted a thousand members from their Third Order days. The Mexicans are the essence of hospitality. I had more than my share of fiestas, as the midday feast was accompanied each day by singers and dancers, the famous Mariachis.

### **SFO General Chapter, Mexico City**

On 6 October 1993, I took off for Mexico City, for the SFO General Chapter. We were fully occupied in studying various aspects of "secularity", and in approving the Statutes of the SFO International Fraternity. We spent a whole day at the Basilica of Guadalupe, where ten thousand Secular Franciscans from all over Mexico joined us in the closing Mass. There were 120,000 Secular Franciscans in Mexico in 1995. It was my fifth visit, so I had already visited Celaya, Salvatierra, Querétaro, Acambaro, Morelia, and Coyoacán in Mexico City.

### **In South America 1992 - 1995**

#### *Argentina*

In addition to two Christmases, I had two birthdays in 1992. I flew out of Sydney on 14 February and arrived in Buenos Aires, Argentina, on a second St Valentine's Day. Added to the intense humidity, was the need to speak and understand Spanish spoken with an Argentinian accent. My Spanish improved, but it had a long way to go, as I had to concentrate on the countries of South and Central America during the next six years. It's frustrating not being able to follow conversations, but only practice would fix that. I just had to smile and bear it. The trouble was that I was not sure whether I should be smiling and saying "Sí" to everything. Argentina is a paradise for meat-eaters! The SFO Vice Minister General, Encarnación del Pozo, joined me in the official visit to the National Elective Chapter, held at Córdoba. On 1 March, our flights left at the same time, Encarnita's for Madrid, and mine for Rome.

#### *Paraguay*

In 1992, I didn't succeed in getting a visa for Paraguay, either in Rome, where they didn't answer the phone, or in Australia, where they didn't have an Embassy, so I missed out on making an important visit to the friars and Secular Franciscans in Asunción.

From 19 September 1995, I spent a week in each of three countries in Latin America. Spanish was required in Uruguay, and Paraguay. With this, my first visit to Paraguay, I had

visited almost all the countries of South America in five years. The need for that was made evident at the last General Chapter in Mexico in 1990. We celebrated the Feast of St Francis in a huge open-air Mass in San Lorenzo, we attended the National Elective Chapter in Asunción, and we visited the local Fraternities there in Caguazú and Alto Parana, which was near the Iguazú Cascades, featured in the movie, *The Mission*. Nearby was the largest powerhouse in the world, Itaipu, jointly owned by Paraguay and Brazil. Its size was stupendous.

### *Uruguay*

In 1992, the SFO Vice Minister General, Encarnacion del Pozo, and I visited the SFO in Montevideo, Uruguay, and found them very receptive. In Montevideo, we established in 1995 the SFO National Fraternity of Uruguay only three years after we had set the process in motion among the scattered local Fraternities.

### *Ecuador*

In 1992, we were guests of the SFO National Minister at the Congress in Guayaquil. In Quito, I had a wonderful tour of this beautiful old colonial city and met the local SFO Fraternity in the splendid Convento de San Francisco. We even drove out to see the “Middle of the World”, built on the line of the Equator.

### *Peru*

In July 1992, I switched into Spanish and took off for Peru. I should have gone with Emanuela first to Bolivia, but the travel agent didn't give me enough time to obtain a visa for the necessary stay overnight in Rio de Janeiro. In Peru, I was whisked off to Cuzco by the OFM National Spiritual Assistant, who showed me the wonders of the former Inca empire and made sure that I saw Machupicchu, the abandoned Inca city high up in the Andes. In Lima, the conventos and churches, where our meetings were held, were ancient and magnificent. I suffered a bad night of hypothermia in Cuzco and wore every item of clothing, including a plastic raincoat, to cope with the violent shivers.

### *Chile*

At the end of May 1993, the SFO in Chile held their National Elective Chapter in Santiago. I stayed with our friars at the centuries-old Convento de San Francisco Alameda, which houses a famous national museum. The friars treated me to a memorable outing on 1 June. We left early for the hermitage of San Francisco del Totoral and continued along the central coast. We stopped at the Restaurante Sol del Pacifico, where we had a delicious meal of piscosauer (a lemon-flavoured drink), erizos (sea urchin), congrio fish, and a mixed salad accompanied by Chilean red wine. We continued our drive through Viña del Mar to Con-Con, where the Parish Priest grew the national flower, copihue. We capped the day with a visit to the Franciscan postulants in Valparaiso.

### *Guatemala*

In 1993, I flew to Guatemala where the SFO held their National Elective Chapter. We visited the colonial gem of Antigua Guatemala and the most famous shrine in Central America, the Black Christ at Esquipulas. Then, in *Panama* City, I met the friars and Secular

Franciscans before returning to Rome for Holy Saturday.

### *Venezuela*

Next stop in 1993, on my so-called “endless round of ceaseless pleasures”, was Caracas, Venezuela. I stayed with our friars in Cristo Rey, where you could hire a gunman for one U.S. dollar. That was no problem, but the hornets’ nests in the windows scared me mightily when I opened the louvers. Together with Emanuela De Nunzio, the SFO Minister General, I attended the National Elective Chapter of Venezuela. The friars gave me a thorough tour of Caracas before I returned to Rome on 27 October.

### *Brazil*

Only four days after returning from Poland in 1994, Emanuela, and I left for Rio de Janeiro, where we visited the SFO National Council of Brazil, and attended the National Elective Chapter, from 23 July till 3 August.

Rio was a violent place. In broad daylight and at night, we heard the shootouts between gangs of bandits to decide who would control the drug traffic. We spent half a day in a “favella”, a shanty town, where the SFO conducted a clinic. In the midst of appalling social conditions, the SFO in Brazil was perhaps the world’s best in all aspects, including the formation of the laity, cooperation within the Franciscan Family, and down-to-earth service to the most needy. Moving in and out of extreme situations as diverse as Russia and Brazil, we realized our limitations only too well, but what we could do, with God’s help, was worth doing. We felt the material and spiritual support of so many people who showed their practical concern for others less fortunate than themselves.

### *Dominican Republic*

I had only two weeks to move mountains in the SFO Office. On 11 March 1995, I accompanied Emanuela De Nunzio to attend the National Elective Chapters of the Dominican Republic and of Colombia in South America, on 14 March. In Santo Domingo, we admired the splendidly restored historical centre, full of vivid memories of Christopher Columbus and of “that English freebooter Francis Drake”, who had sacked the Spanish colony in 1586. It was interesting to hear about the local reputation of Sir Francis. History depends on who writes it, obviously.

### *Colombia*

In Bogotá in 1995, we visited the Museo de Oro, housing an acre of exquisitely worked Inca gold, also some magnificent Spanish Baroque colonial churches, and the national shrines of Monserrate and Chiquinquirá. The National Chapter was held in Tranquilandia, some distance from Bogotá, in a quiet mountain setting.

### *Bolivia*

In mid-July 1995, I spent a week in Bolivia, where the SFO held their National

Elective Chapter. The friars drove me to the Apostolic College, founded in 1794 in Tarata, from where the Spanish friars went out to far-flung stations in all directions. I watched a colorful procession following the statue decked with flowers, accompanied by a four-man brass band, firecrackers, and skyrockets. The hymn in Quechua matched the solemn pace, punctuated by pauses for prayer. It was a fully inculturated Christian devotion.

Very different was my other visit to a popular sanctuary in Cochabamba. The miraculous Virgin of Urkupiña blew my mind. Here, the people chipped off pieces of rock behind the shrine, requested what they needed, bought a toy model of it, and made an offering of it to the sanctuary. They took the rocks home, and, *hey, presto!*, they would have what they wanted! That place was booming. It made me realize how long it takes, hundreds of years, to evangelize a superstitious culture.

## **In Oceania 1986 - 1998**

### *Australia*

#### **First Home Visit**

In 1986, I had already spent three years in Rome, so I could take holidays in Australia, making Pastoral Visits to *Singapore* and *Malaysia* on the way to Sydney and, on the way back, visiting French-speaking West Africa, to *Togo, Ivory Coast*, and *Burkina Faso*. My Italian went “AWOL”, absent without leave.

#### **25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination 1988**

My Australian Province offers us three months' vacation on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination. I had deferred the vacation in 1988 to take in the National Elective Chapter of the SFO in Oceania, in February 1989. I turned up unexpectedly at some friends' homes and enjoyed their looks of disbelief. Our Lord must have had a lot of fun with his appearances after his resurrection!

I hadn't resided in Australia for fourteen years, so I stayed with the friars in Paddington and Edgecliff. I spent a lot of time with the Secular Franciscans before their National Chapter at Wahroonga. It was great to see my brothers and sisters. I stayed with Marge and celebrated my birthday on 14 February with Terry. I visited Gwen and John and made a lightning visit to Melbourne to see Auntie Wilma Brady and my cousin Betty Mahney.

#### **Second Home Visit**

In 1989, I took the two months holiday in my home Province of Australia-New Zealand-Singapore that is granted every three years after working overseas. I flew to Singapore on 13 December and met the SFO Regional Council and as many friends whom I could manage to meet in a few days. Arriving in Perth on 19 December, I thoroughly enjoyed my first visit to Western Australia. I celebrated Christmas with our friars in Midland, and New Year's Day with my brother Terry and Rosie in Albany, which they claimed to be the best place to live in Australia. Certainly, it's a scenic wonderland.

### **Third Home Visit**

On 4 January 1992, I reached Adelaide and stayed with our Maltese friars. The in-laws of my niece Jenny invited me to share their Ukrainian Orthodox Christmas Day. What a fabulous feast! Next stop was Melbourne on 8 January, where I caught up with the friars at St Paschal's College, my former House of Theology, but rebirthed as the Yarra Theological Union, Box Hill. Eleven days passed too quickly while I visited Mum's relatives. The warmth of their welcome made up for the coldest January on record. I reached my hometown, Sydney, on 19 January. After the necessary medical check-ups were attended to, I could enjoy the company of the friars at Edgecliff, Waverley, and Campbelltown. I spent some delightful days in Wollongong with my sister Margaret and Norman, her husband.

### **OFM Provincial Assembly and Chapter**

In 1992, I fitted in a visit to Australia. My Minister Provincial invited all the friars of the Province to attend the Provincial Assembly and Chapter, held at my old school, St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill. Of course, being in Rome, I wasn't expected to accept the invitation, but there it was, not to be missed! On my way, I visited the friars and Secular Franciscans in Jakarta, Jayapura, Aitape, and Port Moresby.

### **Fourth Home Visit**

On New Year's Day 1995, I arrived in Sydney and stayed with the friars in Edgecliff after an experience of "perfect joy." The reference is to the experience that St Francis called "perfect joy" when he made up a story of being refused entry to a friary. I had let the friars at Edgecliff know of the date and time of my flight's arrival in Sydney and had accepted their offer of hospitality. I reached Edgecliff friary at around 9.30 pm and rang the doorbell and rang again, and again. One friar left it to another to come down and let me in. I spent the entire night outside, crouched in a corner near the door.

After overdue appointments with my dentist, doctor, and eye-specialist, I still had time to visit the friars at Waverley and Campbelltown and to catch up with relatives and friends. I spent a most enjoyable, quiet week with my sisters, Margaret, and Gwen, in Wollongong, after making a lightning visit to our Auntie Wilma in Melbourne, who included Antarctica among her many worldwide tours. I was not trying to emulate her.

### **Fifth Home Visit**

I flew to Sydney on 5 January 1998 and stayed for two weeks with the friars at Edgecliff, then, after a brief visit to the friars and Poor Clares at Campbelltown, I joined my sister Margaret at Mt Ousley near Wollongong, and my other sister Gwen at Woonona, for another two weeks of a restful holiday.

I spent a few days with my cousin Peter Arentz on his hobby farm at Murrumbateman near Canberra. The kangaroos put on a show of jumping his fences. Peter took me to Adelong to see where our parents, grandparents, and great grandparents lived on the goldfields. They were blacksmiths rather than gold diggers, so there's no family fortune stashed away.

### *New Zealand*

It's amazing how people resume acquaintance from when we last met. That's how it was in New Zealand. On 22 January 1990, the Secular Franciscans picked me up at Auckland airport and set me down four hours later at Mangonui, in the north. Returning by bus, I stopped at Orewa for an hour with the SFO Fraternity, who put me on the ferry to Waiheke Island, where I sought out the Secular Franciscans in their fabulous hideaways. I was keen to meet Jenny, the "Queen Mudder", who designed and built a beautiful Franciscan haven out of mud bricks. I renewed acquaintance with many friends at St Francis Retreat House in Auckland.

### *Papua New Guinea*

In September 1992, on my way to the OFM Provincial Assembly and Chapter at Hunters Hill, I took the opportunity to visit the friars and Secular Franciscans in Papua New Guinea. From 28 April to 16 May 2003, I gave two three-day seminars, one in Aitape and the other in Port Moresby, mainly to Spiritual Assistants. Other friars and Sisters and Secular Franciscans attended as well. I dosed myself with antimalarial tablets before, during, and after, and had no trouble. The dosage was kept up for six weeks after leaving PNG. I enjoyed meeting three friars who had been fellow students of Theology at Box Hill. They were all experienced missionaries by then.

### *Tahiti*

"The social round ain't restful." After my fourth Home Visit in 1995, I was relieved to reach Papeete, where I spent ten days with the Franciscan Family - the Poor Clares, Franciscan Sisters and Secular Franciscans - but without friars. The SFO Fraternity was only four years old, but what a magnificent development. The Tahitians loaded me with necklaces of seashells and beautiful shirts, which I shared with the friars in Rome. I bade farewell to exotic Polynesia on my birthday, 14 February 1995, and had another birthday with the friars in Los Angeles, on my return to Rome.

## **CHAPTER ELEVEN: THE HOLY LAND**

### **Visits in the Custody of the Holy Land 1985 - 1994**

#### *Jerusalem*

In 1985, I spent my annual holiday of three weeks as a pilgrim in the Holy Land and commended to the Lord all Secular Franciscans and their Spiritual Assistants, together with my family and friends.

#### *Holy Land Custody*

From 14 August 1994, I spent six weeks in the Franciscan Custody of the Holy Land, the first week with the SFO in Lower *Egypt*, in Cairo, Alexandria, and Port Said, and the second week in *Syria*, in Damascus and Aleppo. I was surprised to find that these were big

modern cities, not out of “One Hundred and One Nights.” I travelled overland by sherut taxi to Amman in *Jordan* for only three days, then by the Allenby Bridge to *Jerusalem*. For two

weeks, I visited Bethlehem, Capharnaum, Nazareth, Ramleh, and Jaffa. A short flight from Tel Aviv brought me to *Cyprus*, then to *Rhodes*.

This race around the Middle East was long planned. The Custos of the Holy Land invited me three years previously to visit the Secular Franciscans and their friar Spiritual Assistants, and to make recommendations for the renewal of the SFO in the Custody. In the course of visiting the SFO, I saw also in Cairo, the Citadel of Saladin and the two magnificent mosques nearby; in Syria, the basilica of St Simon the Stylite; in Jordan, the Roman city of Jerash and the Nabatean “rose-red city” of Petra, “half as old as time”; in Jerusalem, the Holy Sepulchre and Gethsemane; in Rhodes, the Crusader’s fortress-city, betrayed by a disgruntled insider to the Ottoman Turks.

### *Tantur Ecumenical Institute*

In 1998, I was granted a sabbatical year after working for fourteen years in the OFM General Curia in Rome, in the service of the Secular Franciscan Order. I moved out of the General Curia on 11 January to begin a course on 13 January at the Tantur Ecumenical Institute, Hebron Road, Jerusalem, Israel.

I had problems in both sending and receiving mail. The first packet readdressed to me from the SFO Office in Rome on 18 January was lost. I had provided the SFO Office with the street address of Tantur, the only address I knew, but the Israel Post delivered mail only to the post box address of Tantur and blithely ignored mail addressed to the street address. Some other mail from Rome was returned to the sender. I could only guess who may have written. I felt deeply this rupture of contact with friends, and I feared that they thought I had forgotten them.

I flew into Tel Aviv on the very evening when Jerusalem was cut off by snow. My taxi reached within five miles of Jerusalem but had to turn back to Tel Aviv, where I booked into a hotel after midnight. The next evening, I arrived at Tantur, near Bethlehem, on the border of the occupied West Bank. The Palestinians frequently detoured through the property to avoid ill treatment by the Israeli Police at the checkpoint.

### *Continuing Education Program*

The course at Tantur ran for three months, until Holy Thursday. About thirty of us from a dozen countries, mainly Catholic priests and religious, completed the Continuing Education Program. There were five Australians, including a married Catholic priest and his wife from Manjimup, Western Australia. Four Ministers with their families were in our group but usually there would be more of other Christian denominations attending. Probably, the strong rumours in January, of war with Iraq, kept a number of people and families away.

As well as daily conferences on Sacred Scripture, Judaism, and Islam, we attended

evening services in Christian Unity Week, and a week-long international conference on Palestinian Liberation Theology at Bethlehem University. We went on many excursions to historical and archeological sites. I enjoyed them all.

### ***St Saviour's Monastery***

After Tantur, I transferred on Holy Thursday to St Saviour's Monastery, where I stayed till June. With the large community of friars from there, I attended the Easter Triduum in the Holy Sepulchre. It was quite an endurance test: eight hours on Good Friday and ten hours on Holy Saturday-Easter Sunday. No regrets, once in a lifetime!

I missed the facilities of an office and imposed on the Custody's Secretariat when I needed help. For email, I found a friar who lent me his laptop. Nothing like the mendicant life! Five months of my sabbatical year had passed already. I had benefitted by the change of pace and by a new set of interests. I concentrated on getting rid of allergic bronchitis that affected many people that year. I was almost free of it after six months!

The community of over ninety friars in St Saviour's Monastery included the Custody of the Holy Land's thirty-three Theology students and thirteen friars in the Infirmary.

### ***Studium Biblicum Franciscanum (SBF)***

While still lodging at St Saviour's Monastery, I followed several courses after Easter, mainly at the Franciscan Studium Biblicum, also known as the SBF or "The Flagellation", in Via Dolorosa, Jerusalem. I gained access to the Library and continued my reading program after the Tantur Ecumenical Institute. I joined an SBF field trip to the Negev desert and enjoyed Fr Ravanelli's tour of three excavated ancient cities: Shivta, Nizzara, and Avedat.

Next to "The Flagellation" was the Ecce Homo Institute that ran courses of ongoing formation. One of the students who were taking a course until the end of May was Sr Celine Low IJ, from Singapore, who had been a fellow student at the EAPI in Manila.

### ***Bethphage***

I spent some restful days with American Brother Roger Petras OFM while he was living alone at Bethphage. Only a few years previously, a friar was murdered when alone in that house, but that didn't seem to worry Br Roger.

### ***Gethsemane***

Joe Hamilton, from Australia, was helping at Gethsemane at the time. I had lunch with the Community, and Joe entertained us without a break. The eight-centuries-old olive trees were "full of sap, still green."

### ***Latroun***

With Secular Franciscan friends from Germany, I visited the Benedictine Monastery at Latroun, the site of a momentous battle in 1948. The Israelis were celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their victory, while the Palestinians mourned "The Disaster."

### *Mount of Olives*

On Ascension Thursday, the entire Community of St Saviour's Monastery took buses to the Mount of Olives, the traditional site of the Lord's Ascension. On these special occasions, the liturgy was sung in Latin, just as it was in my student days. Regretfully, few friars understand Latin these days. I love the Latin liturgy, but I fully support the adoption of the liturgy in the vernacular and have celebrated Mass in five languages.

The Custodial Chapter was held at St Saviour's Monastery in June, so I had to move out to make space for the capitulars. I thanked the Community for their hospitality and friendship during my stay with them.

### *Ein Karem*

On 15 June, I transferred to St John's Convent, Ein Karem, in the hill country of Jerusalem. It was the Custody of the Holy Land's Noviciate with fifteen Novices present at the time. I stayed at Ein Karem, coming, and going, till 4 December. Ein Karem was the traditional location for celebrating the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary to her cousin St Elizabeth. A group of Irish friars also came to stay at Ein Karem, so I had company, although I lived with the resident friars and communicated with them in Italian. Thieves broke into our rooms in the Visitors' accommodation and stole money. Fortunately, I had hidden my valuables in an obscure little drawer that escaped their attention.

### *Bavaria*

While still officially residing at Ein Karem, I left at the end of June and flew to Munich on a free ticket earned from United Airlines and received just in the nick of time. My travel agent in Rome had to work overtime.

What a carry-on that was! From 1 July to 15 August, I tried to learn German in a course conducted by the Bavarian friars at Füssen, in the land of lakes near King Ludwig's fantastic castle, Schloss Neuschwanstein. As I didn't have much German grammar or vocabulary to start with, the course was very hard, but at the end I was generously awarded a Certificate that proved that I had learnt something at least. Tragically, I lost my precious workbook in the overhead storage compartment of the plane to Rome when the book spilled out of a paper bag. Without it, I couldn't make progress in learning German.

### *Rhodes*

In mid-August, I took the ferry to the Greek island of Rhodes, in the Custody of the Holy Land, and looked after St Francis Church, giving the resident friar a break on Mount Tabor. The friars supplied Mass also for the tourists on the island of Kos, so I did that, too. I visited the Greek island of Patmos, and the cave where St John wrote the Apocalypse.

### *Turkey*

Modern Turkey used to be part of ancient Greece, then it became the Roman Province of Asia. St Paul's Letters are full of references to that region, so it was well worth the visit. Rhodes was only forty-five minutes by hydrofoil from Marmaris in Turkey. I joined a group of Italian priests for two weeks in October and studied the cities of the Apocalypse in the

south of Turkey. The ruins of cities such as Ephesus, Pergamon, Sardis, Miletus, and dozens of others, were awe-inspiring. Just one example: at Pergamon, I saw the base of all that remained of the famous Altar. A German engineer had collected all the fragments and transported them to Berlin, where Italian restorers meticulously reassembled them in the Pergamon Museum, which I had seen in my visit to East Germany.

### ***Ongoing Formation***

Having returned to Ein Karem, I attended a Franciscan Ongoing Formation Course conducted by the OFM General Curia, from 30 October until 4 December. There were two sessions, one in English and the other in Italian. I took advantage of attending both.

### ***Provincial Chapter 1998***

My Franciscan Province of Australia - New Zealand held its Chapter from 4 to 9 October 1998. The newly-elected Provincial Minister and his counsellors, the Definitory, worked on our appointments, which were announced in December.

### ***A life-changing decision***

Near the end of my sabbatical year, I received a phone call from my Provincial Minister in Sydney. He confirmed that I was expected to take up my appointment as a Confessor in the Basilica of St John Lateran in Rome. Yes, this had been an unofficial understanding during my last year in the OFM General Curia in Rome. I had even accepted the invitation of the community of Confessors at the Lateran to dine with them informally once.

But something had just happened that radically changed my mind. I had received the Report of the General Visitor to the Australian Province that alarmed me. It showed that I was unaware of the decline in the number of able-bodied friars due to ageing and to the lack of vocations. After intense soul-searching, I decided to return to the Province to add one more friar to the workload. So, when I received the phone call from my Provincial Minister, I told him that I wanted to return to Australia and to provide an extra able body for the Province.

My Provincial Minister was aghast. The Confessors had been pestering him to hasten my appointment to the Lateran as a Confessor in the English language. He would speak to the Minister General.

I left Ein Karem on 4 December, flew to Rome, and returned to the General Curia, as was expected.

I didn't know at that time, that when the Minister General heard of my request to return to Australia, he asked my Provincial Minister to send another friar to replace me as Confessor at the Lateran.

If I had known it, I would have asked to go to the Lateran as was first planned, because I had not achieved my aim to provide an extra man for the Province. Instead, Fr Christopher Gardiner OFM, my fellow Novice, moved to Rome and I returned to Australia.

### *Knee drill*

While I accompanied the Irish friars at Ein Karem around the many shrines where we celebrated Mass, I had carried a heavy suitcase of Hymn Books and developed an inguinal hernia. As soon as I arrived at our General Curia in Rome, I saw a doctor at Villa Luisa hospital at the entrance to our street, Via Santa Maria Mediatrice, off the Via Aurelia. The doctor found two hernias, another in the umbilicus, that had been there apparently since my birth. I had the operations on 8 December and returned to the Curia after two days. I convalesced until 22 December and packed my belongings on my knees for my return to Sydney.