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ST. PETER'S ABBEY NEWSLETTER



Return to Cluny

In 1881 St. Vincent's Archabbey, Latrobe, Penn., purchased land near Wetaug, Ill., for the establishment of a priory. The monastery, named Cluny, was about 340 miles south of Chicago. Raised to the status of an independent priory in 1892, under the leadership of Father Oswald Moosmueller, OSB, the monastery survived considerable obstacles. However, the death of Father Oswald (1901) and deteriorating financial conditions eventually led the priory to accept an invitation in 1902 to transfer to Saskatchewan. The Cluny monastery, renewed with assistance and manpower from St. John's Abbey in Collegeville, Minn., became St. Peter's in 1903. Of the monks who came to St. Peter's, the following were originally from Cluny: Prior Peter Windschiel, Fathers Matthias Steger, Benedict Steigenberger, Rudolph Palm, John Balfrey, Leo Ojdowsky, and Bernard Schaeffler and Brother Rhabanus Canonge.

Since the move to Muenster, monks from St. Peter's Abbey have returned to the site of their monastic predecessors only twice: in 1929, when Fathers Leo Ojdowski and Bernard Schaeffler returned to exhume part of the remains of Father Oswald and bring them back to St. Peter's for reburial; and in 1976, when Father Andrew Britz and Brother Bede Hubbard visited the site Aug. 1-3. The site of Cluny is 20 miles north of Cairo, Ill. Brother Bede gives us the following account of their visit.

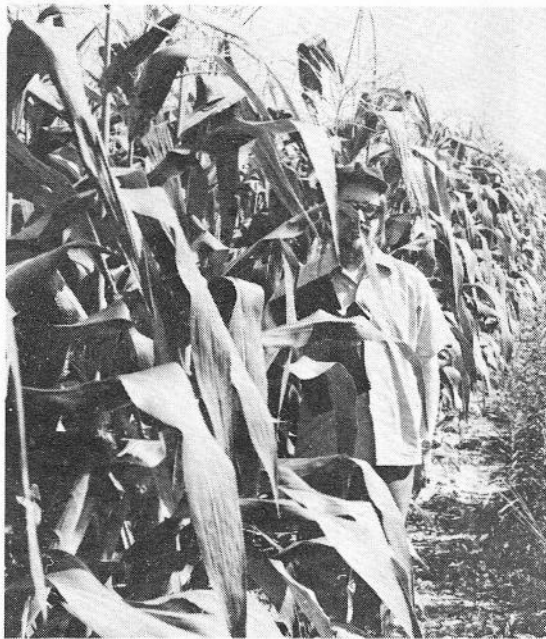
As Father Andrew and I drove deeper into the tip of the southern triangle of Illinois, we observed various transformations. The earth carried a definite red hue. The trees multiplied in lushness, size and variety. The landscape became more hilly, with bare outcroppings of red limestone rock. Six-foot-tall swampy grass with palm-like leaves grew in the ditches. Dark, almost black, butterflies flew about in the hot summer air. The accents of gas station attendants and waitresses were definitely southern in tone and drawl, while the plug-in for our Honda's blockheater and the frostshields on our car windows became a topic for conversation.

At noon on Sunday, Aug. 1, we stopped at Rend Lake, curious about the hundreds of drowned trees along the highway. The lake, we discovered, was one sight no Cluny confrere had ever seen, for though only 50 miles north of Wetaug, it was a new, man-made lake begun in 1968 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers as a flood control measure.

COVER

The grave of Father Oswald Moosmueller (inset) at Wetaug, Ill., was marked by a beautiful marble tombstone which was donated by the Negroes of Savannah, Ga., among whom Father Oswald had worked. According to an eyewitness, when the skull and forearms were removed from Father Oswald's grave in 1929, the tombstone was broken and dumped into the grave before it was refilled. (Photo, taken in 1918, and information courtesy of Miss Rose Spence, Cairo, Ill., and Belleville diocese.)

Those 18,900 acres of water were to be both the symbol of and the key to our Cluny discoveries. Flood control and land drainage had marked the end to Prior Peter Windschiel's memories of floods, mosquitoes, malaria and impossible farming conditions. We instead were entering a



The cornfield in which Brother Bede is standing shows the fertility of the land at Cluny. The height of the corn is remarkable since the growing season was not yet over.



This hill was the site of the monastery of Cluny. The priory is believed to have been built in the area shown in the foreground of the picture. The large barn was built on the hill.

fertile country with apple and peach orchards, fields capable of bearing two crops a year and full now with eight-foot-tall corn, and even an occasional oil well.

At 3:10 p.m. we found Wetaug. A quiet village with no stores, a fallen down, rusted metal-covered garage, a Pentecostal assembly hall and 56 men, women and children, according to local count. Prior Peter's description of a thriving town also faded into the past. No major railroad watering-stop now; the 10,000 gallon spring had dried up after a minor earth tremor many years ago. The former stores, saloons and grain mill had been razed in 1903, victims of a series of 13 fires, all mysteriously appearing around two in the morning.

Worst of all, the roads we had counted on for discovering the site of Cluny Priory had disappeared. Brambles, horse weed and poison ivy or else concrete and asphalt highways sprang up instead to change the landscape as pictured on an old map we had copied back in the archives at St. Peter's.

For an hour and a half we drove, got lost, circled back and tried again. Our map was useless,

our eyes found no suitable ruins, and the roads we needed were no longer in existence. Until this time we had hesitated about meeting the local people. We were Catholics in a very Protestant region (one Catholic church in all Pulaski County according to an American Catholic directory). We were bearded foreigners amid a people whom Prior Peter had remembered as "uncivilized Negroes and unbelieving whites".

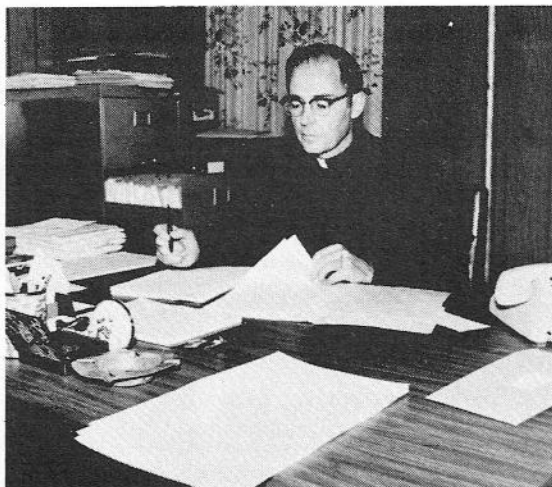
We were mistaken again. A considerate farmer, listening to what must have been for him incoherent questions about a former monastery and roads disappearing off old maps, sent us to his neighbor. "Walter Dillow's been here for years. If anything's old around here, he'll know about it."

Walter and Louise Dillow were the embodiments of southern courtesy. A retired school teacher and presently a Cumberland Presbyterian deacon, Mr. Dillow drove us out to what he thought was the site of Cluny Priory. (He identified the farm land correctly, but the actual site of the buildings turned out to be about half a mile farther southeast.) Both he and his wife escorted us to Wetaug, where they risked poison ivy and rusted

barbed wire fences to find the sites of the old cemeteries. (The Catholic cemetery, where Prior Oswald Moosmueller was first buried, is no longer in use, but Father Engelbert Leist's mother's gravestone is still there, in good condition.) They took us into their home for cold drinks and fresh popped corn and then, after a short sermon on the benefits of ecumenism, sent us off with mutual blessings.

Mr. and Mrs. Dillow were to be representative of the many helpful and interested people around Wetaug: Father Vito Lapardo, pastor of St. Mary's in Anna, where we found the Wetaug baptismal and marriage register, with its first entry, dated Sept. 4, 1881, signed "P. Augustinus Schneider, O.S.B." Michael Johnson, with the oral history program at Shawnee Junior College, Ullin, who found us transcripts of interviews with references to the "Priests' Farm" as the Cluny site is still called today. "Doc" Ulrich, the Gondola veterinarian, who shared with us his memories and gave us directions to his brother's home near Grand Chain. Jim and Gene Ulrich, with their sister Mrs. Beryl Little, who have a special interest of their own in Cluny history, since their family lived in Cluny Priory for three years after the monks had left. Mrs. Jim Ulrich, who interviewed Father Andrew and myself and publicized our appeal for pictures of Cluny in the Cairo Evening Citizen. Miss Rose Spence of Cairo, whom we never had the pleasure of meeting, but who later read Mrs. Ulrich's interview and sent us the only photographs we have of the Cluny barn and priory. Dr. Jack Beadles, an historian who was trying to preserve southern Illinois history and who wanted a monument erected in Prior Oswald's memory because he had "such a determined will to succeed". Grace Moyers at the county office in Mound City, whose father had surveyed the priory land and had drawn the very map we had photocopied at St. Peter's. Msgr. Bernard Sullivan, chancellor of the Belleville diocese, who opened for us the diocesan archive's file on Cluny and later sent us photocopies of its contents.

Hospitality, memories and interest there were in abundance. Buildings, ruins and sites, however, were not so easily found. The Wetaug church, at which Father Oswald had ministered, was now only a few foundation stones lost in the shadows of giant, gnarled thorn trees. The priory farm land was now sliced by State Highway 51 and Interstate 57. No one today lives on its now fertile and rich



Father Leo Hinz, director of the Marriage Tribunal for Saskatchewan and Manitoba, works on a petition for annulment in his office at the Pastoral Centre, Regina. Father Leo began work there on Jan. 1, 1975. Last year he rendered final decisions on 100 cases; however, 180 cases came into his office. Prior to working in Regina, Father Leo worked for three years as defender of the bond in the Vancouver Marriage Tribunal. He received his degree in canon law from St. Paul's University, Ottawa, in 1953.

land; it is owned by a corporation of attorneys headed by an Iowa congressman.

The huge, two storey barn, with its hand-hewn walnut beams and its three thirty-foot-square cupolas, burnt in 1939. Rumors say it was arson. It had been the largest barn in southern Illinois (70 feet by 140 feet); some said the largest in the state. Part of the barn's foundation still stands, but we discovered its existence too late to explore it.

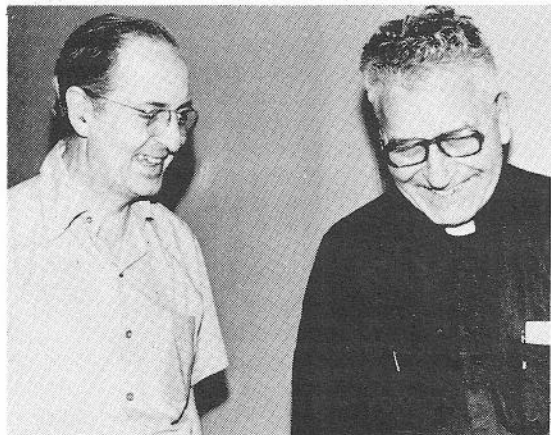
The priory itself blew down, perhaps in the '40s. After the few surviving members of the community had left, eventually to come to Canada, the building may have been used for a few years more as a school; no one remembers for sure. Father Andrew and I surveyed a hill of rubble, surmising that it may have been the site of the priory. Thorns, nettles, weeds and tall, summer-dried grass covered the mound where once may have stood a monastery large enough to hold 50 men. Pieces of quarried limestone lay scattered around our feet, broken, like Prior Oswald's hopes for a new Cluny. It seemed so ironical that now, years later, the

farm land could easily support a monastery, and that ecumenism and the Shawnee College would now provide a better welcome than had been possible 80 years ago.

A few inches from my left foot a fat, gray snake moved through the grass. I hastily abandoned my reminiscences and the site.

After hurrying back through the cornfield, trying not to panic as I remembered the varieties of local poisonous snakes (rattlers, cottonmouth and the highland moccasin) and crawling on top of the Honda (to survey the priory site at a safe distance), I felt peeved at myself for not having at least taken a picture of the snake. I began to doubt its dangerous intentions and wondered instead whether Prior Peter had purposefully sent the snake. Perhaps to remind me that some things at Wetaug were still the same. Or maybe a little shock treatment to snap me out of my despondency over Cluny's failure.

For who are we to say that Cluny failed? It is still a vivifying force in the memories and pride of its now hospitable neighbors. It is capable still of stirring interest in historians and would-be archeologists. Its gift of life certainly was essential for its successor, 1,300 miles away to the north, in Canada. It was the sale of Cluny's land and buildings which made possible the monastery and its first building project at Muenster. New Cluny had died that St. Peter's might live. Who was to call that failure?



Dr. Thomas Francoeur, McGill University, Montreal, shares a joke with Father Alfred Engele during the abbey summer workshop, Aug. 23-27. Over 80 monks, Sisters and lay people attended the sessions.

Guestmaster's diary

The summer months have been busy ones at St. Peter's.

A week-long baseball school early in July and five separate sessions of week-long hockey schools (500 boys!) kept Bro. Douglas Schmidt busy through July and August as "chore-boy", an always willing and cheerful one.

Also in July, the Carlton Trail Community College held its two-week summer arts and crafts workshops at St. Peter's.

Two groups of Sisters of St. Elizabeth made directed retreats at the abbey. A number of Ursuline Sisters and lay people made private retreats. The staff of the Anglican divinity school, Emmanuel-St. Chad, Saskatoon, spent the last weekend of July at the abbey planning for their coming school term.

Lay people occasionally come to the abbey to spend their holidays, and if these coincide with a busy season, they pitch right in. Thus Al Charron of Winnipeg and Joe Bernard of Carey, Ohio, spent several weeks in the hay fields and gardens of the abbey farm. Pat Shanahan of Watson, a former student, also spent a few days picking peas and beans before going to the London School of Economics on scholarship from the University of Saskatchewan.

Helmut Schmidt of Menden, Westphalia, visited the abbey, Aug. 23-25 on his way home after a year spent at the University of British Columbia on a Rotary International Scholarship. Mr. Schmidt, who speaks English fluently, will pursue doctoral studies in biology at the University of Muenster, Germany. He was intrigued with the rich farmland around the abbey, a countryside much like that of Westphalia.

In the week of Aug. 16-31, 30 Saskatchewan teachers studied the Kodaly choral method at St. Peter's under the direction of Bro. Thomas Gerwing. They were an enthusiastic, hard-working group, and their closing program at the end of the week indicated the creative skill they bring to their teaching.

Dr. Thomas Francoeur, head of the department of Catholic Studies at McGill University, Montreal, lectured at the abbey from Aug. 23-27. Eighty monks, Sisters and lay people of the abbacy attended this inspiring series of talks.

Greg Schulte arrived at the abbey on Aug. 27 and will stay most of the winter. He is preparing a

piano repertoire in anticipation of studying in Germany in the spring. Meanwhile he is playing for the daily eucharist at the abbey and will be accompanist for the St. Peter's Adult Chorus.

Mr. and Mrs. Ron Richardson of Owosso, Mich. visited Sr. Maristella (one of six people living the eremitical life at St. Peter's) over the Labor Day weekend.

The Sept. 17-19 weekend saw much varied activity at the abbey. The Saskatchewan Speed Skaters Association held an off-ice workshop; the Campus Ministry of the University of Saskatchewan held a weekend conference; the second session of the fall Marriage Preparation Course met on Sunday and assorted other guests included relatives of Father Albert Ruetz from Ontario and four Franciscans.

On the weekend of Sept. 24-26 the council of the university's Students' Union met at the abbey. On the council is a former St. Peter's College student, Carey Kraus.

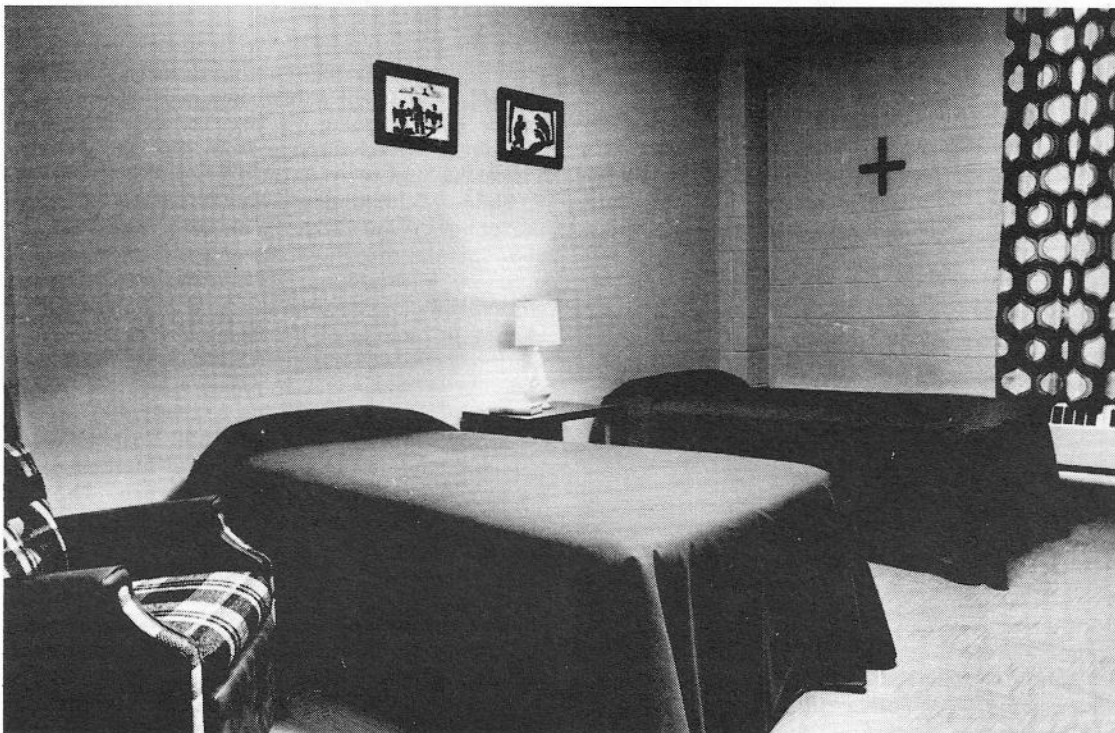
Confrere's addresses

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Rome 00153
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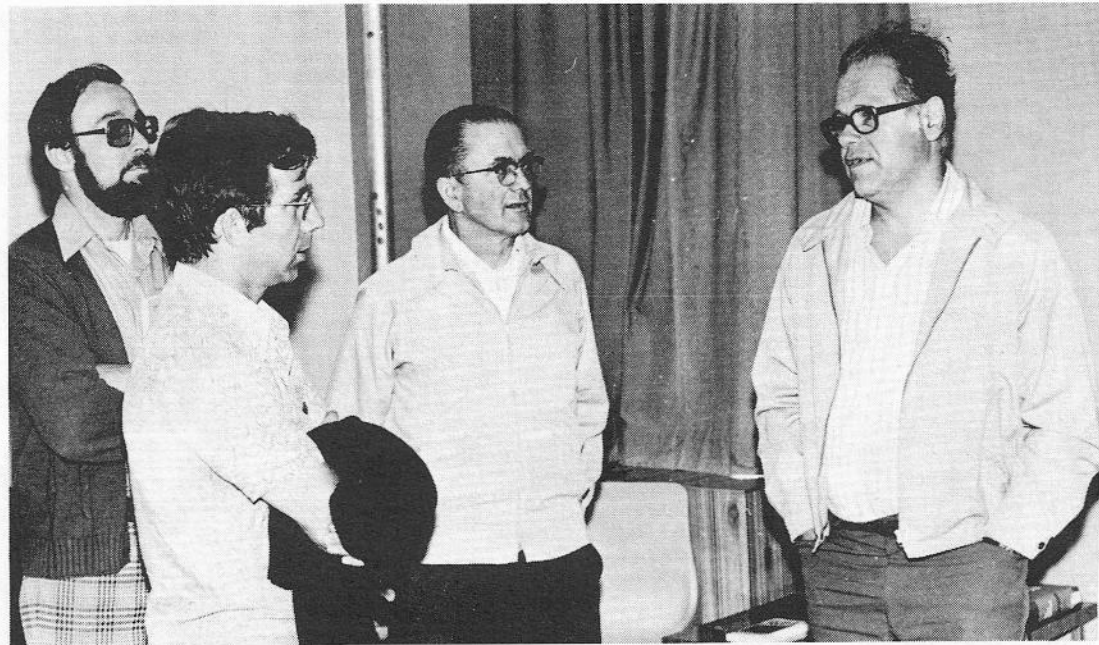
Bro. Douglas Schmidt, OSB
St. Anselm Abbey
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U.S.A.

Padres Benedictines
C.P. 161
57,000 Maceio, Alagoas
Brasil

Rev. Leo Hinz, OSB
3225 - 13th Ave.
Regina, Sask.
S4T 1P5



The renovation of Severin Hall into guest rooms has been completed. Most of the work of constructing and arranging the beautiful, comfortable rooms was done by members of the community.



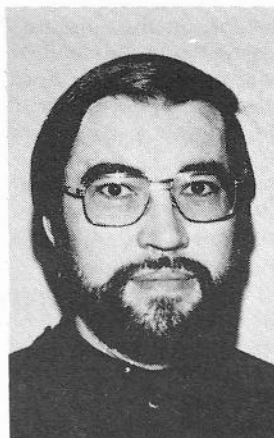
*Father Gregory Baum, OSA, Toronto (right) exchanges views with some community members during his visit to the abbey July 14. He spent two weeks in Saskatchewan doing research for a new book he is writing, *The Catholic Church and Canadian Socialism*. During his visit he spoke with several pioneer members of the CCF party from this area.*

School term begins

St. Peter's College, on opening its doors this fall, experienced quite a change in clientele. With 23 young ladies (Mrs. Louis Wolsfeld is still young at heart!) in commercial class and 16 girls in the first-year arts and science program, the image of the college has changed much.

With over 40 women regularly at school here some renovations of Michael Building became imperative. Now we will have to get the word out to the young men that there are new advantages to attending St. Peter's! We have only nine full-time arts men this year. Included in this number is Brother Stanley Vindevoghel who in his spare time co-ordinates the social activities of the student body.

The number of students in arts has remained quite constant the last years. This year we have 25 full-time students and five partial day students, including Father Peter Novecosky, who with Father Norbert Schwinghammer's help, plans to become a better Canadian by learning French.



Father Andrew Britz, acting principal



Father Maurice Weber, principal, now studying in Rome

The night class number is up a little; 72 are coming for evening classes this year. Father Lawrence DeMong was all smiles the first night of



During the first week of university classes, the faculty and students got acquainted at an outdoor barbecue.

his Ed Foundations 410 class when 13 showed up to learn new methods of handing on the Christian faith. One of his students, Angelinda Marshall of Quill Lake, is taking her eighth night class here which should be a record. She says she would like to graduate here when she gets her BA next year.

The museum this year must share the third floor with the Humboldt School Unit's Special Education class. This year 21 students are enrolled in the

three-year program. Here the traditional male image of the college is maintained; 18 of the students are boys.

The unit also rents room in Michael Building three times a week for its band program.

With the reopening of Severin Hall many groups have begun to use Michael Building for workshops. The old college building is now as busy as ever, and with the installation of the elevator it promises to serve many more people in the future.

Personnel notes

Father Daniel Muyres attended the executive meeting of the Western Conference of Priests, held at Lumsden, Sept. 20. The executive made plans for the next WCP conference, to be held in Winnipeg Feb. 14-17, 1977.

Father William Gehlen went to the University hospital, Saskatoon, Sept. 6 for surgery on his left foot. He returned home on Sept. 15, and he reports he will not be able to walk until after Oct. 4.

Father George Brodner, provincial director of the Catholic Women's League, attended three of the five diocesan CWL conventions this spring and summer. He also attended the provincial convention at Nipawin and the national convention at Fredericton, N.B., Aug. 22-28. He will also attend a number of mini-conventions this fall.

Father Martin Brodner will be chairman of the annual meeting of the Western Liturgical

Conference held in Edmonton Oct. 19-20. The main topic to be discussed is: Prayer Life in the parish today.

Father Maurice Weber and Brother Douglas Schmidt left St. Peter's Sept. 3 on the same plane for a year of studies. Brother Douglas returned to St. Anselm Abbey, Manchester, N.H., for his junior year of university, majoring in philosophy. Father Maurice flew on to Rome for a year of continuing studies on theological and monastic topics. Before settling in at Sant' Anselmo, however, he spent a month at Florence to study Italian.

Fathers Werner Renneberg and Peter Novecosky were among the 2,100 people in Calgary that participated in the fourth annual Western Canadian Charismatic Renewal Conference, Aug. 12-15.

Brother Bede Hubbard has been appointed archivist for St. Peter's, with Russel Weber as assistant and Father Norbert Schwinghammer as consultant. Brother Bede was also elected delegate to the 1977 general chapter, during the annual community meeting Sept. 1. Elected as alternate delegate was Father Andrew Britz.

Father Peter Novecosky will be the abbacy Priests' Senate delegate to the National Federation of Senates of Priests meeting in Ottawa, Nov. 1-4.

Brother Wolfgang Thiem left St. Peter's Sept. 2 to visit his parents living in Schwab-Gmund, Germany. His father is 87 and his mother, 82. His last visit home was three years ago. He will return on Oct. 4.

Brother Jude Marco reports that since the beginning of April he has conducted 58 tours through St. Peter's museum with over 1,000 people signing the guest register. The museum is popular with children, he says, because they are allowed to touch and operate the items on display.

At the annual community meeting, Sept. 1, Fathers Albert Ruetz and Andrew Britz were elected to the Senior Council and Father Aloysius Herriges was elected to the Priests' Senate. Other members of the Senior Council are: Abbot Jerome Weber, Fathers Rudolph Novecosky, Daniel Muyres and Florian Renneberg and Brother Bede Hubbard. Other members of the Priests' Senate are: Abbot

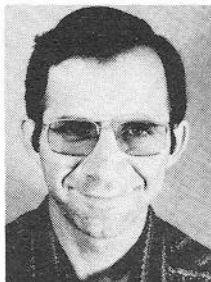
Jerome Weber, Fathers Martin Brodner, Edward Benning and Peter Novecosky.

At the same community meeting the requests by Mary Smith and Charlotte Vogel to continue on as hermits on the abbey property, were accepted. Mary Smith has been at St. Peter's for five years and Charlotte Vogel for four years.

Mission in Brasil

Father Bernard Stauber, who has worked with the St. Peter's Abbey mission team in Brasil for three and a half years, returned home July 2 for holidays. He returns to Brasil during the first week of October.

I would like to share some of the things that I experienced in my work in Brasil. As you may know, a year ago I moved to a new parish, a country parish called Colonia Leopoldina. It is 70 miles from Maceio, where Father Sylvester Vredegoor and Sisters Imelda Doecker and Claire Novecosky are working, and it has a population of 5,000. Three Brazilian Sisters from the south work with me in the parish.



Father Bernard

At another town nearby, Novo Lino, which has a population of 5,000, we hold weekly services. As well, there is one other larger town, Canastra, with 2,000 people, where we celebrate Mass at least monthly. There are also two sugar cane mills near Colonia and together they have about 3,000 people. We celebrate Mass monthly at each of the mills. There are 10 other chapels and locations where we celebrate the eucharist monthly whenever possible. All told, in the three municipalities we cover, there is a population of about 40,000. The people are predominantly Roman Catholic, granted, many nominal.

As you can imagine, the sacramental aspect of priestly work in Brasil is very demanding. The distances are great, and the driving conditions difficult. Off the main highway, the roads are quite primitive and ungravelled. We have a volkswagon bus with mud tires, and this is reasonably versatile. The bus belongs to the diocese, but we have been given the use of it.

Often enough we are not able to get to some areas when we want to because of rain and bad roads. But then there is always the tension involved when one should go to a certain place and can't. The people, however, understand. That's a difference there. Although this "if God wills" attitude is seen by us as perhaps a shirking of initiative to improve many things. Gradually, though, this attitude is changing.

One change in depth of ministry that is being effected in Brasil is the development of grass roots communities. There are about 20 lay leaders performing Christian leadership functions in our 15 communities. They meet with us at least monthly to receive better formation. But they are responsible, to the extent possible, for their communities. They have a weekly celebration with their people, using in part a weekly liturgical bulletin, a couple of thousand of which we distribute weekly. Also 30 catechists meet regularly and function in the various towns and communities.

I don't want to paint an unrealistic picture. There is much new ground to be broken in Brasil as well as in Canada. They are much too "priest

conscious". For many of them the important thing in terms of religion is "only" the presence of the priest and the eucharist and other sacraments. Granted, they have their faith and prayer and devotional life. Mass and the sacraments are important, I believe, but they have to be combined with real Christian community, a community that works and prays together in an ever growing way, not just when the hierarchical minister is there.

We are trying to work together and grow in real Christian community living. This growth comes from the center of the community and from each person in it. This call to personal wholeness in the Christian community is, to me, something the Spirit is saying clearly to the church. Without that continual growth in the whole gospel life by everyone in the church, we are banging our heads against a brick wall.

Implementing or incarnating this call to gospel wholeness requires an open, prayerful attitude in relation to action. This is something we are attempting to help the people live. For me, this is as important as doing projects; it means really to rely on the power of Christ through the gift of the



Prior Rudolph Novacosky (left) and Brother John Brodner pick some of the 180 gallons of June berries that were transformed into pies, jam and wine at the abbey. There was also a plentiful supply of wild choke cherries this year.

Holy Spirit who helps us grow more fully day by day in gospel wholeness. This is why we continually pray "Thy kingdom come." It is the Father's kingdom that is growing, not ours.

One thing that took a lot of my time up to now has been helping people who are sick or who are more than 70 years old get their pension of \$40 a month. This means helping them get all their

documents together and doing everything for them. Many are simply too uneducated even to begin. Before we came, they didn't even know they had the right to a pension, even though the law had been passed a year earlier. We have helped about 60 people so far.

Remember Maceio and Colonia Leopoldina in your prayers and action!



The potato crop was bountiful this year and many families from the surrounding area came for their year's supply.

Bountiful harvest

The weather and soil conditions combined to make Saskatchewan into a promised land this year. Record-breaking crops were harvested during fall weather that was second-to-none.

Farm manager Brother Bernard Lange reported that for the grain and garden crops, this was "one of the best years on record." The wheat produced over 35 bushels an acre and the oats went over 90 bushels an acre. The garden supplied more than enough to meet the requirements of the abbey, and some of the produce was sold to families in the neighboring area. About 50 families picked up their year's supply of potatoes from the abbey garden.

Father Xavier Benning reported that it was a

better than average year in the apiary. The bees produced over 4,400 pounds of honey, with each hive producing an average of over 190 pounds.

Deceased brethren

Father Oswald F. Johannes, 86, St. John's Abbey, died on June 30.

Father Alcuin Kasny, 81, St. Procopius Abbey, died on Aug. 7.

Father Owen H. Roth, 61, St. Vincent Archabbey, died on Aug. 26.

Brother Paul Olson, 67, Holy Cross Abbey, died on Aug. 29.

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SOK 2Y0

