

**Eulogy for Fr. Donald Bracht, S.M.
Fr. Tom Schroer, SM**

“The best way to build bridges between the land of the dead and the land of the living is to tell and retell the story of those who are gone” (*Middletown, America – Gail Sheehy*)

And so, we tell the story, at least in its briefest summary and outline form, of Donald Frederick Bracht.....

Born in Toledo, Ohio September 22, 1913 – exactly 94 yrs ago today

Born to the late Lawrence and Cora (Lenz) Bracht

Don also has one surviving sister, Catherine Nerone, of Cleveland, Ohio, who is in a nursing home and could not make it....

However, fortunately, the family is represented by her son and Don’s nephew, Michael and his wife, Sandra, and their son, Anthony.

We welcome them and thank them for joining us in giving thanks for Don’s life and ushering him into eternal life.

Early in Don’s life, his family moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where he eventually attended and graduated from Cathedral Latin High School.

Don professed first vows here at Mount St. John on August 15, 1931 – more than 76 yrs ago. He graduated from the University of Dayton in 1934 and professed perpetual vows there on September 12, 1935, in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception.

His seminary experience, which took place during the war years, was well travelled and quite diverse. He began at the Cincinnati Archdiocesan Seminary in Norwood, Ohio in 1940...Mt. St. Mary’s. His second and third year were spent at the Catholic University of America in Washington, DC, with his final year at St. Meinrad Seminary under the auspices of the Benedictines in southern Indiana.

He was ordained in Cincinnati on May 29, 1943. He also received a master's degree in history from Catholic University of America in 1949 with a dissertation on "The U.S. Supreme Court and the Matter of Religion from 1920 to 1940."

Although Don's formative years were spent east of the Mississippi, his years of ministry were spent west of the Mississippi, beginning with his first assignment as a teacher at Trinity High School in Sioux City, Iowa in 1934.

After the seminary he became the first Marianist priest at St. Joseph High School in Alameda, California, in the bay area. He was a pioneer in many other ways in the life of the former Pacific Province.

He was in the community that in 1949 initiated a postulate for the new Pacific Province – Chaminade High School in Santa Cruz on that beautiful property overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

When the postulate was moved to Cheviot Hills and was integrated into the high school in 1952 Don was on the first faculty as teacher and chaplain. He was then tapped as principal/director of Junipero Serra High School in Gardena, California. The following year – only its second principal....

In 1960 he became the first director of the Marianist Mission in the former Pacific Province – first in San Francisco and later in Cupertino and was involved in that work for almost forty years....and he excelled – especially reconnecting with the alumni of our schools -- organizing alumni dinners, establishing a newsletter, visiting, praying for and in some cases burying them. During that period he was also a popular retreat director.

Given that Don spent more than 50 years in California and much of it in the San Francisco area, it is not completely surprising that Bro. Paul Merland – who was sharing a room with him back in May and June – reported that one night, Don sang "I Left My Heart In San Francisco" in its entirety and in tune – and he certainly had a commanding voice and I'm sure he was an excellent singer.

Paul also reported that Don sang "School days, school days, glorious school days" also during the night. Don was a lot of fun and there was a distinctive, lovable, child-like quality about him.

My most endearing memory of Don was one day in which I asked him how he was doing. He responded, "I'm doing OK. I'm blind and I can't hear, but I'm

doing ok," he continued with a smile and his distinctive deep, strong laugh. And then a tear formed in his eye and rolled down his cheek.

Courage and humor and faith to the end – A marvelous man – a marvelous life.

We must give thanks for such a wonderful man and his life as a Marianist religious. We also must thank those who cared for Don to the end.

The caring and professional staff at Mercy-Siena....

The Marianist community at Mercy-Siena, many of whom are here this morning....

We especially thank Fr. Bob Backherms, who had a special bond with Don and back in June before his own illness and hospitalization selected our readings for today's Mass.

We thank Bro. Nick Rufo, Bro. Joe Mariscalco, Judy Moehl, our medical coordinator, and Kim Evans, her associate, for their special care for Don and all of our men at Mercy Siena.

As Don returns to the San Francisco area, may he rest in peace and may all the souls of the faithful departed through the mercy and compassion of God rest in peace.