



*Lift Up  
Your  
Hearts*

*An Autobiography  
Carl Schafer OFM*

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*Part Three*

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## CHAPTER TWELVE: CAMPBELLTOWN 1999 – 2005

### Re-entry to Australia

I flew from Rome to Singapore, where I stayed for Christmas. I arrived in Sydney on 31 December 1999 and a friar drove me directly to Campbelltown, an hour's drive. Our Maryfields Friary is a residence, not a parish centre, but beautifully situated in the countryside. When I came there to enter the Noviciate in 1956, we really were out in the country. The main street of Campbelltown five miles away looked like the stage setting for a Wild West movie.

Living at Maryfields, Campbelltown, I focused my life on being a Franciscan, as it had been since I joined the Order there as a Novice. I had come full-circle. It was a nostalgic experience to return to the place where I had entered the Order. Whatever -Whoever – possessed me to take such a huge step that determined the rest of my life? I thanked God that the Lord acted so strongly in me at the time and that Jesus had kept me in my vocation.

Living here permanently was different from when I had a month of holidays every three years and raced around to see the friars and my family and friends. In the friary at Campbelltown, I had to wait for six weeks before I could move into a bedroom permanently and set up an office after other friars had moved out. I hadn't unpacked, except the luggage that I had carried with me on the plane.

My appointment was connected with our chaplaincy to the Poor Clares and to building up our friars' community. Eight friars belonged to the community but four were transient. I, too, would be transient, travelling often to Sydney for various meetings and commitments.

I could travel to and from Sydney by train and bus for only a dollar a day on my Senior's Card for over sixty-year-olds. One could relax, read, and even study in our electric trains. The Province made a car available, but I hadn't driven for fifteen years, and I didn't care to drive in the city of Sydney just yet. This touches on the difficulties that I experienced in returning to live permanently in Australia after twenty-four years of living overseas - in Singapore, New Zealand, and Rome.

After three months, I was still settling in, not only to a bedroom and an office in Maryfields friary but also to life "back home." I spent time in registering myself in civil life: for insurance, banking, voting, and driving; for a Seniors card that gave traveling concessions; for BP Plus petrol; for NRMA service to the car; for free travel on the M5 motorway; for Qantas Frequent Flying; registration as a marriage celebrant; membership at the Public Library; application for access to Medicare and Medibank Private. All this and more, just to fit into Australia again.

I had been away for a long time. Australian society, and church society too, had become more oriented towards secular life than it had been when I left. So, re-entry into living in Australia was a significant culture shock. I wasn't prepared for it.

In November 1999, we voted against a Republic in Australia. The NO vote was decisive, not because all the NO-voters wanted to maintain the British Monarch of Australia, but because they rejected the model of a republic proposed by our politicians and they wanted to have more say in electing Australia's Head of State. Our politicians were out of touch and postponed the debate.

Church life had its own requirements: meeting the Bishop and receiving Faculties for Wollongong Diocese; supplying the Eucharist and Reconciliation in nearby parishes; attending clergy meetings with the Bishop and the Deanery of priests in Hume; joining the Campbelltown Catholic Club.

Franciscan life gained momentum. Our Provincial Minister appointed me as Vicar of Maryfields community of friars and I conducted a Recollection Day for them. I accompanied our Samoan student friar through his Franciscan Reading Course once a week for four months. Celebrating daily Mass with a short homily for the Poor Clares was a priority.

Although Campbelltown is 50 km out of Sydney, I managed to catch up with some friends of twenty-five years ago, from Naval Reserve days and from the SFO. One couple was the first I had married as a newly-ordained priest. Another young Aussie couple whom I had married last year in Rhodes, Greece, invited me to Bronte for a day with their friends. My two sisters, Marge, and Gwen, and also some cousins lived in Wollongong, only forty-five minutes' drive from Campbelltown.

I enjoyed also supplying Mass in Italian on two Sundays a month for three months at St Brigid's Church, Marrickville. While their chaplain was on leave in Italy in 2003, I heard three hours of Confessions on Good Friday evening, when a thousand Italians celebrated their traditional pageant in grand style, with Roman Legionaries in full armour, proud Carabinieri in plumed cocked hats, and plebs draped in a toga. Jesus was there, looking thoroughly forlorn. I blessed the home of an Italian couple in Earlwood, and celebrated Mass at the Pauline Fathers' Shrine, Penrose Park, where I blessed the statue of Our Lady of Sinopoli. I had little opportunity to speak Italian, so I enjoyed taking Holy Communion every second week to a ninety-year-old lady in Camden, who spoke in the Calabrian dialect.

I had that rare opportunity to practise Spanish when I took on celebrating the Mass for Hispanics at Mary Immaculate Church, Eagle Vale, on three Sundays at 7 p.m., while their regular chaplain, Fr John Pickering OFM of our Maryfields community, was on holidays in 2019.

“Spring is here, the grass is riz. I wonder where the birdies is.” Our kitchen window looked onto a stretch of lawn and garden, and we could view at close range an assortment of native birds. Some sulphur-crested white cockatoos once lined up on the windowsill and looked in at us.

## **SFO National Spiritual Assistant**

Spiritual assistance to the SFO in Oceania was my major commitment. Our Provincial Minister delegated me as Provincial Spiritual Assistant to the SFO, and OFM National Spiritual Assistant, one of three National Spiritual Assistants to the SFO National Fraternity of Oceania. My Province provided me with a car. I used an overnight Visitor's Room in Paddington Friary, at a short walk from the National Office of the SFO, which was handy after late-night meetings. My main job, as SFO National Spiritual Assistant, was the hardest to set in motion. I gradually contacted the other National Spiritual Assistants and the Secular Franciscans. The three National Assistants (OFM, OFM Capuchin, and OFM Conventual) had not worked as a Conference before. Finding other friars to be Spiritual Assistants was our biggest task. I prayed that I would continue to be successful in finding OFM Spiritual Assistants. So far, we had a

local, a regional, and a national Spiritual Assistant in our OFM Campbelltown Fraternity.

I met the NSW Regional Executive at their first meeting in 1999 and introduced their new Regional Spiritual Assistant, Fr Allan. The Oceania National Council held their annual meeting in Perth, Western Australia, in February 1999. Perth is 3,200 kilometers from Sydney, about four hours by jet. I thought too soon that I had stopped traveling!

In February, I witnessed elections in the Campbelltown Fraternity and introduced their new Local Spiritual Assistant. The widely dispersed members spent a full day together once a month, beginning with the Sunday Mass at Bethlehem Monastery, followed by initial formation, lunch, ongoing formation in the general meeting, and afternoon tea, then the meeting of the Fraternity Council.

The SFO in 1999 held a National Formation Gathering at Kensington. The “house mother” of our accommodation turned out to be the girl I used to go Irish dancing with. Joan reminded me that when she practised the bagpipes over the street from us at North Parramatta, I turned the hose in her direction. Yes, I remembered that very well and was still unrepentant.

The pace of commitments increased. The SFO National Council of Oceania met in Auckland, New Zealand, in March, so I took my annual holidays afterwards and visited five local Fraternities, including Waiheke Island. This was one of my favourite spots in the entire world, but hordes of tourists had discovered it since the days when it was a little-known paradise.

In April, I made a pastoral visit to the SFO Regional Fraternity of South Australia and included a weekend retreat for them at Aquinas College in Adelaide. I took a quick bus ride to see my brother Terry and Rosie at Victor Harbor, which they chose as the finest place to live in Australia after they had circumnavigated the continent by car.

In June, with National Minister Tod Walker, I made a combined pastoral and fraternal visit to the SFO in Singapore and in Sabah, East Malaysia. The Secular Franciscans everywhere overwhelmed us with their hospitality, so I ended up looking like a Friar Tuck honey pot. In July, I gave a Regional Retreat Weekend to the SFO in Brisbane.

Early in November 2000, the SFO National Minister and I visited the SFO in Tasmania and conducted the canonical establishment of a new local Fraternity at Smithton and the elections of the Regional Executive. The next weekend found me in Port Macquarie conducting a retreat for the three SFO Fraternities of the mid-north coast of NSW. After the Retreat, I visited a friend whom I grew up with when we were aged from 8 to 16. He was Terry Curley who went on to be one of Australia’s famous rugby union players.

We held the long-prepared Seminar for the OFM Spiritual Assistants to the SFO in Australia held in 2002, at Newman College, University of NSW, Kensington. Our Provincial Minister had convened the Seminar for the thirteen OFM friar Assistants of our Province as part of our ongoing formation.

In April 2003, I helped to conduct a second Seminar at Chevalier Resource Centre, Kensington, for twenty-one Spiritual Assistants to the SFO, not only OFM friars but also OFM Capuchin and Conventual Spiritual Assistants in Australia.

## **The Secular Franciscan Order**

I took on the task of local Spiritual Assistant to an enthusiastic and promising Korean group of thirteen women and one man who met monthly at the Korean Church at Silverwater. They started meeting there in November 2000, but I joined them in February 2001. Their leader was a woman professed in the West Pymble Fraternity in 1995. Others joined and were all professed into West Pymble Fraternity. Michael, the local Minister, and I attended their monthly meetings and relied on an Interpreter. With the demise of most Australian elderly members of West Pymble Fraternity, the Koreans and the remnant Australians had transferred their meetings to Silverwater.

In December, the Korean Fraternity celebrated three admissions and one profession, but at Waitara, after the Korean priest in charge of the Silverwater Centre did not want a non-Korean attending. This embarrassed the Korean Secular Franciscans so much that we met in Waitara until that priest returned to his diocese in Korea. After that, we happily returned to the Korean Centre in Silverwater.

A schoolmate, whom I hadn't seen since he left St Joseph's at Hunters Hill in 1952, paid my ticket to Leeton, where I enjoyed his hospitality and attended the meeting of the SFO local Fraternity in 2001. George was a Motor Neurone victim who heroically counted his two minders as his blessings. Another week later, in Launceston, the SFO National Minister and I conducted a Fraternal and Pastoral Visit to the Regional Fraternity of Tasmania, before I attended the Provincial Assembly of all our friars in Melbourne. Our Minister General, Giacomo Bini OFM, and two General Definitors, his counsellors, had come from Rome to meet us.

In June 2001, I travelled the length of our Province, east to Auckland, New Zealand, then west to Perth, Western Australia. My main commitments in Auckland were a two-day seminar on the SFO for our OFM and the Capuchin friars and, two weeks later, a two-day Regional Elective Chapter of the SFO in New Zealand. I thoroughly enjoyed catching up with old friends, including the men and their wives of the Serra Club, which I had helped to initiate over twenty years previously. The Secular Franciscans in Western Australia held their Regional Elective Chapter early in July. I attended the Chapter as the official witness from the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants.

In August 2001, I stayed with the FMM Franciscan Missionaries of Mary, in Holland Road, Singapore, and accompanied the National Visitor at the Regional Elective Chapter of Singapore-East Malaysia. The Lord has gifted me to find all beds comfortable and all foods delicious. The durian fruit was a special treat. When God grants you the gifts that you need to function properly, spiritual writers call this "the grace of state."

The Secular Franciscans kept me hopping in 2002, with meetings of the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants at Kellyville, and the National Executive meetings at Rozelle. We were working on the revision of the International, National, and Regional Statutes. That was my excuse for addled brains, forgetfulness, and sleepwalking in a sleep apnea mask.

In 2004, the SFO National Fraternity of Oceania held their Elective Chapter at Sancta Sophia College, University of Sydney. The Chapter elected Helen Britton as National Minister. In April, I gave a retreat to the Secular Franciscans of the Regional Fraternity of South Australia, at St Paul's Retreat, Glen Osmond in Adelaide, and added a Pastoral Visit to

the Regional Council at Aquinas College. I stayed with the Capuchin friars at Newton, who always made me most welcome on my rare visits to Adelaide.

In October 2004, the Vocation Promotion Committee held our last meeting at the National Minister's home when we completed our work on the Manual for Promotion of the SFO. In November, as the friar witness, I attended the Elective Chapter of the NSW Regional Fraternity at Kellyville, and the Regional Day, also at Kellyville.

Toronto's lively SFO Fraternity celebrated their 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in Newcastle Cathedral at the end of January 2005. I drove up to share their joy.

I spoke about St Francis and the Secular Franciscan Order in the Slovenian church at Merrylands in 2005. The friar priest was assisting a group of laity to form a local Secular Franciscan Fraternity. Fortunately, they all spoke English. Concord Fraternity sponsored them. The National Minister, Tod, and I attended their monthly meetings. When Fr Philip Rupnik OFM, their Spiritual Assistant, returned to Slovenia, he left the vacancy to me.

I gave a Day of Recollection to the Secular Franciscan Fraternity in Port Macquarie in October 2005, and a weekend Retreat in Goulburn to the Canberra Fraternity in November.

Early in December, I flew to Brisbane to attend a five-day Formation Conference for Junior Friars and spoke about the Secular Franciscan Order as my contribution to post-Noviciate formation. Three junior friars attended and a sizable number of senior friars as well, so that was worth the effort.

I addressed the Secular Franciscans in Singapore in March 2003 and made the Pastoral Visit to the four local Fraternities in Sabah, East Malaysia. After Easter, I gave two three-day Seminars for Spiritual Assistants in Papua New Guinea, one in Aitape, and the other in Port Moresby. Other friars and Sisters and Secular Franciscans attended as well. I enjoyed meeting three friars from our noviciate and student days, all experienced missionaries. I dosed myself with anti-malarial tablets before, during, and after visiting PNG, and stayed safe.

I extracted my feet from concrete in November 2003 and attended the Meeting of Spiritual Assistants to the SFO in Asia and Oceania, in Manila, in the Philippines. Mainly National Spiritual Assistants from all the countries of Asia participated in this first meeting of its kind. The four General Spiritual Assistants from Rome attended and gave valuable presentations.

On the first Friday of the month, I drove to St Johns Park to meet the Croatian Franciscan Youth (FRAMA). Fr Gracian OFM initiated the group in 2004, then Fr Marijan OFM assisted them with support from me. They met once a week. The SFO in Australia had tried to establish Franciscan Youth groups, but without lasting success. We prayed earnestly to succeed with this group. They went off in high spirits to attend World Youth Day in Cologne, in 2005.

## **MARYFIELDS**

### **The Stations of the Cross**

The Franciscans erected the Stations of the Cross in the fields of Maryfields in 1936.



Each Station was represented by a group of lifelike statues. The Way of the Cross used to attract as many as 37,000 people on Good Friday before the Second Vatican Council's revision of the Holy Week Liturgy. The Campbelltown City Council declared the Stations a Heritage item after we had them renovated. I had fond dreams about the revival of Good Friday at Maryfields.

In 2000, for the first time, we introduced the Way of the Cross at Maryfields on the five Sundays of Lent and on Palm Sunday at 3 p.m., so as not to compete with the Good Friday liturgy in the parishes. We attracted up to 150 participants.

Also, in anticipation of All Souls Day, we held the Way of the Cross for the Faithful Departed. It was too windy to light the votive candles at the Calvary Station, so we brought them back to our friary chapel to light them there. Not a clever idea. The smoke detectors went crazy, and I rushed into the chapel to find a sizeable fire. I picked up the tray and carried it outside and ended up with severely burnt thumbs and four fingers that needed daily dressing for two weeks. As a result, I've lost my fingerprints and can't turn pages easily.

We encouraged groups to make the Way of the Cross at other times as well, including a large Italian group, a crowd of Croatian young people, and, on Good Friday morning, the Campbelltown parish and the Hispanics of Wollongong Diocese.

Groups of Filipinos and Italians before Holy Week, of Tongans and Koreans on Palm Sunday, and four busloads of pupils from John Therry High School, Rosemeadow, on Holy Thursday, conducted their own Way of the Cross during Lent. Our Novice, Joshua, led a gathering of five hundred on Good Friday's Way of the Cross. On Wednesday of Holy Week, the local radio station interviewed me about the origins of the Way of the Cross devotion and about the Stations of the Cross at Maryfields.

Campbelltown's Visitor Information Centre occasionally brought a busload of tourists to visit the Stations, not as a spiritual exercise but as a historical tour. We presented the history of the Way of the Cross and explained our set of Stations. We conducted one tour, "In the Footsteps of Fr Therry," the pioneer priest. The Campbelltown City Council relocated his brick cottage near the Poor Clare Monastery.

### *Commitments Outside Maryfields*

Retreats and reunions filled November and December 1999, as though we had to do everything before the Y2K scare threatened to wreck everything when we would attempt to insert into our laptops the date on 1 January 2000. Nothing went wrong. Just a big hoax.

I never thought we'd be an endangered species. In 2002, we were down to four friars at Maryfields, and I was the second youngest. I could hardly wait for my 65<sup>th</sup> Birthday Anniversary, to collect my Age Pension and two free return tickets a year on NSW Rail, to anywhere in New South Wales. Centrelink were confused by my papers and wanted to know what ship I came on.

Life "down on the farm" in 2002 couldn't compare with the delightful chaos of Rome, but it did have variety, "the spice of life". I thoroughly enjoyed a get together of former friars and their wives at Minto, when men of my own vintage were present. We found it challenging to recognize one another. Fr Paschal, our Chinese friar, invited us to the celebration of his 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination, when six hundred guests sat down to a ten-

course banquet in the Haymarket. Add a house blessing for an Italian family, a visit from two General Definitors (counsellors of the Minister General) and a visit from a couple of Slovene Secular Franciscans. My life was “an endless round of ceaseless pleasures!”

We friars enjoyed going out to nine parishes in south-west Sydney, where we played a little game: “Spot the Aussie.” Asians filled the seats vacated by the Anglo-Celts.

I celebrated Mass at Greenacre in 2001, where vandals had firebombed the church earlier. There had been a spate of firebombed churches in the western suburbs of Sydney. But life was not all bombs, murder, and requiems. Also in 2001, Anglican Frencham School at Mittagong wanted a full-scale “Franciscan Blessing” at their big Pet Fair. I had habit and sandals and obliged.

Wollongong Diocese celebrated the magnificent installation of our new bishop, Peter Ingham, in the city’s Entertainment Centre, on 25 July 2002. I had known the Bishop as a friend since we were newly ordained priests in 1963. I had been celebrating Sunday Mass in his far-flung parishes: Mittagong, Hoxton Park, and Bundanoon.

A kind soul asked me, “How do you occupy yourself, now that you’re retired?” Well, I didn’t know that I was retired, and I had no problem in finding things to do. The baptism of a cousin’s grandson, the wedding of new acquaintances, and the funeral of a Marist Brother, set me up as a regular HMD practitioner: Hatch, Match, and Dispatch.

We four oldies had loads of commitments outside the Friary. Many of these commitments were the same each year. The parish priests called out all four of us to help with the Second Rite of Reconciliation in nearby parishes before Easter. We were involved, too, in the Holy Week liturgies, where there were large attendances. If they all came to Mass on Sundays, we would need to double the size of our churches.

### *Weddings*

After my return to Australia, I found one thing about marriages that struck me as strange. Complete strangers contacted me unexpectedly, to prepare them for their marriage and to officiate at the wedding. I expected that they would ask a priest relative or friend, or their parish priest, but many of them did not go to Mass or did not know any priest. Besides, some parish priests didn’t get involved in the marriage of anyone who was not a parishioner. I soon took on an apostolate to these poor sheep without a shepherd, who asked me to marry them in the vacant Mater Dei chapel, at Cobbitty in Camden parish. There alone, I averaged one marriage a month.

Preparing couples for marriage and officiating at weddings became a major occupation. Filling in papers for Church and Government, running couples and their attendants through rehearsals, editing marriage booklets, and officiating at their marriage, kept me busy. Church weddings seemed to be in vogue but often without Nuptial Mass. What surprised me was that the couples, when asked to choose their own Scripture readings, chose the ones that vigorously rejected divorce. It just went to show that, on the big day, they definitely wanted their marriage to last “forever.” My cousin Kylie was married to her Michael in St John’s College Chapel, Sydney University, in October 2000. In November, I had a wedding at St Paul’s Church, Camden.

I had up to seven brides lined up for their big day, including Heidi, granddaughter of my sister Margaret, in 2002. Heidi arranged a donation *for me*. More often than not, the officiating priest received nothing. Friends told me to spell it out, at least to cover my expenses.

In February 2004, I officiated at my third wedding in St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, a beautiful setting for a wedding. The only hitch was the drive from Campbelltown, not only for the wedding, but also for the rehearsal a day or so before, but it meant so much for the couples.

It was a nostalgic weekend in the Blue Mountains when I officiated at a wedding in St Bonaventure's Church, Leura, at the end of November 2004. I stayed overnight in the OFM Province's holiday cottage at Katoomba and celebrated Mass at St Canice's Church, where I had been an altar server for four years as a boy.

On a happy occasion, I officiated at a wedding in the little chapel among the vineyards at Lovedale in the Hunter Valley, in 2005. I had married the parents of the bride thirty years previously.

My cousin Trish and her Tony renewed their marriage commitment in a Marriage Reaffirmation Ceremony in May 2005, at St Brigid's Church, Marrickville, where I had married them forty years previously. Their grandchildren accompanied them up the aisle. This ceremony moved me more than the original marriage ritual. Their three children hosted the Reception at their daughter's home in Lilyfield.

### ***Baptisms***

Baptisms came, five at a time, at Hoxton Park. I was on call for Anointing the Sick at Campbelltown and Camden Hospitals. The last resulted in a funeral in the historic Appin church.

On Anzac Day 2004, I baptized twins, Vittorio Emanuele and Nicodemo Rocco Lopresti, in St Gregory's College Chapel, Campbelltown. It was a full-blown Italian event with six sponsors, a hundred and fifty guests, and a banquet that went on for four hours. I thought it was over when they served Cappuccino, if that was your choice of coffee, after two hours, but then they served the main courses. I couldn't cope, so I walked around to meet the guests and joined in for sweets at the very end of the line. So, that was My Big Fat Italian Baptism. Regretfully, only a month later, I officiated at the funeral of the twins' grandfather, Francesco (Frank) Lopresti, in the same College Chapel. The funeral cortege made the long trek to the family vault at Frenchs Forest.

It was the season for baptisms of the grandchildren of my cousins. I had married their grandparents and their parents. I marveled at the passing of the years. It didn't take long to become a Great Granduncle. On 5 March 2006, I baptized my great grandnephew in Queanbeyan. I couldn't believe that my sister Margaret was a great grandmother!

## THE NOVICIATE REVIVED

### *First year 2003*

At the end of July 2002, our community received an important visit from Fr Steve, our Provincial Minister, who told us to expect five Novices, all Singaporeans, in January 2003. Fr Theophane, our Guardian, would also be their Novice Director. I would be their Assistant Novice Director and would continue to be the National Spiritual Assistant to the SFO in Oceania. Fr John and Fr Campion would also give conferences to the Novices. We began in earnest to plan for the arrival of the Novices in five months' time. Four Singaporeans arrived after Christmas, on 28 December 2002.

We received our four candidates from Singapore into the Noviciate in our Maryfields community, on 3 January 2003. William, Justin, Derrick, and Colin, aged 28 to 38, settled in very well. I set about enjoying my second noviciate as Assistant Novice Director and enjoyed the luxury of set times for the Eucharist, Divine Office, Meditation, and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, not to mention delicious Chinese cuisine prepared by the Novices. We celebrated Chinese New Year on 2 February. No fear of their becoming Australian. We went Chinese.

Until Easter, I gave them a course in the liturgy of Holy Week, then allotted their assignments to be presented by PowerPoint. They were wizards on computers and their presentations were excellent, technically, and spiritually. They discovered the delights of vegetable gardening for the first time, and produced bumper crops of silver beet, cabbages, cauliflowers, beans, and pumpkins, and what else? They were bracing themselves for a Campbelltown winter.

Another friar from Singapore, Brother Rowland, joined the Novices and made a month's retreat in preparation for professing Solemn Vows. Since he was deaf and speech-impaired, they communicated with him in sign language, so Rowland didn't miss a trick.

In the morning of the five Thursdays of July, I spent an hour and a half with the Novices, explaining the Franciscan Charism, Vocation, and Family. This was their introduction to the universal Franciscan Family, a huge conglomerate of religious Orders of Franciscan friars and Poor Clare nuns, and hundreds of religious Congregations of Franciscan Sisters and of Brothers, as well as thousands of local Fraternities of Secular Franciscans, and other Franciscan lay Associations. St Francis certainly started something.

Over two months, I navigated a very steep learning curve, while Justin, our wizard Information Technology (IT) Novice, tutored me in creating my own web site. I called it "SFO FILES" because I intended it for the information of the Spiritual Assistants to the SFO. Its current address is: <http://sfo.franciscans.org.au>

As a farewell treat for the Novices, I accompanied them on 31 December to meet my Singaporean friends who resided at Kirribilli and had a superb view of the fireworks on the Sydney Harbour Bridge. We enjoyed a spectacular evening. The Bridge was in our view lengthwise to the right side. The Overseas Terminal and Circular Quay were directly in front of us. The Opera House was to the left. Later, my friends built their home in Longueville, which I blessed. I confirmed Su-Lin on that occasion. I had baptized her and her children in Singapore thirty years previously.

On 5 December, our four Novices flew the coop and winged their way home to Singapore. They were due for profession the next day in the OFM Custody of Singapore and Malaysia, which was still a part of our Province of Australia. People still asked about them. They stole hearts. They certainly enlivened Maryfields Friary in 2003 and kept us on our best behaviour.

Then, we oldies could relax until next year's novices arrived at the end of January.

### *Second year 2004*

We were four friar priests in the Maryfields community. Each of us participated in the Noviciate program and had other commitments outside the friary. Our only Novice, Joshua, arrived on 28 January. Joshua was born and educated in China, but his family had settled in Melbourne six years previously. He was an Australian citizen and belonged to our Province. Joshua made an earnest effort to improve his accent in speaking English and was successful also in writing the language. He created a beautiful PowerPoint presentation for Holy Week. While the Novice Director Fr Theophane was away on holidays, then on retreat, I accompanied Joshua to *Kairos*, a well-organized program over two months each year, conducted at Epping for novices of all religious institutes. On five Wednesdays, I gave Joshua my course on the Franciscan Family.

Our Novice took part in all the activities of Maryfields Friary, including house chapters and days of recollection. He attended with us a Clergy Day in January and a Day for Religious in February, which our Bishop Ingham hosted.

### *Third year 2005*

My third year as Assistant Novice Director was off to a flying start. Two candidates, Leonel from Timor-Leste, and Joseph from Singapore arrived on 27 and 28 December 2004. We received them as Novices on the last day of the year. Our earlier Novice, Joshua, professed his vows at Box Hill, Victoria, in February. Life in the Noviciate was never dull. Daily Masses at the Friary, or at Bethlehem Monastery with the Poor Clares, or at St Gregory's College with the Marist Brothers, plus weekend Masses in local parishes, provided variety.

Fr Vicente Kunrath OFM, Regional Guardian of the friars in Timor-Leste, visited his Novice, Leonel, for a week in August. We were full of questions, which he readily answered, given the troubled recent history of Timor Leste.

At the same time, I was giving a month's course on the Franciscan Family to our Postulant, Harry, a Hong Kong-born New Zealander, who lived with our friars at Minto.

Ash Wednesday in 2005 fell on Chinese New Year. No problem. The Singaporeans moved the Ashes to Friday. Joseph, our Novice, heartily approved. The Cantonese, "Gong hei fat choy" means, not "Happy New Year," but, "I hope you get rich."

Leonel decided to return to Timor-Leste. Our other Novice, Joseph, after giving the religious life a generous try, left the Noviciate a week previously and returned to Singapore. The Noviciate year was effectively over. In 2006, our Minister General transferred the Noviciate to Singapore.

In 2011, and again in 2012, I enjoyed spending the four Wednesdays of September at Maryfields, giving a course on the Franciscan Family to a group of our Postulants from Timor Leste. I drove up from Waverley on Tuesday and stayed at Maryfields overnight.

## **RANR Retired**

The Royal Australian Naval Reserve retired me at the age of 60, in 1997.

I had a rare day out in October 2003 with three Reserve Navy shipmates, at Beecroft. The old salts were great company. Anzac Day, 25 April was special for me in 2005. Geoff Dobbin, a friend from the RANR Naval Reserve days at HMAS Watson, invited me to attend the annual meeting of the Naval Warfare Officers Association, held on a hired ferry, the “Radar”, that sailed leisurely from Kirribilli around Sydney Harbour on a perfect day. I met Navy friends whom I hadn’t seen for thirty years. We found it hard to recognize one another.

I received a surprise Christmas gift in 2006, when the Department of Defence in Canberra awarded me with the Australian Defence Medal, in recognition of my thirty years as Chaplain in the RAN Reserve. I met eight or more of my fellow Reservists regularly for dinner in Barrack Street, and later in York St, City, and a crowd of others on Anzac Day, when again we hired the “Radar” ferry for a harbour cruise. They pressed me to apply for the medal, so I was supposed to wear it on the appropriate occasions when they wore their hefty loads of ribboned service medals.

In November 2010, I attended the Requiem Mass and the funeral of Fr Patrick McCormick OFM. I had served with Fr Pat since 1967 as a Naval Reserve Chaplain at HMAS Watson. How Fr Pat managed to have two Roman Catholic Chaplains attached to one base was a measure of his remarkable influence and the high respect that he enjoyed among the men and their wives and families.

In January 2011, I celebrated another Requiem Mass, of Lieutenant Commander Keith Donoghue, a close friend for the same length of time in the Naval Reserve. Keith was the one who had introduced me to the reunion luncheon of the Naval Reservists who dubbed themselves “the Olds and the Bolds.” We celebrated the dedication of a memorial plaque in Keith’s honour at Garden Island Naval Base. His widow, Elaine, in a wheelchair, was undaunted by the flights of stairs into and out of the chapel at HMAS Kuttabul, which I hadn’t visited for over thirty years. I was the guest of the Catholic (RC) Naval Chaplain, Fr Cristof, at Garden Island. I won’t attempt to spell his Polish name.

After a Sunday Mass at Port Macquarie in 2011, a couple introduced themselves who recognized me after forty-one years. Dick and Wilma were friends from my Naval Chaplaincy days at HMAS Watson. We enjoyed an evening reminiscing and a splendid meal in their home at Lake Cathie. In another light vein, I enjoy the quarterly luncheons of my old shipmates in the Royal Australian Naval Reserve (RANR), when we meet at 99 York Street, Sydney.

On 7 October 2015, I officiated at the funeral of my former RANR Commanding Officer, Ray Williams, at the Northern Suburbs Crematorium. I had known Ray and his family since 1967, when I joined the Naval Reserve as a Catholic (RC) Chaplain, at HMAS

Watson, Watsons Bay, Sydney. We had an arrangement. If Ray went first, I would officiate at his funeral. If I went first, Ray would come to mine. Ray, rest in peace.

## **The World Trade Centre 2001**

Where were you when you heard about the bombing of the World Trade Centre? On the evening of 11 September 2001, I joined a gathering of friars and former friars of my own vintage at Philip's Foote, in The Rocks, Lower George Street, Sydney. In Campbelltown the next morning, I went to pick up the mail and the newspapers. The newsagent hadn't put out the ordered papers when I raced in, picked up what I needed from a pile, and raced out. Only then, I noticed the headlines and pictures, and couldn't believe my eyes.

From that moment, we were living in a different world. Each new day, with its burden of news, confirmed a sense of insecurity. I felt it most when, on my return from Brisbane by plane, the luggage checkers confiscated my nail-clippers!! That really hurt. Sydney airport had let me through, and Brisbane had let me in but not out!! Seeing my dismay, they didn't arrest me for questioning.

## **Requiem**

On 6 October 2001, we celebrated the memorial Requiem Mass for Fr Fabian Thom OFM, a student with me, whom the "Raskols" in Port Moresby murdered in his sleep, in payback because the Franciscan Archbishop Brian Barnes was outspoken about shady politics in Papua New Guinea.

After seven years of operations for diverse kinds of cancer spaced eighteen months apart, my dear sister Gwen died at Thirroul Hospital in November 2005. My other sister Margaret and I spent precious time with her in her last weeks. Gwen called me to administer the Sacraments. I conducted Gwen's funeral on the day after we had prayed the Way of the Cross at Maryfields, for All Souls.

Like all the country, we were in a severe drought. At Maryfields, we could water the garden from our dam, but the water level was very low. To quote a famous Australian poem, "We'll all be rooned (ruined), said Hanrahan." if the drought didn't break soon. The cloudless days were splendid, which confused our prayers: "Thank you, Lord, for this magnificent weather, but please send us rain, but not floods, thanks."

## **Refugees**

Who decides? I wasn't impressed by our Prime Minister John Howard's proclamation that "we" would decide the circumstances in which people came to Australia. I felt that the circumstances of the country that they came from decided whether they wanted to stay there or get out. They must have been desperate to pay big money to people smugglers and to cram into hulks, to head out for something better. All this was going on while we prepared for Christmas and a bright New Year. The plight of desperate people highlighted the meaning of Christmas, when the Son of God came to join us, and to lift us out of our mess.

## CHAPTER THIRTEEN: WAVERLEY 2006 – 2013

### Settling into Waverley

After my residing for six years at Maryfields Friary, Campbelltown, the Minister General moved the Province's Noviciate to Singapore in 2006. Our Provincial Minister kindly granted my request to move to Waverley Friary, where it would be more convenient to continue my commitment as National Spiritual Assistant to the Secular Franciscan Order in Oceania. I said farewell to the friars at Maryfields and to the Poor Clares at Bethlehem Monastery, with heartfelt thanks for their support of my Franciscan life.

On 23 January 2006, I moved to Waverley. My bedroom at Waverley Friary was on the third level of the friary on Victoria Street, facing north. On the left side was the Church of Mary Immaculate, where Bishop Doggett had ordained me in 1963. I had already done a mammoth job shifting the Office of the OFM National Spiritual Assistant from Campbelltown. The Office was on the fourth level of the friary, facing south, with a fine view of the sea over the rooftops and trees. There was only a flight of stairs between the Office and my bedroom. I exercised, using the stairwell instead of the lift, which I hoped would limit my girth.

I took my turn in the friary as "Hebdom(adarius)," the leader for a week of praying the Divine Office, and I celebrated daily Mass for the Apostolic Poor Clares at Carrington Road, from Monday to Friday at 7.15 a.m. A brisk walk of five minutes found me back in time for Morning Prayer with the friars. On Saturday evening or Sunday, I celebrated the Eucharist at either Paddington, Edgecliff, or Double Bay. That was a three-in-one parish by then, served by the Franciscans and only ten minutes' drive from Waverley. I transferred from Wollongong Diocese in 2006 to Sydney Archdiocese and received the faculties from Archbishop Pell to function pastorally when celebrating Masses, baptisms, marriages, and funerals. Bishop Ingham very kindly continued to grant me the faculties of Wollongong Diocese.

St Francis Church in Oxford Street, Paddington had a renowned choir that sang at 10 a.m. Mass on Sundays and in Holy Week and at Christmas. In 2006, after forty years, I was singing Gregorian music, not in Latin but in English. The Mass on Christmas Day was resplendent with the choir and an orchestra. As the celebrant, I was shamefully outclassed. The occasion called for a Pavarotti.

On St Francis feast day, the Sydney friars, including the Croatians, gathered at Paddington Friary for dinner, prepared by our Polish friar. Fr Piotr kindly included my favourite Polish dish, *flaczki*. Everyone found it to be delicious. We didn't tell them till afterwards that it was slivered tripe.

Daylight Saving, beginning on the last Sunday in October, was my favourite time of the year. I relished the long evening hours of light, especially when I had to drive at that hour. But this time of the year was the worst for bushfires that had already devastated huge drought-stricken areas in 2006. We prayed earnestly for rain and for the consolation of families who had lost everything.

My weekend Mass supplies sped me to Sydney parishes, including Punchbowl, where



I knew the Parish Priest. Fr Richard was an altar server at Waverley in the early 1960s, when I was a close friend of his Gates family, who lived at Bondi Junction.

**Weddings** came thick and fast. Benjamin asked me to officiate at his wedding in Mary Immaculate Church. I had married Ben's parents and had baptized a loudly protesting Ben over thirty years previously.

October must have been a favourite month for weddings. I officiated at a wedding in St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, on 20 October 2006. A week later, I attended the wedding of my cousin Martina in Wollongong, which provided a grand opportunity to meet paternal relatives whom I had never met.

**Baptisms, too.** I baptized my great grandniece, Molly May, in Queanbeyan in 2006. This "great grand" business came as a shock, because I didn't feel that I could be as old as that.

In August 2007, Singapore invited the friars who had worked there to celebrate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Foundation of the Custody of Malaysia, Singapore, and Brunei. I visited the friars at Massai in Johore before celebrating the Anniversary in Singapore. I visited the friars also in Kuching, Sarawak, from 19 to 21 August. I returned from Singapore on 22 August, at 5.55 a.m., in time at 2 p.m. to baptize in Campbelltown the granddaughter of our much-loved cook. I don't know why baby Penelope's mother and grandmother were worried that I wouldn't make it to Edgecliff in time!

The Provincial Chapter in September 2007 appointed me as Vicar of the Waverley Friary. I kept the Mass books, entered the Mass Intentions received and banked the Mass stipends, then allocated the Intentions to the priest celebrants and ticked the date when they celebrated the Masses. I also kept the friary's books of expenses and receipts and the monthly balance sheets, and stood in for the Guardian in his absence, but rarely.

In November 2008, Fr Hugh, our Guardian (St Francis's word for Superior), suffered a minor stroke that divested him of all responsibilities. As the Vicar, who is second in charge, I assumed the Guardian's care of personnel as well as the administration that I was already doing to a significant extent. So far, no traumas. I hoped it would stay that way.

On 12 December 2008, I received a phone call from the presenter of a religious program on the ABC, to come in that afternoon and talk about St Francis and the Crib. I'm not an "off the cuff" speaker, but it wasn't too bad, and the ABC aired it late at night. I wasn't swamped with feedback.

The Custos of the OFM Custody of Singapore and Malaysia invited all the friars who had worked in our parish of Our Lady of the Angels to attend the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Parish in 2010. I gladly accepted his invitation and stayed for a week in San Damiano, Bukit Batok, when we were guests at a magnificent Gala Dinner.

On 29 October 2011, our Franciscan Province hosted the "Spirit of Assisi Concert", commemorating the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the World Day of Prayer for Peace, held the first time in Assisi in 1986. The friars held the first-class concert that attracted a large ecumenical and interreligious audience in the Uniting Church, Pitt Street, Sydney.

## **Secular Franciscan Order**

I drove to the Korean Fraternity, who met at Waitara, near Hornsby, and to the Slovenians at Merrylands. Driving from Waverley was dangerous in summertime because the sun was directly in my eyes. It was scary on busy Parramatta Road at 5.45 p.m.

I spent much of September 2006 preparing a two-weeks-long set of courses for our three postulants, two novices, and three junior professed friars in formation in Singapore. I enjoyed making PowerPoint presentations for each conference, hoping that they would be compatible with their projector. I celebrated Mass for the first time in the much-admired new Church of St Mary of the Angels, Bukit Batok, and stayed in the new San Damiano building, where we celebrated the feast of the house on Saints Cosmas and Damian's Day.

Early in November 2006, I accompanied Fr Benedict OFM by train to Bellingen, where we stayed with Annie at Mount Tabor Retreat Centre. Annie had assisted Fr Ben for years, raising funds for the Franciscan Mission in Aitape, Papua New Guinea. Annie was also the local Spiritual Assistant to the SFO Fraternities of Taree and Forster-Tuncurry, hence my main interest in our visit.

Regional elective chapters followed after the election of the SFO National Executive in April 2007. New Zealand held theirs on the weekend of Pentecost in May, which I attended with the National Minister. Victoria followed in June, at St Anthony's Church, Hawthorn. I flew down on Friday afternoon and returned on Saturday night.

A leading Secular Franciscan stalwart, Peter Keogh, died after a lengthy illness on 10 May 2007. Church and civil dignitaries attended his funeral at St Kieran's Church, Manly Vale. Secular Franciscans attended from Victoria and Tasmania, and from country areas of NSW, as well as from around Sydney.

On Queen's Birthday Weekend in June 2007, I conducted a workshop for preparing a course for the formation of Secular Franciscans as Spiritual Assistants. Nine Secular Franciscans and three National Spiritual Assistants participated in that joyful exercise. Regretfully, not one of the nine Secular Franciscans who qualified functioned as a local Spiritual Assistant. The two OFM-assisted Fraternities who were offered them declined their appointment. One of those Fraternities had their spiritual assistance formally transferred to the Capuchins, expecting to receive a friar priest as their Spiritual Assistant.

"Return to normal" after World Youth Day in 2007 could have been the theme of our SFO National Executive Retreat, held at the Capuchin Conference Centre, Plumpton, from 8 to 10 August.

For the first time, I met the Italian SFO Fraternity in Leichhardt in 2007, when the NSW Regional Minister, Barry Blake, and I attended their elections on 14 September. For two weeks in September, I supplied Mass at Port Macquarie to give the Curate a holiday and met the SFO Fraternity and Council. I was in Port Macquarie again in October, running an SFO promotion program with the NSW Regional Minister. We joined in the celebration of the Transitus of St Francis and enjoyed his feast day on 4 October.

## OFS Visited after Cancer

Thanks to email, ever since July in 2009, during my illness with cancer, I stayed connected with the interests of the SFO. I couldn't attend meetings, but the Conference of National Spiritual Assistants came out to meet me at Waverley. In mid-January 2009, I returned as Spiritual Assistant to the Concord and Korean Fraternities. While sitting in my office at Waverley, I tuned into the Teleconferences of the SFO National Executive. On 12 March, I attended the meeting of the National Executive at Edgecliff.

I attended an important event in 2009 at Sancta Sophia College, University of Sydney, when the TOR General Spiritual Assistant conducted the Pastoral Visit of the SFO in Oceania and the Vice Minister General of the SFO conducted the Fraternal Visitation and presided at the National Elective Chapter.

Celebrations were in order at St Johns Park on 3 April 2009, when the Franciscan Youth Fraternity held their elections, and on Palm Sunday, 5 April, when twenty-five candidates made their profession in the SFO Fraternity. The young people and the adults were all from Croatian families. A big event was the OFS Family Day at St Johns Park NSW, on 14 October 2012, when I caught up with Fr Smiljan OFM, Spiritual Assistant to the local SFO Fraternity and to FRAMA, the Franciscan Youth Fraternity. I had a longstanding interest in the Croatians at St Johns Park, and also in the Koreans at Silverwater.

*“What's in a name?”*. The title of the SFO was different in the different languages, which created problems in identifying the Order as one universal entity. The official title in Latin is: “Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis,” and its acronym is “OFS.” In 2011, the Presidency of the International Council decided to use the Latin OFS acronym in all languages. The SFO acronym had to stay in the title of my website, SFO FILES, because of all that the website contained before 2011, but the subtitle was added: “SFO to 2011 - OFS from 2011”.

The translation of the Latin “Ordo Franciscanus Saecularis” and its OFS acronym into English is “Secular Franciscan Order”, as it had been since the approval of the Rule of Pope Paul VI, in 1978. Some mistook OFS to be an English acronym to stand for the “Order of Franciscans Secular”. A smidgen of Latin helped to solve the problem.

## OFS National Statutes 2011

The SFO National Committee for the Revision of the National Statutes occupied all my time. The Committee of three members drafted a proposal for the revised Statutes and presented it to the meeting of the National Council. It had been a huge effort. The Committee sent the final draft to the National Minister on 28 April, to give the members of the National Council time to study it. The National Council met at Mount St Bernard, Pennant Hills NSW, from 27 to 29 May 2011. After a grueling weekend, they managed to adopt the draft of the amended National Statutes and forwarded the text to the International Council for approval.

The closest I had ever come to suffering a mental breakdown was over the approval of the *Minutes* of the meeting that approved the draft. One person subjected us to an agony in her efforts to denounce the *Minutes* (not the procedure) of the approval of the Statutes,

intending to nullify the approval. St Bernard said that if you don't have a problem-person in your life then go out and find one, for your sanctification. I didn't have to find one.

On 20 November 2012, the OFS Regional Minister and Regional Spiritual Assistant conducted the combined Fraternal and Pastoral Visit to the Korean Fraternity, which I attended as the local Spiritual Assistant. We were treated to a veritable feast afterwards.

**Christmas treats!** The Secular Franciscans of Waverley Fraternity swung into party mode after their Mass in the Friary on 13 December 2012. The friars were invited and joined in the games and enjoyed a delectable supper. I even won a prize as the last one left standing after an Australian History Trivia quiz.

Other OFS Christmas parties followed in quick succession. Concord Fraternity held theirs on 16 December and the Korean Fraternity on 18 December 2012. My own dear mother attended Concord Fraternity, all the way by bus, train, and bus, from Baulkham Hills, for a great number of years, since 1956. I found Mum's name listed in the Fraternity's old Registry of Professions.

## **OFS National Spiritual Assistants**

Early in March in 2007, I flew to Kota Kinabalu (KK) in Sabah, East Malaysia. My pastoral visit to the SFO, with the National Minister's fraternal visit, took us to Sandakan and Labuan, and to Fraternities closer to KK. The Franciscan Sisters gave local spiritual assistance to the SFO in Sabah.

Later in March 2007, I attended the Second Asia-Oceania Congress of the SFO in Penang with Representatives from many countries in Oceania and Asia. The SFO Minister General and the four friar General Spiritual Assistants attended, as well as the international leader of Franciscan Youth. I renewed my friendship with the retired Archbishop Anthony Soter Fernandez of Kuala Lumpur, with whom I was a student when we were junior priests at the EAPI in Manila, in 1972. "Fr Soter" gave me a guided tour of the historic College General in Penang that boasted of a host of martyrs in its long history since the 1600s.

The Conference of General Assistants of the SFO based in Rome delegated me to attend the first National Elective Chapter of the SFO in New Zealand in 2010. It was the culmination of thirty-two years of my working towards this event. With Helen Britton, whom Rome delegated to preside at the Chapter, I spent the last weekend of September visiting friends in Auckland. From there, I flew to Napier and spent three days with my brother Terry and his Kiwi wife Rosie, at Hastings. Terry had a heavy cold, but Rosie made sure that I had a thorough tour of Napier and Hastings, as well as a Gannet Safari to Cape Kidnapper, where the colony of gannets numbered in the hundreds.

All three of us National Spiritual Assistants shared the Pastoral Visits to the Regional Fraternities and were witnesses at the Regional Fraternity Elections. From 29 November till 1 December 2012, I accompanied Helen Britton, the National Minister, who presided over the Regional Elective Chapter of the OFS in Tasmania that was held in Launceston. I enjoyed the hospitality of the Spiritual Assistant at Riverside, my dear friend, Fr Allan OFM.

The Conference of National Spiritual Assistants met about eight times a year.

Regretfully, the Conventual friar member resigned in 2013, leaving the Capuchin and me to soldier on. We took turns in writing the *Monthly Spiritual Message* to the National Fraternity. It was my turn to write the *Message* for February, March, and April.

The National Assistants were members of the OFS National Executive, which met every three months at Edgecliff. The Executive had waited a long time for the OFS National Statutes to be returned from the Order's Rome-based Juridical Commission. The Statutes were returned on 15 March 2013 and the National Minister sent them with a covering letter to the Secular Franciscans. They would be presented to the National Elective Chapter on 5-7 July, for approval. The President of the OFS Juridical Commission, Hungarian Tibor Kauser, would preside at the Chapter.

### **OFS National Fraternity of Oceania 2013**

The Oceania National Fraternity of the Secular Franciscans held their Elective Chapter at St Joseph's Centre, Baulkham Hills NSW, from 5-7 July 2013. "Oceania" no longer included New Zealand after 2012, but it included Australia, Papua New Guinea, Singapore, and Sabah. Papua New Guinea had just been taken over by the Order's international level. Before long, probably in January 2014, Singapore, Sabah, and West Malaysia would become the emerging National Fraternity of Malaysia-Singapore. I had been working with Singapore since 1974, and a little later with Sabah, and with Papua New Guinea since 1999.

The Oceania Elective Chapter resulted in four Councillors being elected from South Australia. Consequently, the new National Council met in Adelaide in August and November. The National Minister travelled from Victoria, and three of us travelled from NSW. On July 21, I conducted the Pastoral Visitation of Newton Fraternity in Adelaide.

### **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Profession 2007**

On 18 February 2007, my Noviciate group celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of our religious profession with the Sydney friars at Waverley. All of the original group were present, except one who left the Noviciate and two who left later.

I took my customary leave from 27 June to 20 September 2007. First destination was New Zealand. I celebrated with our friars at Mangere in Auckland. I flew to Napier, where Rosie met me and drove me to Hastings. I stayed a few days with my brother Terry and Rosie, who whisked me around on a tour of Napier, including the monument of the earthquake of 1931 that killed 256 and injured thousands. I flew from Napier to Auckland and after only four days in New Zealand, I flew on to Los Angeles.

I attended the five-yearly Quinquennial Congress of the SFO of the United States, in Pittsburgh, in July 2007. Apart from losing my glasses in a shuttle bus and thankfully retrieving them at the hotel desk the next day, I enjoyed catching up with many people whom I knew. The Congress was well organized, the sessions were informative, and recreation was ample.

I left America from O'Hare Airport in Chicago and arrived in Düsseldorf and had my luggage lost for two days while I stayed with the friars. My Swiss friends of over twenty

years, Hans, and Marianne had met me at the airport and shared my angst over the loss of my luggage and the delay of our plans to drive to Fritzlar, the birthplace of Heinrich, my great grandfather.

We stayed in a small, homely guesthouse for four days. Fritzlar is a medieval imperial town that escaped the bombing in World War II, except that the Allies destroyed a bridge. I was surprised to find the Franciscan emblem of the crossed arms of Jesus and St Francis. It happened to be on the wall of a thirteenth century Franciscan monastery that the Lutherans converted into a hospital. Its gutted church became the Lutheran parish church, but the reformers missed a tiny figure, high up and attached to the ceiling, of St Francis stigmatized. St Peter's Cathedral is still Fritzlar's Catholic church, which is unusual because the Protestants took over Catholic cathedrals.

I have an interest in St Boniface because Heinrich came from Geismar, now a suburb of Fritzlar, which I visited in 2007, and found St Boniface with his mighty axe in front of St Peter's Cathedral.

Boniface, an Anglo-Saxon Benedictine monk in the Eighth Century, worked as a missionary in Germany. To show the heathens how utterly powerless were the gods in whom they placed their confidence, Boniface felled the oak tree sacred to the thunder-god Thor, at Geismar. He had a chapel built out of the wood and dedicated it to St Peter, the Prince of the Apostles. The heathens were astonished that no thunderbolt from the hand of Thor destroyed the offender, and many were converted. The fall of this oak tree marked the fall of heathenism, at least in Hesse, but St Boniface was martyred later in Friesland, where the heathens did not approve of his missionary zeal.

We visited the villages where the Schafers had lived, in Geismar and Haddamar. The Schafer family had died out, but a local man showed us one Schäfershaus and their carpentry workshop. But I missed seeing the large family home where my great grandfather Heinrich was born and from where he left for Australia. Fritzlar's archivist kindly sent me a photo of it later.

Heinrich's mother was Anna Elizabeth Braeutigam from Geismar, another village near Fritzlar. The family was still thriving in both villages and owns the Adler Hotel in Fritzlar. I didn't attempt to make myself known as the great-great grandson of Anna Elizabeth! My Swiss friends and I spent four days altogether in Fritzlar, in Geismar, and in Haddamar.

After Germany, I attended the EUFRA meeting of the SFO of Europe, in Donovaly in Slovakia, from 19 to 28 July 2007. I had enjoyed these EUFRA meetings while I was living in Rome. They were not meant to be a sunbathing holiday, but they did require a commitment to building the community. I suffered a bout of arthritis in the left hip and knee. A Rumanian doctor did the best he could in the remote mountain resort, by treating my ear with acupuncture! Later, a Slovakian participant applied plasters that gave out heat to the affected areas.

It was an immense pleasure to meet people whom I knew, both friars and laity, in New Zealand and in the USA, as well as in Germany and Slovakia. There was still more to my Anniversary Leave, taking in Slovenia, Croatia, Italy, and Singapore. I compiled a beautiful album of photos, postcards, and commentary. The profusion of exquisite orchids in Singapore and Malaysia moved me to praise the Creator.

## **YouFra International Gathering 2008**

Months before the event, I prepared for the Franciscan Youth International Gathering, which St Francis School and Church, Paddington accommodated, from 12 to 15 July 2008. Members of the SFO Presidency, based in Rome, conducted the Gathering. On 7 July, Xavi Ramos (World Leader of Franciscan Youth), and Michele Cannone (GiFra Leader in Italy) arrived. Fr Ivan Matic OFM (General Spiritual Assistant to the SFO and Franciscan Youth), arrived on 10 July. Fourteen youths arrived on 11 July. Sixty lived in until 15 July, when they joined their WYD (World Youth Day) national group elsewhere in Sydney. Forty-five stayed in Paddington for WYD until 20 July. Others stayed over until 21 July.

The Sydney-based Administration of WYD had approved of accommodation in the school for a hundred Franciscan Youth participants, also for WYD Week. The Franciscan Youth members participated in all the events in Sydney. We walked on Pilgrimage to St Joseph's Church, Edgecliff, and bussed to the Bethlehem Monastery of the Poor Clares at Campbelltown. We held a fun Franciscan Youth Festival in St Francis Church on 17 July. It was one of the 270 events approved by WYD out of 600 entries.

## **World Youth Day 2008**

The World Youth Day (WYD) week followed the YouFra Gathering immediately, from 15 to 20 July. The arrangements for the week were exceptional. The youth had only to walk up to Centennial Park nearby and through the scenic park to Randwick Racecourse, to attend the WYD functions. They had their meals in the "Come In" Centre, located between St Francis School and St Francis Church, Paddington.

Since 20 April, I had been a member of Provincial Committee for WYD events, which included the festival, "Come to the Water", at Bondi Beach on 16 July. I concelebrated the Opening Mass at Barangaroo on 15 July, and also the closing Mass at Randwick on 20 July. We bade farewell to the last of the Franciscan Youth at Paddington before noon on 21 July. It took me the rest of the month to tie up the loose ends and to wind down. Glowing reports from USA, France, Poland, the Philippines, and Rome, came back to us. I published them on my website, SFO FILES, together with the report of our own Franciscan Youth Fraternity at St Johns Park. Precious photos and memories filled an album.

## **Provincial Commissary of the Holy Land 2008**

The Provincial Minister appointed me as Provincial Commissary of the Holy Land in 2008. My main task was to organize the Good Friday Collection for the upkeep of the "stones," of the Holy Places, and to support the "living stones", the Christians living in the Custody of the Holy Land, wedged between the Israelis and the Muslims. The Popes entrusted the care of the Custody to the Franciscans. As well as Israel, the Custody includes Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Cyprus, and Rhodes. Jerusalem is the centre of the Custody's administration. Each OFM Province appoints a Commissary to support the Custody, especially through the Good Friday Collection, which the Pope directs that it be held in all the Catholic parishes of the world.

My particular Lenten exercise was organizing the Good Friday Collection for the

Holy Land. Each year, on Ash Wednesday and again before Good Friday, in the Boardroom of the Provincial Office, together with the Provincial Secretary, Angela Sivris, I gathered an excellent team of friar helpers from Waverley Friary, who twice prepared over 1,200 envelopes for posting to all the parishes and Mass centres in Australia. I wrote a covering letter and included the results of the previous year's Collection. We provided information for making the Collection, and a large colorful poster for display in all Mass centres. I chose for the poster in 2009 the *Pietà* scene from World Youth Day's Way of the Cross. It came out like a classic painting. The OFM Provincial Office collected the proceeds and transferred them safely through Washington to Jerusalem. The Australian Catholic parishes donated over a million dollars to the Collection each year of my tenancy.

The Holy Land Commissariat in Washington DC publish an excellent *Holy Land Review* four times a year and generously offered me copies to distribute for a token subscription of \$20, which helped to cover the costs of the Commissariat Office.

### **Washington D.C. 2011**

A most welcome break came when I attended a Conference of English-speaking Commissaries of the Holy Land, in Washington D.C., USA., from 17 to 28 February 2011. It was a demanding test of my stamina after my cancer operation in 2009 and the consequent chemotherapy treatment. I did suffer jet lag during the hefty conference sessions, but it was a rewarding and most enjoyable experience. I knew the friars from my years in Rome. The Australian friar, Fr Romuald Green OFM, was residing then at the Franciscan Monastery of the Commissariat of the Holy Land where the Conference was held. Rommy's hospitality, and that of all the friars, was exceptional.

### **Jerusalem 2012**

From 27 January till 14 February 2012, I attended a Congress of five full days in Jerusalem, with all the world's Commissaries. Traveling consumed twenty-four hours in planes each way, plus five to seven hours in transit lounges. The Congress was followed by three days of excursions to biblical sites in Israel. On the first day, we visited Samaria (Nablus and Jacob's well), Sebastia (Ahab and Jezebels' temple of Baal), Mount Gerizim and 5,000-year-old Shechem. On the second day, we went to the Negev desert (Beer Sheva, Guvrin, and Tel Arad). On the third day, we bussed to Tel Aviv (Jaffa, Lod, Ramle), and to Emmaus Nicopolis, another site that claims to be the Emmaus of the Gospel.

### **Retreats**

At the end of October 2008, I enjoyed giving a retreat to senior Marist Brothers at St Joseph's Spirituality Centre, Baulkham Hills NSW. Being an Old Boy of St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill, and knowing the Brothers at St Gregory's College, Campbelltown, I knew the Brothers personally and enjoyed my time on retreat with them.

Beverly Hills Parish asked me again to give them a recollection day in November 2008, on the feast day of Christ the King, on my favourite theme of St Francis and the Franciscan spirituality of the Primacy of Christ.

On 16 April 2009, we friars and other members of the Franciscan Family renewed our vows as we do annually as a devotion, but this time also to celebrate the 800<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of



the approval of the Franciscan way of life. St Francis and his band of twelve friars received approval from Pope Innocent III in 1209.

The friars in Brisbane organized the annual Spiritual Retreat in Tweed Heads for the friars in the Eastern States, in June 2012. We were accommodated in a large hotel. It was the least expensive arrangement available and was a great success.

The friars at Waverley joined the other friars in Sydney for our Annual Retreat, again this year at Tweed Heads, from 24 to 29 June 2013. Later, from 12 to 16 September, I gave the Regional Retreat to the Secular Franciscans in Western Australia. So, I could tick off the “Retreats” box of commitments for 2013.

## **Cancer 2009**

### **Anemia**

The combination of my usual SFO commitments and acting as Guardian proved to be too stressful. As soon as our Guardian Fr Hugh had recovered and was reinstalled, I resigned as Vicar, following our Provincial Minister’s advice, and spent three restful days with Brother George at our Gabriel Allegra Friary, in Ashfield. I still wasn’t feeling well, and the friars commented that I was looking pale. I went for a regular checkup to my doctor, who discovered after a blood test that I was alarmingly anemic. On 24 July 2009, my GP immediately placed me under the care of Dr Allan Meagher at St Vincent’s Private Hospital, who booked me for a gastroscopy and a colonoscopy a week later, which provided no explanation of anemia.

I became increasingly ill and nearly collapsed while celebrating Mass at Edgecliff on 9 August 2009 and was ill that night. Dr Meagher said that he would have to consult with his “namesake.” I asked, “Is he the Chinese Doctor Ma?” Allan, surprised, said “Yes!” I said, “I’m related to him!” Allan, even more puzzled, said, “You don’t look like it!” David Ma is married to my niece, Kathy Ansell.

Dr Meagher arranged for a Cat scan of the abdomen at St Vincent’s Public Hospital on 11 August, but there was still no finding. During that week, while at home at Waverley, I suffered so much that I called an ambulance on 14 August and headed for Emergency, who admitted me to St Vincent’s Private Hospital, Darlinghurst, where I underwent more tests. Finally, Dr David Ma arranged a Pet scan at St Vincent’s Public Hospital, which discovered something to investigate below the duodenum.

### **Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma**

On 22 August 2009, I underwent major surgery to excise Non-Hodgkin’s Lymphoma. After a successful intervention by Dr Douglas Fenton-Lee, the hospital discharged me on 5 September. On 14 September, I began a three-months’ course of chemotherapy under Dr Samuel Mellican at St Vincent’s Public Hospital, receiving an intravenous injection from four to six hours every second Tuesday.

In the first week after the injection, I took powerful medication each day that produced a high mood-swing that deprived me of sleep. In the second week, I was off drugs except for Bactrim that prevented infection. I was still taking it three times a week.

Physically and emotionally, I fell into a low mood-swing while the system built itself up for the next intravenous injection. Before each cycle, I had a blood test. If the red and white cells and the platelets had not been healthy enough, the injection would have been postponed, but that didn't happen.

### **Chemotherapy**

The early cycles of chemo were not so bad. I could attend the conferences of the visiting American friar, Joe Chinnici OFM, at Waverley, from 6 to 8 September. I presided at the Chapter of Elections of the Poor Clares, Waverley, on 10 October 2009.

The assault on the system through effectively controlled poisoning became more severe as the cycles mounted up. I was very ill, not in pain but nauseous. I missed meetings of the SFO National Executive and of the local Fraternities of Concord and Waitara. Although I had close connections with the Croatian Catholic Centre at St Johns Park, I was too ill to perform the Blessing of the Activity Centre at Stepinac Village on 15 November, and the canonical establishment of the Croatian SFO Fraternity on 26 November 2009.

I wasn't up to visitors or phone calls or heavy SFO business or duties even inside the friars' community at Waverley. I had my first visitors on 21 December 2009, when I thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon with the Korean Secular Franciscan Fraternity in the sunroom on the fourth level of Waverley Friary, overlooking the sea.

But chemotherapy had served me well. On 2 November, after the fourth chemo cycle, the results of a Cat scan were favourable. After naming a long list of bodily organs, the report stated: "No finding to suggest recurrent or residual disease." That was a great relief. I didn't have to see the Oncologist again until February. After I finished with chemotherapy in December 2009, the Oncologist saw me every six months. Three years after chemotherapy, I was cleared of cancer.

### **Specialists**

I saw my GP on 30 December 2009 and received referrals to four specialists, so it wasn't all over yet. My GP described me, with a floppy left foot, damaged vocal cords, no hair, and no toenails, as "wasted." I'd say, "like an escapee from Bergen-Belsen." It took some months before I was healthy and could resume normal duties. When I began the course, I was a little overweight at 84kg. At the end, I weighed 65kg. I hoped to build up to around 75 kg and maintain that weight, which would be healthy for me. I've always wanted to get rid of a pot belly, without much success. Well, I had no pot belly after all that, but what a way to get rid of it!

The prayerful support of so many people was very much appreciated. My own prayer had been, "Lord, I want to submit to whatever you allow to happen to me. Let me know your will." This was it, God's will, full on! I was blessed to go freely through it all and to benefit from the experience. But I never thought of receiving the Anointing of the Sick, and no one suggested it to me. I had plenty of time to pray for my family and the friars and friends, so I hoped they were feeling the good effects.

## Recovery

New Year 2010 was off to a flying start. My run-in with cancer left me with disabilities, all being after-effects of chemotherapy. My GP suspected a mini stroke to account for the floppy right foot, but a Cat scan of the brain fortunately ruled that out. A scan of the lumbar spine showed “a significantly diseased disc” that was common at my age of seventy-three. I spent a restful week at Maryfields, Campbelltown, at the end of January, then I was back in circulation. Driving a car was no problem.

My brother Terry came over from New Zealand and stayed with our sister Margaret in mid-February. My nephew Michael and his wife Ineke joined us to celebrate my birthday, St Valentine’s Day, and Chinese New Year, all on the same day. On 1 March 2010, I rejoined my Naval Reserve shipmates, the “Olds and the Bolds”, at our quarterly luncheon. They had accompanied me with great concern and had stormed heaven for their “Bish.”

Recovery went on apace, so that on 5 March I had keyhole surgery in hospital overnight, to fix an inguinal hernia. Fingers and toes, minus nails, and the dropped foot were back to normal. Even my hair was slowly growing, darker and thicker than before! The damage that the operation did to my throat held me back from celebrating Mass publicly. The nasogastric tube inserted down my throat in the cancer operation had obstructed it for two long weeks, then the tube inserted in my throat in the hernia operation had left me with a hoarse and weak voice. My feet were numb from neuropathy, which has become a permanent condition.

I had had trouble over 2011 and 2012 with osteoarthritis in the back, hips, and legs, owing to degeneration at the base of the spine. Fortunately, we had a physiotherapist very near to us at Waverley Friary. Physiotherapy helped to free seized-up muscles at the base of the spine. A straight-backed chair helped. I had spent too long since 1985, slouched at a computer, and had to be more aware of correct posture.

I had a course in 2011 of five sessions of Physiotherapy with the help of Medibank Private, and another course in May, in 2012. My GP referred me to a specialist for an ultrasound at St Vincent’s Clinic, who referred me to another specialist for an MRI. The result of it all was that I didn’t need a hip replacement yet, but that I had to be very careful in lifting things.

In 2013, I was pleased to report to my family and friends that my health was good. My GP checked me every two months and he was happy with me. My Physiotherapist had rescued me from osteoarthritis over eighteen painful months and advised me to call in for a check-up every two months. So that's not bad for a seventy-six-year-old. Pope Francis was proving to be an inspiration in every way, not least because he was only two months older than I was. If he could take on the papacy at his age, surely, I could cope with my condition.

## 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination

On 14 July 2013, four of us celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination with Sunday Mass in Mary Immaculate Church, Waverley. Fr Christopher Gardiner and I were ordained in the same church on 13 July 1963. On 23 August, I celebrated Mass for my classmates of 1953 at St Joseph’s College, Hunters Hill, on our 60<sup>th</sup>

Anniversary of leaving school. We intended to celebrate our 65<sup>th</sup> Anniversary together at the College if we are still around. Not sure of our 70<sup>th</sup>!

Our OFM Province held its Provincial Chapter at MacKillop Place, North Sydney, from 22 to 27 September 2013, after the Visitation in July conducted by Andrew Brophy OFM, from the United States. On 11 December, we received our new assignments. After twelve years and with time overdue, I concluded my statutory term as National Spiritual Assistant to the Secular Franciscan Order and would move in January 2014 to Maryfields Friary in Campbelltown NSW. I would still be Local and Regional Spiritual Assistant to the OFS and Commissary of the Holy Land, looking after the Good Friday Collection.

## **CHAPTER FOURTEEN: CAMPBELLTOWN 2014 – 2021**

### **Return to Maryfields**

In 2014, I ended my twelve-year stint at Waverley, vacated the office of the National Spiritual Assistant and moved for the second time to Maryfields Friary, Campbelltown NSW. I kept the same appointments, except that I could not be any longer the National Spiritual Assistant to the OFS. No one was appointed to replace me as National Assistant.

A new habit was well overdue as my present habit had worn through in embarrassing spots. Michael, our excellent tailor, provided the necessary cover.

Our Maryfields friars at Campbelltown also had their own commitments. We supplied Masses and Reconciliation on a number of occasions in the parish of Ruse that was without a Parish Priest, and in other parishes when needed. I celebrated Mass every weekday and most weekends for the Poor Clares at Bethlehem Monastery nearby.

At Maryfields, we held the Way of the Cross on the Sundays of Lent and on Good Friday, with great help from the teachers and students from Magdalene High School, Narellan. About 1,500 people attended and donated \$2,300 to the Good Friday Collection.

I continued to be the Holy Land Commissary in Australia. The Commissariat in Washington D.C. had set me up with a Commissary website for Australia:

<http://holylandfranciscansaustralia.org.au>

As in previous years, I spent the months before Easter organizing the Good Friday Collection for the Holy Land. We needed a large poster for display in all the Mass centres. I searched for a suitable image in the ample collection that the Custody of the Holy Land in Jerusalem displayed on the Internet. I received my choice by email and wedded it to the text of the poster. Redfern printed and delivered it to the OFM Provincial Office in Waverley, where my team of friars went to work to post it for Good Friday.

In my rare visits to Sydney, I tried to fit all that I had to do into two days while staying overnight at Waverley Friary. As Commissary of the Holy Land, I had a room on the third floor of the Provincial Office at Waverley. I arranged packing and posting *The Holy Land Review* to about two hundred subscribers. I also recruited friar helpers to pack and post the first mail-out for the Good Friday Collection. Ten generous friars turned up at the Provincial Office. Secretary Angela treated us to a sumptuous morning tea. That was the draw card! Two weeks later, I asked the friars to help again with the second mail-out, to pack

the Good Friday posters and other items, and to post them to all the 1,260 parishes and Mass centres in Australia.

There was one conflict of interests in my move from Waverley in 2014. We held the Campbelltown friars' recollection days on the same four Mondays of the year when the RANR Navy men held their reunions. Apart from that misfortune, I happily settled into Maryfields community, with its commitments in the Wollongong Diocese. Fr Dan and I drove to Wollongong Cathedral on Holy Thursday, 16 April 2014, to attend the popular Mass of the Chrism with Bishop Ingham and the Clergy. We attended the Wollongong Clergy Conference on 26 April. For three days in June, we attended the Clergy Inservice Course, held at Campbelltown Catholic Club.

For the first time, in 2014, I officiated at a wedding in the open. It was at Belgenny Farm, Elizabeth Macarthur Avenue, Camden South. This was John Macarthur's farm, where he died in 1834. Macarthur has a chequered reputation in the early history of the colony, but his introduction of merino sheep enriched Australia immensely. There are some marvelous old homesteads and farms in the Camden area whose owners have turned them over to catering and tourism.

In 2015, my computer underwent a major conversion, from Windows Excel to 8.1. Our Province also changed our Internet Service Provider (ISP) to Commulynx. I received expert attention from their team in the process of installation and with editing my web site, SFO FILES. It was a steep learning curve for me. To cap it all, our Internet connection modem failed, and Telstra couldn't send a technician till 2 March. I know now that the ultimate Lenten penance is to be without the Internet and email for eleven days.

We celebrated the Year of Consecrated Life in 2015. I drove down to Wollongong on 5 February with two of the Poor Clares from Bethlehem Monastery nearby and concelebrated Mass with Bishop Ingham and many other priests, religious, and laity, and enjoyed the dinner afterwards. On 2 March, Bethlehem Monastery hosted Franciscan Sister Joanne Schutzian from USA, who addressed us in the morning and was the honoured guest at dinner. On 6 March, the friars feted our Jubilarians at Waverley Friary.

## **Visitors**

We had few friars who came to visit us at Maryfields in 2016. I joked that for Sydney's Eastern Suburbanites, "the bush" began on the other side of Anzac Parade. But a young Croatian friar, Fr Tonio, stayed for a few weeks to learn English in a language school in Campbelltown. On one occasion, Tonio returned home from school, looking dejected. I asked him what the matter was. He answered, "Up ya buttle!" Startled at first, I quickly realized that he was trying to say, "Uphill battle"! I sympathized with Tonio, having suffered my own setbacks in learning languages.

Our Minister General, Fr Michael Perry OFM, visited us in February 2016, and the Visitor for the second time to our Province, Br Andrew Brophy OFM, arrived in June. These were important events of great interest to us that strengthened our belonging to a worldwide Franciscan Order. Our Provincial Elective Chapter in September 2016 gave us a new Provincial Minister, Phillip Miscamble OFM, and his team of Definitors (counsellors).

I celebrated my 80<sup>th</sup> Birthday Anniversary on 14 February 2017, quietly with my Maryfields community. Four days later, the Poor Clares treated Br Tom Davison and me to High Tea on the Anniversary of his Solemn Profession and my Simple Profession, sixty years ago. Our Provincial Minister had professed us at the original Maryfields Noviciate in one combined ceremony.

Maryfields community was down to four after the death of Br Tom, on 18 December 2017, and of Fr Dan Neylon, on 12 May 2018. Our Guardian, Fr John Roberts, was not well for three months. Fr Paul Smith, former Provincial Minister, was with us but made four visits a year to Papua New Guinea as General Delegate to the friars. Br Garry Hill was in great demand for his many skills. We enjoyed the company of Br Robert Stewart in July, while he gave a retreat to the Poor Clares.

In February 2019, I attended the Ordination of our new Bishop Brian Mascord, in the Wollongong WIN Centre. In April, Frs Paul, John, and I, attended the Professional Standards sessions in the Cathedral's Xavier Centre. I attended the Clergy Inservice Training at the Campbelltown Catholic Club, and always enjoyed the monthly meetings of the Hume Deanery of priests, hosted by Fr John Ho in Campbelltown Presbytery.

On 11 October 2019, the OFM Provincial Definitory replaced me with Fr Mario Debattista OFM as Holy Land Commissary in Australia. I handed over the files of the Holy Land Commissariat that I had kept for twelve years at Campbelltown, together with a set of detailed notes to help Fr Mario prepare and conduct the annual Holy Land Collection on Good Friday.

Spring had sprung with hot and cold flushes, but Maryfields' birdlife didn't mind. Our back garden outside the kitchen window served as nursery and kindergarten for wood ducklings and squawking magpie babies, shared with raucous Sulphur-crested cockatoos, Australian ravens, and noisy miner birds, as well as an occasional ibis, and a solitary coel that called incessantly for a companion.

## **The OFS 2014 – 2021**

I was still local Spiritual Assistant to two OFS Fraternities (Campbelltown and Silverwater Korean) and Regional Spiritual Assistant to two Regional Fraternities (South Australia and Western Australia). Regretfully, there was not much possibility of finding replacements.

At the end of May 2014, the Secular Franciscans of Singapore generously invited me to attend their first Regional Elective Chapter as members of the newly constituted National Fraternity of Malaysia-Singapore. I had worked with them for thirty-nine years towards that goal and congratulated them on their achievement.

To make spiritual repairs before the end of the year, I joined the Korean Secular Franciscans for a Day of Recollection on 13 December, at the Conventual Friars' shrine at Kellyville. The Korean OFS meet at the Korean Community Centre, Silverwater. They held their Fraternity's elections on 7 March 2015, which I attended as their local Spiritual Assistant.

The 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday of the Year in 2015 eclipsed St Francis Feast Day on 4 October, but that didn't deter the Slovenian friars and Secular Franciscans at Merrylands from celebrating the Mass of St Francis. I celebrated the Mass for them while their priest, Fr Darko OFM, was in Brisbane.

I had regular commitments to the Secular Franciscan Order (OFS), such as being Regional Spiritual Assistant to South Australia and Western Australia, where email contact was of paramount importance. I was also Local Spiritual Assistant to Silverwater Korean Fraternity and until February to Concord Fraternity that regrettably had to close through lack of numbers to form a Fraternity Council after the death of Tod Walker in January in 2016. I attended the OFS National Assembly in April-May 2016.

The OFM General Spiritual Assistant in Rome delegated me to witness to the communion between the friars and the seculars at the OFS National Elective Chapter in September 2016, who elected Lola Kelly from South Australia as the National Minister.

I was saddened in 2016 to hear of the death of Fr Benet Fonck OFM, the American friar who was General Spiritual Assistant to the OFS before me and who had so much to do with my succeeding him in Rome. My contact with Fr Benet and our shared interest in the Secular Franciscans determined the future direction of my life. We had been in contact since 1982 and had worked together very well. May my dear friend Benet rest in peace.

In 2018, I continued my spiritual assistance to the Secular Franciscans and web-mastered my site for Spiritual Assistants (<http://sfo.franciscans.org.au>). In February, I replaced Fr Norbert Pittorino OFM after he retired as local Spiritual Assistant to the Campbelltown Fraternity. The Korean local Fraternity was also a delight to serve. As Regional Spiritual Assistant to Western Australia, I cooperated with the Regional Minister, Angela McGuire, and the local promoter, Harry Argus, in establishing the OFS Fraternity in Kalgoorlie. Sadly, Harry died a few months afterwards. A great Franciscan, may he rest in peace.

Being the Regional Spiritual Assistant to both Western Australia and South Australia, I attended the General Visitation of the OFS, conducted by Augustine Yoon and Fr Pedro Zitha OFM. The Non-Elective Chapter of the National Fraternity, at Baulkham Hills, followed, from 14 to 16 September 2018.

Regrettably, I missed the OFS Regional Family Day hosted by the Campbelltown Fraternity on 29 September 2018. I heard that it was a great success, although they were expecting me to celebrate Mass in the Parish Hall when they found out that I was in hospital with pneumonia.

I missed three months of meetings with the local Fraternities but made up for them on 8 December 2018, when Campbelltown Fraternity hosted their Christmas celebration with the Poor Clares in Bethlehem Monastery, and on 14 December, when the Korean Fraternity held their Christmas celebration at Silverwater.

In 2019, I maintained contact with the Secular Franciscans in Australia and worldwide through my website SFO FILES, intended mainly for Spiritual Assistants but available to all, cost free. It reached readers in over thirty countries, the numbers varying from month to month. The largest numbers were in Australia, USA, India, the Russian Federation, Ukraine, Sweden, and Korea.

With the Provincial Secretary's publication in April of the Province's 2020 *Directory of Fraternities*, I found that I was no longer listed as the Regional Spiritual Assistant to the Secular Franciscans in South Australia and Western Australia but remained as the local Spiritual Assistant to the Campbelltown and Silverwater Fraternities.

The OFS Regional Fraternity of NSW/ACT held a Virtual Retreat by Zoom on 24-25 July 2020. As one of the four presenters, I spoke about, "St Francis's Experience of God and Jesus, and of People and Creation." The same Regional Fraternity celebrated St Francis feast day on 4 October 2020, when Fr Pedro Zitha OFM, General Spiritual Assistant in Rome, spoke by Zoom about, "The Relevance of the Franciscan Charism Today". Fr Pedro provided his written text and a PowerPoint presentation. I included all of this material in my website for Spiritual Assistants.

With a lull in the pandemic, Campbelltown's first OFS meeting was allowed in the Parish Hall on 21 January 2021. The Korean OFS met on 27 January and 10 April in the homes of their members at Ryde and Concord West.

Campbelltown's OFS Fraternity hosted a special session to stay connected with our National Fraternity members in 2021. On that occasion, I channeled the Pope's Message to the recent OFM General Chapter, "Arise... and Christ will give you light" (Eph 5:14), and adapted it to the OFS for their fraternity life after the pandemic. I even composed and sang a little ditty for them:

*After the war is over, after old Covid's through.  
When the pandemic's beaten, we're coming back to you!  
We'll enjoy our Fraternity's tea-break, and the Office, and Mass, and more,  
After old Covid's **busted**, after the war.*

### **Holy Land Commissary**

On my way to the USA in June 2015, I flew from Auckland through San Francisco to Washington DC, to attend the Meeting of English-speaking Commissaries of the Holy Land that the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in America hosted. It was like an in-service updating. With long-time friend, Brother Roger, I visited three Smithsonian museums, also St John Paul II National Shrine, and George Washington's Mount Vernon estate and the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Maryland. I flew out from Washington Dulles airport through Los Angeles to Sydney, arriving on 12 July 2015.

### **Schafer Family Tree**

In June 2015, I spent a week in New Zealand: three days in Auckland with the friars and with dear friends, then three days with my brother Terry and Rosie in Hastings. Terry's health was fine, but he was seriously ill in March 2017. I flew to Auckland, and Br Phillip drove me down to Hastings, where I spent some days reminiscing with Terry and anointed him. Rosie reported later that Terry was enjoying a new lease of life.



In addition to Rosie's splendid job of looking after Terry, she had done extensive research into the Schafer Family Tree. Through *Ancestry*, she delved into nine generations of Dad's forefathers, without discovering any scandals but making us proud of our solid stock of German artisans, all law-abiding Lutherans. Terry's DNA, and mine too, showed that we are only 8% German. The 92% derives mainly from "the British Isles". Rosie had not researched Mum's genealogy earlier than 1796. Mum's stalwart Irish forebears would have contributed also to our Celtic DNA.

Rosie had researched extensively the genealogy of my paternal great grandmother, Ellen Grady, who married Dad's grandfather, Heinrich Schafer. The Schafers entered my Family Tree late, around 1860.

### **Ten lines**

The trunk of the Schafer Family Tree dates back to the Celtic Britons in 130 BC! The Viking-Norman line dates from 365 AD. The Franks are another long line, from 510 AD. I traced ten lines, mainly in the British Isles:

130 BC: Beli Mawr, *Celtic Briton*.

5 AD: Caradog ap Bran, *Celtic*.

190 AD: Confer ap Cunedda, *Scot*.

320: Moindach King of Ulster, *Irish*.

365: Gor Torresson, *Viking*.

510: Ansbert, *Frankish*.

670: Eadwulf, *Northumberland*.

803: Bardanes, *Byzantine*.

849: King Alfred, *Anglo-Saxon*.

984: Crinan, *Scot*.

### **Ten Saints**

Rosie's notes also revealed eight obscure Saints and three better known ones in the Schafer Family Tree!

Saint Cawrdaf ap Caradog (born about 505), in Celtic Line Part One

Saint Tewdrig ap Llywarch (born in 505), in Cornish Line

Saint Arnulf (582-640), in Frankish Line Part One

Saint Dode van Sachsen (583-611), in Frankish Line Part One

Saint Ida (Itta) (597-652), in Frankish Line Part One

Saint Beggue (613-693), in Frankish Line Part One

Saint Cadwaladr Fendigaid ap Cadwallon (615-682), in Angles Mercian Line

Saint Theodora (810-862), in Turks, Greeks, Frankish Line Part One

Saint Aelffu (924-944), in Anglo-Saxon Line

Saint Vladimir the Great (957-1015), in Ukrainian Line

Saint Margaret of Scotland (1045-1093), in Frankish Line Part Five

### **Notable others**

At the risk of name dropping, Rosie pointed out some eminent great grandparents:

Western Emperor Flavius Maximus, who married a Celtic lass in Britain.

Emperor Charlemagne of the Franks. Many Western Europeans justly claim him.

Old King Cole of the Celts. He was not just a nursery rhyme character.

King Alfred of the Anglo-Saxons, well known only for burning the cakes.

Lady Godiva of the Angles, my favourite great grandmother! She protested against her husband's lack of care for the poor.

I made a delightful visit in 2011 to my Aunty Nita, who resided in John Paul Village, Heathcote. Nita, in her sprightly nineties, was the only surviving member of Dad's family. Nita's daughter, Trish, joined us while we perused my album of the Schafer Family Tree. Dublin Irish, London Cockneys, and Hessian Germans, featured colorfully among our recent forebears.

### **Health 2014 – 2020**

In 2014, I was in good health, thank the Lord. My workload and mobility were nothing like what they used to be, but the Secular Franciscan Order and the Holy Land Commissariat kept me happily occupied. In January, a regular colonoscopy at St Vincent's Clinic found a small polyp that proved to be benign.

The Medical Centre in Queen St, Campbelltown, ran a free comprehensive check-up in 2015 for the over 75s. After answering hundreds of questions covering all imaginable aspects of health, I ended up with a score of over 90%.

On the day before Anzac Day 2015, I concelebrated Mass at St Joseph's College, Hunters Hill. I was the oldest by far of the Old Boy priests present, having left the College in 1953. There, I had a reality check on my age that the medical check-up didn't include!

### **Dental cyst 2015**

A big problem surfaced with a root canal operation of forty years ago that didn't complete the job. In all those years, I had felt no pain from that tooth. I noticed only then that the gum was sensitive. My dentist's X-rays discovered a large cyst at the tip of the root, so Linda sent me to an Endodontic Surgeon who investigated and assessed the damage, finding a hole in the jawbone! On 3 August, Dr David Cable had me on my back for two hours and on 17 August for an hour and a half. On 14 September, he excised the cyst from the gum and

jaw in a four-hour operation and removed the sutures on 22 September 2015. After a long time, Dr Cable confirmed that new bone had successfully grown over the large hole in my jawbone. No needle these days, only a numbing application to the gum. The only discomfort was in lying on my back for hours in the dentist's chair, unable to move or to relieve myself with an elderly gentleman's problem.

### **Health issues 2016**

My memories of 2016 were dominated by issues of health: with regular visits to my GP but only an annual visit by then to my Oncologist; attending the Audio Clinic and securing hearing aids because of my very poor hearing; spending \$380 on a fruitless visit to a throat specialist at St Vincent's Clinic because of a constant unresolved problem with my voice; massive expenses with dental specialists over the removal of an abscess; preparing now for a routine colonoscopy after cancer that I suffered years previously, and for cataracts to be removed soon.

Despite the litany of shortcomings, in 2016, I enjoyed good health, thanks be to God, the giver of all good gifts. Then, a series of illnesses claimed my attention.

### **Cataracts 2017**

Waverley friary accommodated me for two nights, on March 10-11, 2017, for my first cataract operation and the post-operation checkup, which required a regime of eyedrops for four weeks. My second cataract operation, on 24 March, and the post-operation checkup, found me again in Waverley.

### **Hip operation 2018**

I had been staving off the worst effects of osteoarthritis for many years by daily 40-minute walks and physio exercises, but no longer. I had to undergo the operation to replace my right hip. I stayed at Waverley Friary from 31 October, then spent 1 November in the Pre-Admission Assessment in St Vincent's Clinic. On 8 November, Dr Quain at St Vincent's Private Hospital, Darlinghurst, replaced my right hip and put an end to severe osteoarthritic pain, from bone grinding on bone.

### **Rehabilitation**

After five days in bed, I moved into Rehabilitation, and exercised in the brand-new Gym at St Vincent's till 18 November, followed by six weeks more of rehabilitation with the friars at Waverley. I stayed until 20 December as the friary provided aged care and it was easy to return to St Vincent's on Wednesdays to continue formal physio in the Gym. On all other days, I did the usual physio exercises by myself in the friary. The friars thought that I cut a splendid ballet figure exercising on the corridor rail.

As recommended by my Surgeon, Dr Quain, after he replaced my right hip, I attended rehabilitation at Campbelltown Private Hospital on Thursdays for six weeks, beginning in February 2019.

## **Double vision 2015 and 2019**

On 7 September 2015, I took myself to a specialist with a problem of double vision. After extensive tests, the specialist could not determine the cause, so my GP sent me to another specialist, who diagnosed a palsied fourth nerve in the left eye. Both specialists thought that the eye would right itself after two or three months, and they proved to be correct: it took two months and a half. Thankfully, I didn't need an MRI.

Just when everything was back to normal after rehabilitation and the Good Friday Holy Land Collection was out of the way, around 22 April 2019, I developed a paralysis (palsy) of the sixth nerve in my left eye, leaving me again with double vision. I could see with each eye separately but could not focus the two eyes together on an object. I saw a specialist who said that the condition could last for three months. It did, for two months and a half. I could not drive or travel while double vision lasted. It affected my balance and walking ability.

## **Pneumonia 2019**

While attending the OFM Provincial Assembly at Waverley from 17 to 19 September, I woke up on 18 September, hardly able to breathe and suffering a solid thump in the chest, later diagnosed as pneumonia and pleurisy and fluid around the heart (pericarditis). St Vincent's General Hospital admitted me and discharged me five days later, too soon! I was readmitted on 27 September and had over a liter of fluid drained from my left lung. The hospital discharged me on 11 October for rehabilitation at Waverley Friary till 29 November. I stayed at Waverley to be close to St Vincent's complex of hospitals, where a crowd of specialists kept an eye on me with numerous appointments. They couldn't identify the infection that caused so much damage, but said it was some kind of "community acquired" virus. I guess that meant that it was just floating around!!

St Vincent's Hospital Outpatients cleared me, except for numerous day appointments with specialists at St Vincent's and my GP in Castlereagh Street Medical Centre, but I had won the battle to recover full health, thanks to the prayers of the Franciscan Family and others.

I had to cancel my flight to Jerusalem and my attendance at the IV International Congress for the Commissaries of the Holy Land, from 25 November till 2 December. I had planned to travel with Fr Anthony Malone OFM, the Commissary in New Zealand, but I didn't miss out completely. Anthony generously kept a dossier of all the presentations. On his return to NZ, he posted them to me.

After the trials of 2019, I bounced back in 2020 into good health, thank God.

## **Covid-19**

China's infamous gift to the world broke out in March 2020. We observed safe distancing and hand washing and our friaries were closed to visitors. Email, the landline, and mobile phones allowed contact outside the friary. One member of the Campbelltown OFS Fraternity proved to be positive but recovered.

On 25 March 2020, the Roman Congregation for the Sacraments cancelled the public celebration of the Easter Triduum, but on Palm Sunday with the Poor Clares, I followed the directions of the Congregation and used the third form of the liturgy without the blessing of palms and the procession into the church. On 10 and 12 April, Channel 7 News livestreamed the liturgy of Good Friday and Easter Sunday from St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney, without a congregation. We were living in extraordinary times!

On 6 January 2021, my GP vaccinated me against the flu, and on 5 March against Covid-19 with AstraZeneca for the first time. Six weeks after the first one, on 6 July, I received my second vaccination with AstraZeneca. I expected to receive a booster on 4 January 2022.

Since 24 June 2021, just when NSW had maintained a high reputation in managing the pandemic successfully, the Government clobbered us with another lockdown after a serious breakout of Covid-19. I had to cancel all appointments. I had anticipated a fitting of new hearing aids from Audika in Bondi Junction, which was ground zero location of the breakout! Fr Andrew Granc OFM happened to be staying briefly with us at Maryfields at the time. He couldn't leave us but had an enforced "holiday."

We friars celebrated the lifting of Sydney's months of lockdown later in 2021 with the Poor Clares at Bethlehem Monastery, since we couldn't celebrate St Francis Feast Day with them on 4 October. To look less like a long-haired hobo, before the midday Mass, I waited in a queue for two and a half hours to have a haircut. The fourteen men ahead of me, and the lengthy line after me, were a sorry sight, earning honks from passing cars. After being shorn, I joined a beeline to the Drycleaners to hand in a very soiled jacket.

## **Zoom 2020**

Campbelltown OFS Fraternity propelled me into Zoom in a practice run with three Councillors on 25 April 2020. As from the next day, all the OFS monthly meetings and the Council meetings were "zoomed".

The *Laudato si' Season of Creation* Webinar was broadcast by Zoom from Brisbane on 11 September 2020. Archbishop Mark Coleridge and Fr Daniel Horan OFM reflected on "Eucharist and Integral Ecology". They were splendid reflections. I constructed both of them from closed captions provided by YouTube and published them as articles in my website.

The celebration of Sunday eclipsed St Francis feast day on 4 October in 2020. Not put out, the Brisbane friars featured a "Chat" by Zoom on 5 October for all of us to celebrate St Francis together.

The Hume Deanery of Priests, centred in Campbelltown, conducted our meetings by Zoom in May and October 2020. We had a BBQ at the Presbytery on 28 October. It was a most welcome respite as the pandemic had confined us to home since March.

All meetings in recent months relied on Zoom. Brother Bill Short OFM, while holed up in Rome, conducted three Seminars of Franciscan interest in May and June 2021.

On 25 June 2021, Fr Frank Brennan SJ presented a fly-in-the-wall view of the debacle of the case of Cardinal Pell. He didn't spare the Victoria Police or Victoria's system of

justice.

Fr Steve Bliss OFM in Ipswich chaired another of his Questions and Answers sessions by Zoom in 2021. The friars welcomed the opportunity to see one another and to enliven the discussion, despite lockdown restrictions.

I enjoyed the entire week of presentations for Vocations Promotion, organized by the Capuchins while preparing for St Francis' feast day in 2021.

### **Maryfields estate 2020 -2021**

Developments of the Maryfields property were taking shape. On 29 November 2020, our Provincial Minister, Fr Phillip Miscamble OFM, accompanied by Government members, officially opened a Boot Camp, sponsored by the NSW Government, to train young people in trades. It is situated in the far corner of the property, bordered by the Hume Motorway and Narellan Road. The ornamental pear trees in blossom embellished our drive.

We enjoyed splendid weather through winter and into the spring of 2021. I spent forty minutes a day walking along the back garden path of the friary. Our miniature lemon and orange trees were heavy with blossom. Butcherbirds and magpies competed in their vocal repertoire. Two families of wood ducks paraded their ducklings. My window box of Korean pot-planted pansies bloomed profusely. I walked in the cool of the evening with the Lord.

On 18 August 2021, Wayne Camenzuli, who is in charge of the development of Maryfields estate, brought a tree specialist to check the trees of Maryfields property with an eye out for koalas and their habitat. We had sighted kangaroos, blue tongued lizards, a hefty goanna, and also foxes, feral cats, rabbits galore and snakes - red-bellied black and one deadly brown - but no koalas.

Late in August 2021, our community was shocked and saddened by the death of the Groundman of Maryfields property. Floyd Della Lucia hanged himself from a tree by the roadside in the property. Floyd was not married. The friars and the Poor Clares appreciated his exceptional dedication. The nuns conducted a Service of Prayer in their chapel on 2 September. Friars Paul and John attended Floyd's funeral at Leppington the next day, which I watched by Zoom.

### **Requiem**

#### **My sister Margaret**

When I was only seven years of age, my sister Margaret started nursing at the Mater Hospital, Waratah. We didn't really know each other until I resided at Campbelltown from 1999 and enjoyed occasional visits to Marge and Norman Ansell, at Fairy Meadow in Wollongong. To our surprise, we learnt that we were likeminded. After Norm died, Marge moved to St Joseph's Aged Care in Hunters Hill. My dear sister died on 9 July 2019. Four days later, I celebrated her Requiem Mass and funeral, which my brother John attended, whom I hadn't seen for years. A joyful reunion with my elder brother compensated for a sad farewell to my very dear sister.

## **Our Franciscan Family**

Sister Death paid us five visits since April 2020. Bethlehem Poor Clare, Sr Veronica Karooz OSC, died on 30 April. We attended her Requiem Mass and Burial in the nuns' cemetery nearby. Fr Theophane Rush OFM died on 31 May, at St Joseph's Centre, Kensington. Fr Norbert Pittorino OFM died on 23 June at the Sacred Heart Hospice, Darlinghurst. Sr Pauline Mary Babicci OSC, of the North Richmond Poor Clares, died on 1 October at Blacktown Hospital. Sr Clare Donegan OSC died, aged 99, on 11 November. We friars attended Sr Clare's Transitus on 16 and her funeral on 17 November. The Requiem Masses of Fr Theophane, Fr Nobert, and Sr Pauline Mary were livestreamed on Zoom from Mary Immaculate Church, Waverley.

## **Close friends**

Without the collusion of Covid-19, Sister Death visited my close friends in 2021. Frank Lloyd had been my schoolmate at St Joseph's, Hunters Hill; Joe Francois, whose Mauritian family lived in Rosemeadow; Geoff Dobbin, my shipmate in the RANR; and June Fabbro, from Edgecliff Parish. I concelebrated the Requiem Mass for each of these cherished friends. Not long previously, I had buried Joe's wife Rosemary, and Geoff's wife Doranne, and June's husband Rinaldo.

## **My Noviciate companions**

With the death of Fr Anthony Stott OFM on 22 December 2021, after years spent in St Joseph's Aged Care, Kensington, the friars of my Noviciate year number only two: Fr Christopher Gardiner OFM and me. I joined Christopher at Waverley Friary after my 85<sup>th</sup> anniversary in February 2022. My GP had not seen me for two years owing to the lockdowns and recommended that I move to Waverley for nursing care.

## ***MY LIFE IN A DAY***

My day as a Christian, is a miniature of my life. Waking and getting up is like being born. My shower is literally a baptism. My morning prayer raises my mind and heart to God the Father and to God's creation and providence, and to Jesus, the Lord of my life.

With my first prayer of the day, I join my family and community and the entire Body of Christ. "We adore you, most holy Lord, Jesus Christ, and we bless you, because by your holy cross you have redeemed the world."

I recall the words of Jesus: "If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross every day and follow me" (Luke 9:23). "Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light" (Matthew 11:28-30).

My response covers all the aspects of my life. As a Christian, it is: "My God, I offer

you my prayers, works, joys and suffering of today, (as a Catholic) for the intentions of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, in union with Mary's Immaculate Heart, (as a Franciscan) with St Francis and St Clare and with all the Saints, and (personally) with all my ancestors, both saints and sinners."

My Mass of the day is like a priceless gem in the setting of the Liturgy of the Hours, which is the Church's official prayer.

I live the day through morning, midday, afternoon, and evening, and retire to sleep with a final prayer; "Save us, Lord, while we are awake, protect us while we sleep, that we may keep watch with Christ and rest with him in peace."

### ***POSTSCRIPT***

I finished writing my Autobiography on my 85<sup>th</sup> Birthday Anniversary, 14 February 2022.

I had ample sources to call upon, especially the letters written to my family and friends since entering the Franciscan Noviciate at Maryfields, Campbelltown, in 1956. In the years in Rome, I knew that I could never remember my extensive travels without keeping photo albums and commentaries. How to keep more than sixty albums now poses a problem.

I think thankfully of the many people who have contributed to my life, first of all my Mum and Dad, who gave me God's precious gift of life. My eldest sister, Wilma, nurtured me like the child who she could not have.

The 1940s and 1950s were healthy and peaceful times for me. My Cohort, 1930 to 1945, was dubbed, "the Silent Generation." We were not expected to create waves or to move the world.

I was blessed with excellent teachers, Dad, and Mum for a start. The De La Salle Brothers in Katoomba and the Marist Brothers at Hunters Hill spent their lives, sharing with us their vibrant Catholic faith. Brother Leo FSC, the stalwart of St Bernard's, and Brother Liguori FMS, the Maths Master at St Joseph's, stood out from many excellent religious men. Although academics were the love of my life, I never added a degree to my name. Overseas study did not eventuate, but I managed without.

I was fortunate to be a Franciscan before, during, and after the Second Vatican Council of the Catholic Church. The year of Noviciate with Fr Peter Waters OFM was the healthiest and happiest year of my life. In the following years, in Philosophy and Theology and until Ordination, all our professors, called Lectors, were highly qualified Franciscan friars.

I was engaged with the Third Order of St Francis in Singapore and New Zealand before their new Rule of the Secular Franciscan Order was promulgated in 1978. In Auckland, I met the friar who determined the course of my life for the next forty years. Fr Benet Fonck OFM, the General Spiritual Assistant to the SFO, visited us in 1982 and 1984, and had me appointed to the SFO Office in Rome. In 1985, I succeeded Fr Benet as the General Spiritual Assistant, and completed the statutory twelve years in that appointment, and



the next twelve years as National Spiritual Assistant in Oceania and then in Australia without the other components of Oceania that had become National Fraternities in their own right.

I served as Regional Spiritual Assistant to South Australia and to Western Australia until I was dropped out of the official list in 2020. Thankfully, I am still the local Spiritual Assistant to the Korean Fraternity in Silverwater and to the Campbelltown Fraternity, completing the circle of Spiritual and Pastoral Assistance.

Three women in New Zealand influenced my eventual decision to write a biography, and the lockdown during the Covid-19 pandemic offered me ample time to write it. Josephine (Jo) Jones, who shared my love of music and the Liturgy, received my letters from Rome and often requested that I write a biography. Kilian de Lacey wrote her own biography and shared it with me. Rosemary (Rosie) Marriott, my brother Terry's wife, generously supported my efforts after she completed her extensive research of our Ancestry.

I am most indebted to Marianne Wagner, from St Declan's Church in Penshurst, in Sydney, and to her sister Erica, whose professional expertise has been invaluable in editing my amateur text.

I am deeply moved by the Angel Flights by which the United States Air Force flies home Fallen Soldiers: "Come on, brother, I'm taking you home." It's a fine example of secular liturgy, which means, "the work of the people."

Our traditional Catholic liturgy conducts "angel flights" in the final processional hymn that the choir sings in Latin as the deceased is taken from the church: "May the Angels lead you into paradise: may the martyrs receive you at your coming, and lead you into the holy city, Jerusalem. May the choir of Angels receive you, and with Lazarus, who once was poor, may you have everlasting rest."

I would love to think that the choir will sing "In paradisum" when they take me home.

**SCHAFFER FAMILY TREE**  
**130 BC – 2022 AD**

**British**

Beli Mawr 130 BC  
I  
Afallach ap Beli Mawr 100 BC  
I  
Euddolen ap Afallach  
ap Euddolen  
I  
Deheuvrant ap  
I  
Tegfan ap Deheuvrant  
I  
Coel Hen ap Tegfan (“Old King Cole”)

Gadeon ap Cynan (Cornish) I  
St Tewdrig ap Llŵarch I

Arthrwys ap Tewdrig

I

Vortigen ap Gwïdol 380

Brawstead verch Gloud – Arthfael Hen ap Rhys

I

Owain ap Hywel 855-930 – Nest verch Rhodri Mawr

I

Morgan Hen Mawr ap Owain

I

Morgan ap Morgan Hen b. 918

Idwallon ap Morgan 945-1021

Ithel ap Idwallon 980-1042

Gwrgan ap Ithel 1010

Lestyn ap Gwrgan 1045-1093

Gwenlian verch Lestyn b. 1065 -- Drymbenog ap Maernrych b. 1065

Moreiddig Warwyn ap Drymbenog b. 1080

Llewellyn ap Moreiddig 1110-1184

Seisyll ap Llewellyn b. 1145

Hywel ap Seisyll b. 1200

Gwrgan ap Hywel b. 1220

Gosami ap Gwrgan b. 1240

Gwilym ap Gosami b. 1263

Hywel ap Gwilym b. 1290

Hywel Fychan ap Hywel 1313-1355 -- verch Cradock b. 1320

John Hywel (Howell)

Nest verch Hywel 1328-1395 -- Owain ap Einion b. 1355

Llewellyn ap Owain b. 1348

Mrfanwy verch Llewellyn b. 1385 -- Gruffudd 1395-1453

Lleucu verch Gruffudd 1425-1455 -- Dafydd ap Einion Fychan b. 1425

Maredudd ap Dafydd 1450

William Fychen ap Maredudd

Elise ap William 1500

**Romano British**

**Wales**

I  
 John “Wyn” ap Leuan 1530  
 Lewys ap John “Wyn”, Bishop Lewis Jones, 1560-1642 -- Mabel Ussher  
 Bishop Henry Jones 1605-1681 -- Jane Culme 1600-1642  
 Captain John Jones 1629  
 John Jones 1688-1757  
 Amelia Jones 1722-1788 --Thomas Kennan  
 I  
 Jane Kennan -- Joseph Eyres  
 I  
 Sarah Eyres – Felix Carney  
 I  
 Rohese Trussebot – Everard de Ros  
 Robert de Ros – Isabel of Scotland  
 Baron Thomas de Musgrave – Margaret de Ros...  
 Margarett Musgrave --William Sage  
 Jane Carney – William Grady. Rosetta Grady. Daniel Grady -Anne Sage.  
 I  
 Ellen Grady – Heinrich Schafer – Johann Melchior, to Hans b. 1633  
 I  
 Anne Eleanore Wildbore-Walter Paine  
 I  
 Eleanore Sarah Paine-F.P. Julius Weicht -Henry Philip Wicht  
 I  
 Clara Wicht -- Adam Keith Schafer  
 I  
 Leslie Philip Schafer  
 I  
 Leonard Francis Schafer  
 Friar Carl OFM

**Ussher  
Fortescue**

**Kennan**

**Carney**

**Grady**

**Schafer**

## ***MAP OF MY LIFE***

Date of birth: 14 February 1937

### **COHORT: THE SILENT GENERATION (1930-1945)**

<i>Years</i>	<i>Place</i>	<i>Occupation</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Stage</i>
<b>FIRST DECADE: 1936-45: DEPRESSION AND WAR:</b>				
1937	Paddington Daceyville	Royal Women's St Michael's Church	<i>birth</i> 14 February <i>Baptism</i> 14 March	
1937-43	Eastlakes Gilgai	home primary school	0-18mths 1-5yrs 6	<i>Childhood</i>
1944-47	Dudley	primary school	7-10	<i>Boyhood</i>
1945	Redhead	supplied from Adamstown	First Confession First Communion	
<b>SECOND DECADE: 1946-55: PEACE AND PROSPERITY:</b>				
1947	Charlestown	St Mary Immaculate	<i>Confirmation</i>	
1947-48	Katoomba	primary school	11	
1949-51	Katoomba	St Bernard's College St Canice's Church	12-14 Altar Server	<i>Adolescence</i>
1951			<i>Intermediate Certificate</i>	
1952-53	Hunters Hill	St Joseph's College	15-16	
1953			<i>Leaving Certificate</i>	
1954		Parramatta	apprentice	17
1955		Sydney University	Pharmacy	18

**THIRD DECADE: 1956-65: HOPE AND DISAPPOINTMENT**

1956	Campbelltown Franciscan novice		17 February	
1957		Maryfields		<i>Simple Profession,</i> 18 February
1957-59	Mornington	Philosophy	20-22	
1960		Greyfriars		<i>Solemn Profession,</i> 27 February
1960-63	Box Hill	Theology	23-26	
				Diaconate 21 February
1963	Waverley	Mary Immaculate		<i>Ordination</i> 13 July
1964-65	Waverley	pastoral year	27	
	Kedron	teacher: Latin, and basic five sciences	28	
1965	Robertson	teacher: Greek, and Hebrew, English	28	

**FOURTH DECADE: 1966-75: ADJUSTMENT AND CHANGE:**

1966-71	Waverley	editor <i>SC</i>	29-37	
		editor <i>FN</i> 29-36		<i>First Adulthood</i>
		chaplain RANR 30-39		
		retreats to Religious 33-48		
1971-72	Manila, P.I.	student: EAPI, Diploma of Religious Education	34-35	
1972-73	Waverley	editor <i>Sursum Corda</i> and <i>Franciscan Newsletter</i> Chaplain RANR		
1973-74	Box Hill	editor <i>Sursum Corda</i> 37 Chaplain RANR 37 Retreats to Religious		

**FIFTH DECADE: 1976-85: REBIRTH AND RENEWAL:**

1975-77	Singapore	Superior Retreats to Religious TOSF Local Assistant	38-40 39-40	
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1978-83	Auckland	SFO Regional Assist. 41-43 SFO Local Assistant 44-46 retreats to laity 41-46 pioneer of Serra Club 42-46	41-43 44-46 41-46 42-46	<i>Second Adulthood</i>
1984-85	Rome	SFO Vice-Assistant to Religious	47-48 48	
1985	Assisi	Minutes Secretary of General Chapter	48	

**SIXTH DECADE: 1986-95: IMPLANTATION AND CONSTRUCTION:**

1985-97	Rome	SFO General Assistant	48-60	<i>Age of Mastery</i>
1988		<i>25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination</i>	51	
1990	Holy Land Custody	First Pastoral Visit to SFO	53	
1991	San Diego USA	Secretary OFM General Chapter	54	
1994	Holy Land Custody	Second Pastoral Visit to SFO	57	

**SEVENTH DECADE: 1996-2005: CONSOLIDATION:**

1996-97	Rome	SFO General Assistant (cont.)	59-60	
1998		Israel Hernia surgery 8/12	Sabbatical Year	61 Rome
1999-2005	<b>Campbelltown</b>	Vicar of Maryfields Friary SFO Nat. Assist. Oceania SFO Reg. and Loc. Assist.	68 62-68 63-68	
2002		Pensioner	65	
2003-2005		Assistant Novice Master	66-68	

**EIGHTH DECADE: 2006-2015: COMPLETION:**

2006	<b>Waverley</b>	SFO National Assistant. 69-76 SFO Regional Assistant 69-83 SFO Local Assistant. 69	<i>Age of Integrity</i>
2007		<b><i>50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Profession</i></b> Three months' leave 6-8	70
2007-2009		Vicar of Waverley Friary Commissary of Holy Land 2007-2019	70-72 70-82
2008		Franciscan Youth Gathering World Youth Day organizer	71
2009		Lymphoma surgery 22/8 Chemotherapy 9-12	72
2010		Hernia surgery 5/2	73
2011		Vicar of Waverley Friary Commissaries, Washington  Commissaries, Jerusalem	74-76 75
2012		<b><i>50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Ordination</i></b> Bell's Palsy 9/7-10/8	76
2013	<b>Campbelltown</b>	OFS Reg. and Loc. Assistant Commissary of Holy Land	77
2014		Commissaries, Washington	78

**NINTH DECADE: 2016-2025: FOR THOSE WHO ARE STRONG:**

2017		<b><i>80<sup>th</sup> Birthday</i></b> , 14 February	80
		60 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Simple Profession, 18 Feb	
2018		Right hip replacement 8 Nov	81
2019		Double Vision 24 April-1 July Pneumonia, pleurisy, pericarditis 18 Sept-11 Oct Handover of Holy Land Commissariat November	82 26
2020		Cataract operations, 10 & 24 March	

Replaced as OFS Regional Assistant  
of SA and WA, April 83

2021	Covid-19 Vaccinations	84
2022	<i>85<sup>th</sup> Birthday</i> . Autobiography	85

*Blessed Trinity,  
Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,  
I thank you  
for choosing me to live,  
for calling me to follow Jesus,  
and for keeping me in your care.*

May Our Lord bless abundantly the kind person who will write the final entry in the  
*Map of My Life*