

St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter



Vol. 25 No. 2 Spring 2003

The glories of snow and spring runoff!

By Werner Renneberg, OSB

Following two winters with little snow and springs with hardly any water for sloughs and dugouts, and a few other years with minimal runoffs, this year the Good Lord again gave us many reasons to be grateful.

Last fall we had just enough rain to leave a few inches of soil with sufficient water to freeze and seal the thirsty earth for a short time in spring. During the winter we had a fair amount of snow, enough to fill dugouts and sloughs. An early thaw had the water running along its courses to empty reservoirs. It was a glorious sight, especially after not having seen this for some years and with various predictions of continued drought.

Cooler weather soon returned. A few gentle snowfalls again put smiles on the faces of farmers who realized their pastureland would have the moisture needed to give hay an early start in spring. Ducks, geese and other waterfowl were happy to find plenty of water where for a few years there was little or nothing. Being in no great hurry to head north, the birds not only found water but also unharvested fields of wheat, oats and bar-

ley for their feasting. At times some of the sloughs had standing room only for the waterfowl that came there in the mornings and evenings.

As soon as the ground and grain were dry enough to combine the mice that had wintered there, raising their brood, lost their shelter. Crows, hawks and gulls were quick to seize the opportunity and followed the machines, guzzling themselves.

It was also a good winter for deer. They had easy feasting on grain swaths, leaving their deposits behind. Because grain contaminated with the droppings of deer cannot be sold, many farmers were advised to burn the swaths. If they burned them Wildlife and crop insurance would repay some of their expenses. If they chose not to burn them, no payments would be made.

We have had the occasional little showers in April and May until the night of May 15, when we had a real old-fashioned thunderstorm that dropped an inch and a half of rain that the ground quickly soaked up.

Along with other farmers and gardeners we praise and thank God for his goodness this spring and we pray for good summer and harvesting weather.



The large reservoir at St. Peter's Abbey immediately after spring runoff filled it. Pictured is the little pump house that supplies water to the abbey, farm and college buildings. To the right is an aerator that helps keep the water fresh in wintertime.

A message from Abbot Peter's desk

The year 2003 has arrived — the year of our centennial celebration as a monastery in Canada. As I write this article in mid-May, we are reliving the history of the first monastic settlers as they made their way across the frontier prairie land to their homestead, where they arrived on May 21, 1903: Ascension Thursday.

Monastic Archivist Fr. Martin Brodner almost daily comes up with new “discoveries” from the archives. He has been perusing old copies of the *St. Peter's Bote*, written in German, and he has recovered for us precious records of the early years that we were unaware of. He has translated numerous articles of that early history which is now available to English readers.

His work compliments that of Fr. Werner Renneberg who is continuing to translate systematically the *Bote*. He is now working on Vol. 4 (1907).

St. Peter's Abbey has also commis-

sioned St. Peter's College President Colleen Fitzgerald to write a history of the abbey. This work is now in progress and we expect it to be completed by this fall. Another history work in progress is that of the Muenster community. This book has turned into a work of over 1,100 pages and it should be a compendium of the history of the families living in the Muenster area over the past 100 years. Other communities in the area are also rewriting their community histories. This is one advantage of having centennial celebrations once in a while.

Of course, we don't live in the past. We celebrate the past and build on it. And learn from it too.



This spring there has been a steady stream of visitors to the abbey, it seems. Besides our two novices and one candidate, we've had live-ins coming for short stays, and long-term guests staying for a month or more. And there seems to be a regular number of inquirers as well. We pray that God continues to bless our abbey and to renew it with new members.

With the death of Fr. Francis Lohmer on Jan. 28, our oldest monk is now Br. Gregory Brodner, age 98. He was in the infirmary of St. Elizabeth's Convent in Humboldt for several months but is now back at the abbey. Fr. Robert Gannon also needs more care and he is now living at St. Mary's Villa in Humboldt. He spent a couple of months at the nursing home in Cudworth before moving to Humboldt.

May you enjoy the rest of the news of our community in the remainder of this newsletter.

Rev. Francis Lohmer, OSB, dies at 100

By Andrew Britz, OSB

The monks of St. Peter's Abbey have lost their senior member, the colourful centenarian Rev. Francis Lohmer.

His loud voice and active interest in virtually all things made his presence known wherever he was. His willingness and ability to tackle almost anything made him a great asset to the monastery.

Lohmer wanted to die at home, and his wish was granted him. He died peacefully among confreres and friends Jan. 28, 2003. Abbot Peter Novecosky led the burial liturgy at St. Peter's Cathedral in Muenster Feb. 1.

He came from Stillwater, Minn., as a young lad of 19 to join the abbey in 1921. He celebrated his 75th anniversary of ordination at the young age of 97. At the time, he was still an active pastor of St. Scholastica's in Burr.

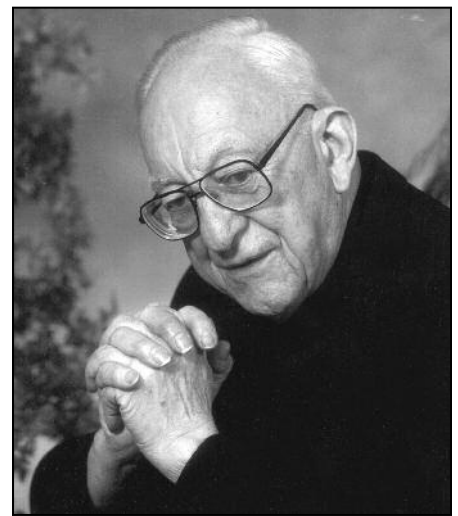
As a young priest at the fledgling St. Peter's College, he carried out many varied tasks. One day he would be building the outdoor rink and coaching hockey; the next he would be teaching violin and organizing an orchestra. In his spare time

he was studying social justice and throughout his life he worked to develop credit unions.

In 1942 he became the pastor of Lake Lenore. After guiding the parish in burning its considerable mortgage, he went about beautifying the church and grounds. He did it with a grasp of liturgical theology far in advance of his time. Already in the early '50s he spoke of having the church's principal crucifix focusing on the Lord's resurrection. This, he told the Lake Lenore parishioners, is primarily experienced in the celebration of the mass and he managed to convince them to purchase a cross on which Christ reigned in vestments used in the liturgy.

He also spoke against communion rails 15 years before the Second Vatican Council. He removed the rail which he said separated the People of God from the altar. He replaced it with two long narrow “communion tables” which, he noted, highlighted the mass as a meal and did not separate the nave from the sanctuary.

But he wasn't always on the side of “progress.” When the Saskatchewan government proposed its province-wide ref-



Rev. Francis Lohmer, OSB

erendum on time zones, he railed for several Sundays against the referendum which would take the parish out of the Mountain Time Zone and place it in the Central. Thus the parish would be on daylight saving time all year round. That was against God's order of things, he told

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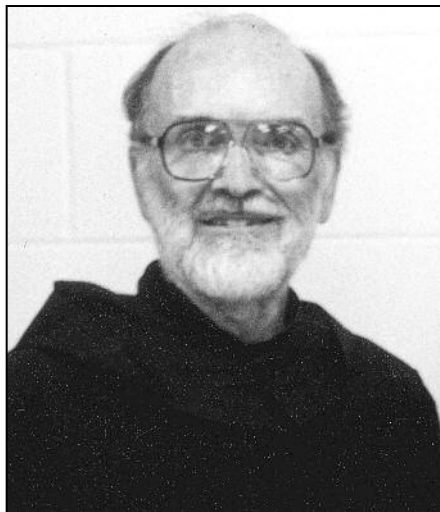
Good news for vocations this year

By Lawrence DeMong, OSB

In last fall's issue of the newsletter I reflected with reference to a concrete example in our congregation on the possibility of an abbey dying out if it does not get new members. As I was taking on the challenge of vocation director and guide to candidates, I suggested that this is a collective responsibility, not only of the monks here but of all our friends who care for the future of this place.

It is indeed a delight to tell you that we have been receiving a steady stream of requests for information and some serious expressions of readiness not only to try the live-in experience of a few weeks but also to come as candidates. What has particularly struck me was the desire to join a comparatively small community, one that is rural and one that has a variety of activities like our own. Even the kind of countryside was mentioned by a person from Oregon. Yes, they're even inquiring from the U.S.A.!

Our hope is that our present candidate, Brian Millette, will become a



Rev. Lawrence DeMong, OSB

novice on our patronal feastday July 11, a marvellous way to underline our centennial celebration this summer. Brian is 38 and represents the younger end of the age group inquiring these days.

Our present novices, Brs. Bob Monk and Ron Brockman (he's away for a few weeks and asks for our prayers), are in

their mid-50s and our most recent inquiry is 66!

We expect another candidate this summer and we can assure you that the uplift of this sort of experience for all of us is enormous. Parishioners often say that those entering the church through the visible rites of the RCIA have the same effect on them: if these people are choosing my way of life in a very deliberate and decisive action, then I must be in the right place!

And so we thank you for your prayers and concern for our well-being. Nothing could be more clear than a vocation to tell us that our future is in God's hands. And so we continue to pray, like St. Augustine suggests, as though all depended on God, but we also work, advertise, answer calls and letters and e-mails, and welcome all with open and kindly arms. Finally, as the bottom line, we desperately try to transform our present monastic life into an experience of God and of the kind of care and forgiveness and love that would make anyone say it's good to be here!

Monks enjoy playing cards for recreation

Skaat is an old German card game because many of the words used are German. It has been preserved in Benedictine abbeys and in some private homes. Ten cards are dealt to three players. The dealer sits out but must pay or will get paid, depending on whether the bidder makes good or gets set.

The game has numerous ways in which the cards will be played. Each name is very important because it determines how to play the cards. Some of the names are: Grand, Grand Ouver, Gookser, Nullo, Solo, Turn, Rumpsch. Whenever someone bids, he must make "Schneider," which means he must have 31 points or more. If the opponents do not get Schneider, or are Schwartzed, meaning they did not get a single trick, they must pay more.

The foursome start with 336 points each in chips. It is a friendly game, and if someone loses all his wealth, the others divide their spoils so that each again has 336 shekels with which to play. The

only thing that has suffered is pride.

Other community members might play Cribbage, Solitary, work out puzzles in the daily StarPhoenix, read or sit

around and chat. It is highly recommended that each member of the community regularly spend some time together during evening recreation.



Every evening, during recreation, whenever possible, this foursome, Frs. Albert, Andrew, Roman and Br. Bernard square off in a game of Skaat.

People and events around the abbey

By Martin Brodner, OSB

Jan. 1 – The eight-inch snowfall at the end of December was a most welcome major event, bringing to an end the long drought months of 2002.

Jan. 16 – A joint Vespers and “get-to-know-each-other” supper brought together both monks and students in the monastic refectory. Classes resumed Jan. 6.

Jan. 28 – Fr. Francis Lohmer, OSB, of our abbey, died having lived five months beyond 100 years. A well-deserved tribute was extended to Celine Wolsfeld who had been his housekeeper in various parishes for 44 years and was a special bedside helper in the declining months of his life.

Feb. 7. – On this day both Fr. Robert Gannon and Br. Gregory left the Eldercare area in the abbey for the Humboldt hospital. Both were in need of 24-hour nursing care. Both have found new temporary homes: Fr. Robert in Cudworth Nursing Home and Br. Gregory in St. Elizabeth's Convent infirmary.

February continued indoor work with major renovations in three areas:

Brs. Basil and Wolfgang and Al Vedress worked on the church elevator.

Our business offices were enlarged into one room with Fr. Richard and Br. Basil coordinating this work.

Br. Kurt and Fr. Richard worked on our telephone system, both in the abbey and college. In the abbey “voice mail” messages are added by Danka and SaskTel. This involved pulling yards and yards of wire from a central place to the many individual destinations in both buildings.

*Face-to-Face youth retreats are springing up everywhere in the Saskatchewan dioceses. These are an evident sign of the blessings flowing from WYD (World Youth Day) in Toronto July 2002. Monks of the abbey who helped in the P.A. and Saskatoon dioceses are: Frs. Richard, Demetrius, Lawrence, Daniel and Werner.

In February St. Peter's Press did special printing for this centennial year of St. Peter's Colony (1903 - 2003). A first job was the printing of our centennial calendar 2003. The history of St. Peter's Abbey is the major project.

*Of special mention is Fr. Werner's contribution. He has been translating the major local news from *St. Peter's Bote* from its beginnings Feb. 11, 1904. Already available are the first three volumes, each consisting of a year, from 1904 - 1907.

March 10 – Fr. Gene Shin of the Peterborough Diocese, Ontario, arrived for a month sabbatical. He is Japanese. His parents came from China, but he was born in Canada.

March 12 – Fr. George Smith, CSB, president of STM (St. Thomas More College, Saskatoon) gave a public lecture on “Called to be a Prophetic People.” This is also the theme of the Saskatoon diocesan Parish Vitality Reflection program this year.

March 22 – Oblate Day. The new Oblate director, Fr. Richard, updated the oblates on the rosary, enriched with the Mysteries of Light. The video on Berthold Imhoff and his paintings, especially in St. Peter's Cathedral and in Holy Rosary Church, Reward, Sask., presented basic information on the well-known painter whose home had been in St. Walburg, Sask., since 1914.

*Ken Mansfield and Terri Zacharias, Muenster, made their final oblation during the morning eucharist.

March 24 – Two candidates were invested as novices for St. Peter's Abbey in the vigil service: Ron Brockman, Racine, Wis., and St. Benedict, Sask.,

and Robert Monk, Winnipeg, Man. Both had completed six months as candidates. They are now Bros. Ron and Bob.

March 24 – St. Peter's College launched the SPC Capital Campaign for renovating the 80-year-old St. Peter's complex and also expanding facilities, such as much needed residences for students. Informational mail is being sent out to our 3,500 alumni/ae this week. It describes the preparation so far for this fund campaign. The goal is set at \$1.5 million.

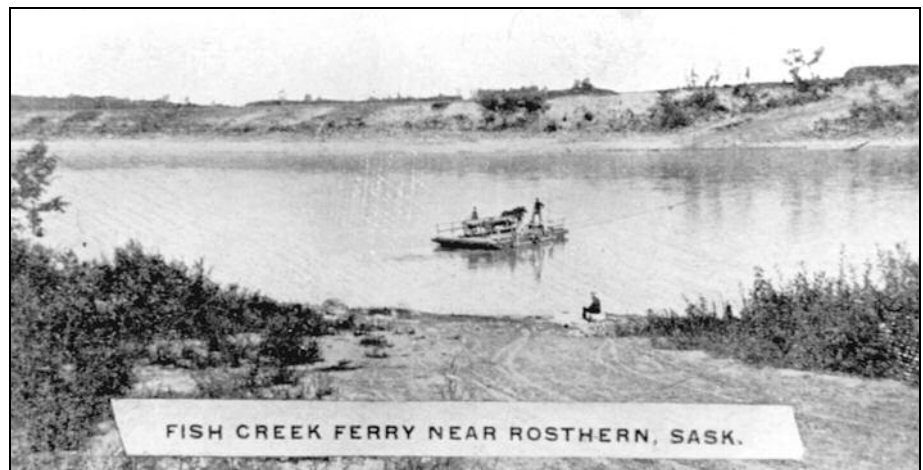
The gym has already been renovated one year ago, and has proven its worth in this past winter's arena/gym sports activities. Five soccer tournaments were held in our gym these past weeks.

March 24 – The spring thaw started the water flow into our reservoir this Monday evening. By Friday evening it was filled. What a blessing! This was the first run-off after two years of drought!

April 6 – Our Br. Gregory Brodner celebrated his 98th birthday at St. Elizabeth's Convent, Humboldt. The sisters prepared a special celebration in the afternoon, ending with coffee and a birthday cake. Br. Gregory is now the oldest monk of St. Peter's Abbey.

April 12 – A van filled with monks joined the caravan trek into Rosthern this morning to “kick off” the 100th anniversary celebrations of the arrival of the first Benedictines there on May 15, 1903.

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Ferry used by settlers before the railway came to the colony.

Br. Wolfgang Thiem celebrates 30 years

Br. Wolfgang is “jack of many trades” and whatever he does, he does carefully and well. This includes work and prayer. After very many experiences and travel he came to our monastery. His expertise is greatly appreciated.

Br. Wolfgang was born in 1924 in Schwab Gmund, south central Germany, in a predominantly Catholic area. World War II was raging by the time he graduated from high school. Students at the time were taught two foreign languages beside their own. So Wolfgang learned a smattering of French and English, which came in handy later.

At age 18 he was drafted into the air force and did his boot training in France. He was transferred into an anti-aircraft unit and sent back to Germany. Here he attended a driving school, learning the mechanics and function of motorcycles, cars, trucks and tractors. His unit was to support the army against tanks and aircraft.

Next he was sent to southern Greece with his unit. The Nazis thought the allies might attempt an invasion there, but it took place in the boot of Italy. His anti-aircraft unit was moved from Greece to Yugoslavia, to protect a German Messerschmitt aircraft factory. However this was soon destroyed by American bombs and the unit moved to Croatia.

As the Russians were moving westward he was transferred to south Poland and then back to Germany. Here he was given the choice to join the infantry to face the Russians or join the parachutist division. Wolfgang chose the parachute option because this group moved westward, away from the Russian front. He was sent to Holland by rail. At the time there was a severe gasoline shortage in Germany. Horses were commandeered and Wolfgang, who had no experience with horses, had to learn how to master them.



Br. Wolfgang in the greenhouse admiring the tall, healthy tomatoes.

He was then sent back to Ruhr in Germany and was taken prisoner by the Americans on Christmas Eve 1945. He had served two-and-a-half years in the military and was to spend another three-and-a-half years as a POW.

Things were not too difficult as a POW of the Americans. But when they were given over to the French, food was scarce and the prisoners lost a great deal of weight.

Already before the war Wolfgang had thought of going to America because of the unstable political condition in Germany. His first thought was to go to Brazil where an uncle had been living. However, by this time the uncle had died. So Wolfgang decided to move to Canada.

He joined a secular institute founded by an Oblate priest in Trois Rivières,

QC., and there helped build residences and a chapel for the women of the secular institute. In summertime he was employed with laying brick and cement blocks, and in wintertime with inside carpenter work.

For a short time he was sent to Haiti to help build buildings for the Institute there.

Wolfgang then spent a few months in a Trappist monastery. At the time the *Prairie Messenger* was the most worldly paper allowed there. He picked it up, read it, and in the summer of 1971 decided to visit Muenster to see what it was all about. He had helped the Trappists with haying and found himself helping with haying operations at the Muenster abbey.

Br. Wolfgang entered the novitiate here and made his profession as a brother in March 1973. He has done a great deal of work ranging from brick or stone masonry to carpenter work.

Being interested in growing tomatoes early in the season in a greenhouse, Wolfgang experimented growing them in a small tent south of the old

press building in 1975. When it was seen what he could do, he was authorized to build a larger greenhouse south of the car shed. Operations there begin in March and go till early November. The plastic roof and south wall allow heat from the sun to make plants grow rapidly. As a backup in case of early or late cold weather, the building is furnished with a natural gas heater.

It is amazing how much different and better tomatoes grown in the greenhouse taste than store-bought tomatoes. Usually by the end of May the first tomatoes are harvested and sliced for the community to feast on.

Br. Wolfgang has visited his family and relatives in Germany a number of times. His one remaining sister is ill and he expects to visit her again this fall.

Celebrating 100 years at St. Peter's

By Werner Renneberg, OSB

Wednesday, May 21, dawned bright and warm. It was a perfect day to gather at the cairn on the west bank of the Wolverine Creek and southwest of the abbey to celebrate 100 years for the Benedictines to be in the area.

One hundred years ago, almost to the hour, said Abbot Peter, the first Benedictines to arrive hurriedly celebrated mass close to where the cairn marking the event is now standing. Abbot Peter was principal celebrant at the mass with many priests from the Benedictine community concelebrating. Also attending were present and past staff members

from the various departments as well as other guests. Among the uninvited guests were a host of mosquitoes, probably offspring of those that attended the first mass 100 years earlier. We don't know about 100 years ago, but a fairly strong breeze somewhat hampered the mosquitoes in 2003.

The site had been cleared, giving ample room for some 150 people in attendance. Fr. Bernard Stauber set up a sound system and Br. Kurt with his guitar led the singing. Chairs had been brought to the area for all to sit.

In his homily Abbot Peter recounted the difficulties faced by the early pioneers. They came into a wilderness area

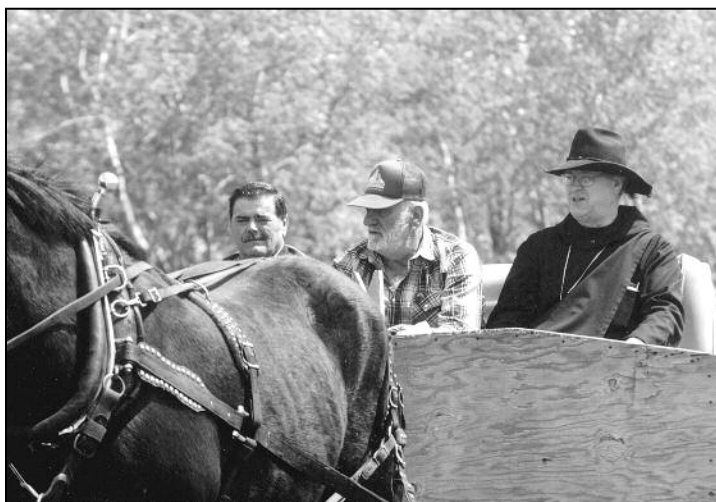
without a competent guide. They were a hardy lot who trusted in God and in their own ability to start a new home. The area had been surveyed and the little surveyor's stakes were the only sure guideposts.

After mass the assembly moved to the college gym where finger food, coffee and cool aid drinks were available. Anyone who wished could make a guided tour of the facilities. Later there was a program in the gym consisting of various individuals telling their memories, whether in the college, kitchen, laundry, press, workshop and farm.

Further anniversary celebrations are planned for Aug. 1 - 3.



We still have fine horses!



Abbot Peter was brought to the site of the Aug. 21 mass in style. Otto Fahl, accompanied by Ron Kuervers, had the privilege.



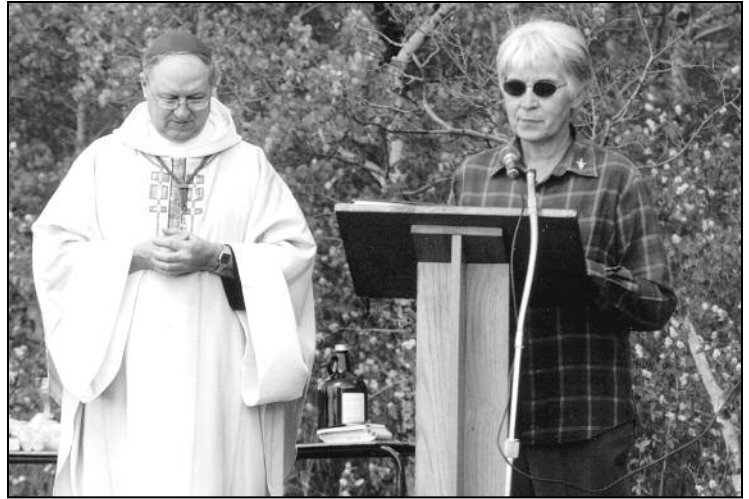
Procession with the flags before mass.



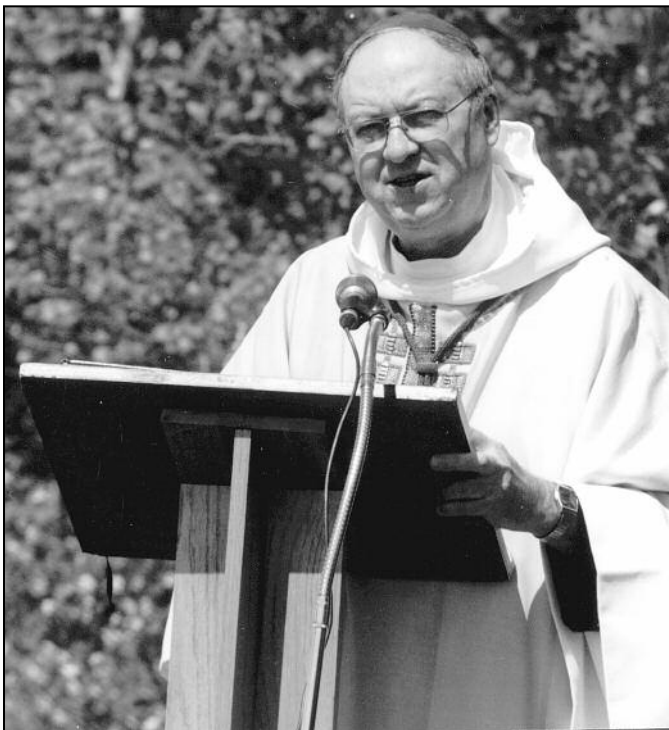
Some of those present at the outdoor mass.



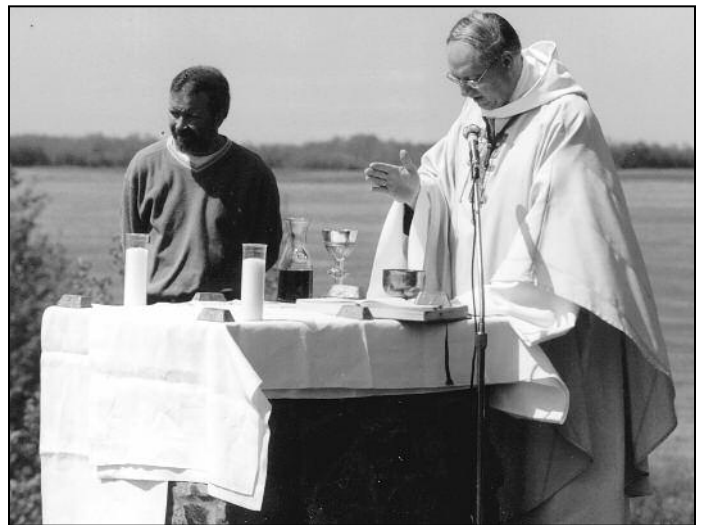
Br. Kurt and his guitar leading the singing.



Sister Marian Noll, OSU, reads at the mass.



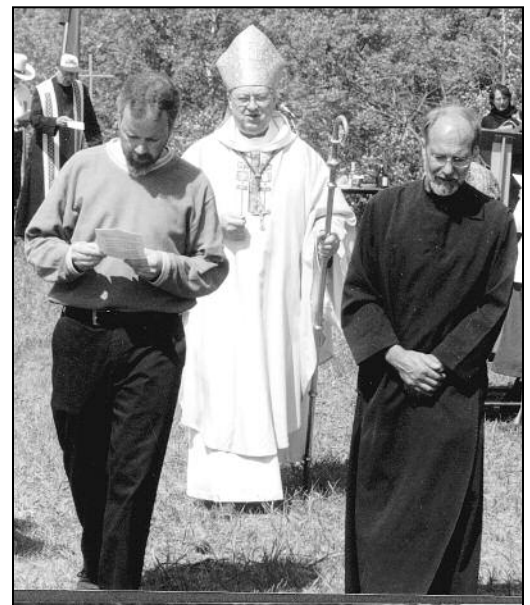
Abbot Peter preaching the sermon.



The consecration.

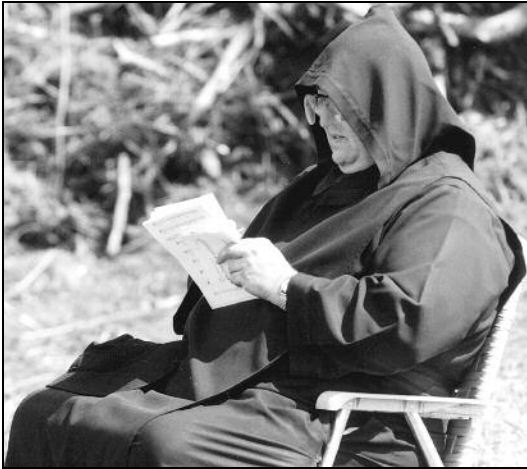


Some of the priests concelebrating.



"Go, the mass is ended." Abbot Peter accompanied by candidate Brian Millette and novice Ron Brockman.

The centennial celebration continues



Fr. Richard



The announcement said two or three could ride back to the abbey with the horses and wagon.



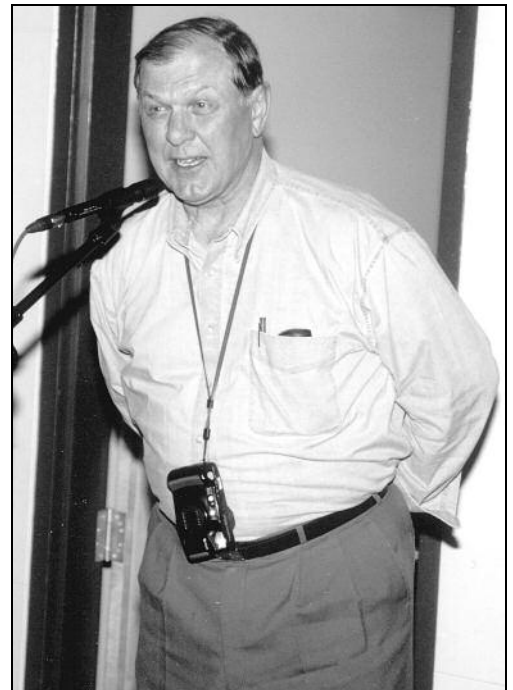
Afternoon program



Sister Anne Marie Lange, OSE, remembering the abbey kitchen back when.



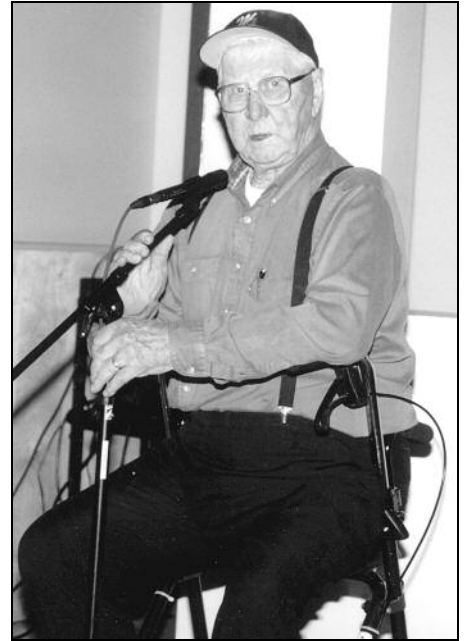
Ann Kiefer remembering the abbey kitchen.



Dennis Korte, mayor of Humboldt and former student as well as employee in the press and later manager, remembering.

Joe Korte was employed at the abbey for many years generally doing mechanical work and repairing and helping on the farm. He said that he had a nervous stomach and would often feed the birds behind a building after a meal. On one such occasion he came into Br. Justus' carpenter-blacksmith shop and Brother asked him where he was. He said he was behind the building throwing up, but that this was nothing new. He frequently did that. Br. Justus pulled out his snuff box and said, "Take a pinch of this, put it into one side of your cheek and don't spit. Swallow the juice, and you won't have this trouble." Joe tried it — it worked. Next he bought a box of snuff and worried what his wife would say when she saw this in his pocket. But he decided that if he told her the advice came from Br. Justus, she wouldn't mind. Joe said he has been using snuff ever since and has never again had a nervous stomach. Joe continued working at the abbey until one morning, on his way to the abbey, he slipped and fell on an icy patch, broke his hip and with the resulting operation and difficulties he was forced to retire.

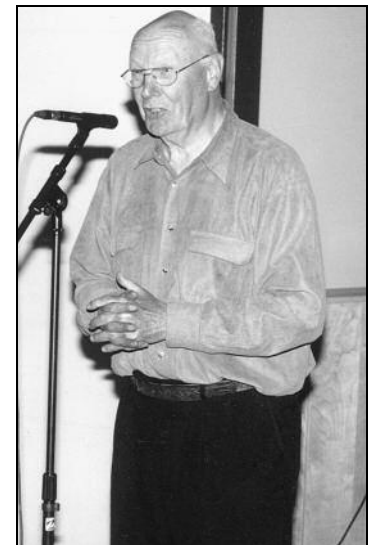
Joe also recalled the evening Fr. Leonard asked him to replace the two back tires on his truck in the morning. No Fr. Leonard came. He went to the abbey and asked for the keys to Father's truck. "You can have the keys," he was told. "But Fr. Leonard died in his bed last night."



Mrs. Anne Back speaking about her experiences in the abbey laundry when she began working there. The big washing machine was driven by a series of belts and pulleys. To make the cylinder shift from one direction to the other, the belt had to be moved from one side to the other on split pulleys. It worked and did the job, but the noise was something else. Whenever things went wrong in the laundry, Br. Gregory would come and fix it, never complaining.



Alphonse Gerwing speaking about the old days in the student dormitory, fourth floor in Michael Hall. Older students enjoyed playing tricks on newcomers. Some of the things they did to Al was to French his bed so that his feet could not go down all the way. His bed also was quite uncomfortable for a night or two because it had a bump in the middle. Someone had placed a stool underneath the mattress and spring. Al said, "Thank God for the drought in the States that brought the family back to Canada." He grew up in the Lake Lenore district.



Celebration honours staff and former staff



Colleen Fitzgerald, president of St. Peter's College, talking about the hopes and dreams of the college.



Rose Marie Strueby, one-time manager of St. Peter's Press.



Some of the staff and former staff attending the afternoon program May 21.

A word from the abbey oblate director

By Richard Meidl, OSB

Greetings to the readers of St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter from the oblates of St. Peter's Abbey. The first five months as director of oblates has been a wonderful learning experience. There are approximately 100 women and men dedicating themselves to living out in some small way the charism of the Benedictine way of life taking this into their daily life at home, at work and in their interaction with others in their parish and social gatherings.

Some of the values of the Benedictine life the oblates of St. Peter's take into their daily living and share with the community around them include: seeking God in all one does, attempting to live a balanced life of work and prayer (the Benedictine motto of *ora et labora*), glorifying God in all things and in all one does, and building up community, especially a community of peace.

One may ask, how does one help in making these values a part of one's life? One makes these values a part of one's life by spending time with the Scriptures through the practice of *lectio divina* or holy reading, by spending time daily with the Scriptures, by privately or publicly participating in the Divine Office, the Liturgy of the Hours and by the attendance at the eucharist as often as possible.

Other elements of the Benedictine life that become significant to the Benedictine oblate are the practice of hospitality in one's private and public life, of care for the poor and a social concern and of stewardship and care for all



Rev. Richard Meidl, OSB

humanity and for the environment.

The Benedictine oblate is assisted in living out these elements of the Benedictine life through reading the Rule of Benedict and by reading other materials related to the Benedictine life. There are many fine books available today written by Benedictine monks and sisters and by Oblates which help to explain the elements of the Benedictine life in ways that they can be lived out in whatever way of life one chooses. Oblates discuss these elements with fellow oblates. Oblates gather at the abbey three times a year to discuss the elements of the Benedictine life and to join the monks in prayer, meals and socializing.

At our next meeting which will take place on June 28, 2003, the oblates will meet at the abbey to participate in the eucharist and join the monks for dinner

and socializing. During the afternoon a talk with discussion will be given on one or more on the elements of the life of a Benedictine oblate. A talk will be presented on some aspect of the of the 100th anniversary of St. Peter's Colony and the abbey such as what the early years of the German Catholic newspaper, *St. Peter's Bote* can reveal to us today about our forebears. Continuing the discussion on the question, "What it means to be an oblate of St. Peter's Abbey" begun at the last meeting will complete the afternoon's program before the oblates join the monastic community for Saturday evening vespers.

This meeting on Saturday, June 28, 2003, will begin with eucharist at 11 a.m. and will finish about 4:30 p.m. If you are interested in the possibility of joining others as Benedictine oblates at St. Peter's Abbey, please feel free to come to the June 28 meeting.

For more information please contact me: Richard Meidl, OSB, Oblate Director, Box 10, Muenster SK S0K 2Y0 or call me at 360-682-1765 or e-mail me at <oblates@stpeters.sk.ca>.

News from around the abbey

Continued from page 4

As soon as the ice was cleared on the Saskatchewan River, this ferry operating at Fish Creek efficiently brought settlers, their effects and livestock, across the river.

*On May 21 an outdoor eucharist was celebrated on the site of the first mass on our monastery homestead 100 years ago!

May 20 — Because the infirmary

at St. Elizabeth's Convent was filled, Br. Gregory needed a different residence and, to his great joy, he was brought back to the abbey. With the combined efforts of Fr. Martin, novice Br. Bob Monk, Br. Neil, candidate Brian Millette and others, along with professional help from home care workers, Br. Gregory has been able to resume monastic life and share in our annual Retreat, May 25 - 29. He is very happy to drive his motorized scooter again.



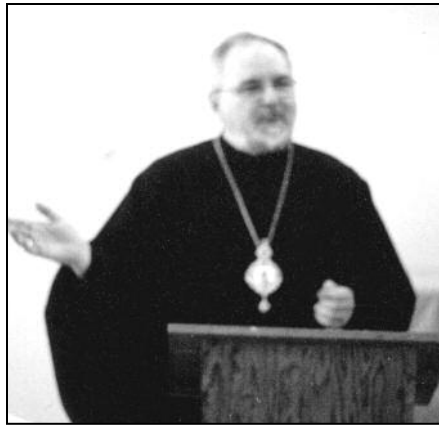
Br. Gregory on his scooter

Bishop Huculak preaches annual retreat

Most Rev. Lawrence Huculak, OSBM, was our community Retreat Master May 24 - 29. He is the Ukrainian Catholic bishop of all of Alberta. He has definite connections with this area. His paternal grandparents were born in Lanigan, later retired to Saskatoon. His maternal grandparents were born in Edmonton and Wynyard. His father was born in Lanigan and his mother in the Ukraine. Bishop Huculak himself was born in Vernon, B.C., joined the Basilian Order of monks and was ordained as a priest in Vernon in 1977. His ordination as bishop took place in Edmonton in 1997.

The bishop's talks were based on Eastern or Byzantine spirituality. Icons are very important in Eastern spirituality. There is a constant and greater expression in their singing and prayers witnessing that they already are in the presence of the angels, saints and the Blessed Trinity. Although this too is an important part of our faith, the Western church's liturgy does not emphasize it as much.

Pope John Paul II frequently prays and speaks for unity between the Eastern and Western churches. He calls the two



Rev. Lawrence Huculak, OSBM

churches two lungs, and until there is unity, both they and we are breathing with one lung.

The Ukrainian Catholics have been united to the Roman Catholic Church for many years. They are keeping up their traditions and have much to teach us in the way of singing, reverence and respect for tradition.

At present there is a rift between the Orthodox Churches and the Ukrainian Catholic Church, even though they use

the same language and employ the same liturgy. Pray that this division may be healed and that the very great split between the Eastern and Western churches may soon be only a bad memory.

One of the delightful customs we have is praying Vespers in the abbey cemetery one evening during the retreat. We like to remind those who have gone ahead into eternity that they are still part of the local community and we need their prayers. It is also a reminder for us that we are walking in their footsteps now and want to follow them into glory whenever God calls us into eternity.

The retreat closed Thursday, May 29, with the bishop celebrating mass in the Ukrainian Rite, even though it was all in English. A number of the abbey priests concelebrated with the bishop. After a very brief practice the community joined in the singing. It was quite good, the bishop said, but it lacked the four-voice harmony usual in Greek Rite masses.

After the mass Bishop Huculak invited questions relative to the liturgy we had just shared.

A Chronology of St. Peter's Colony and Priory

By Martin Brodner, OSB

1892

— Founding of Cluny Priory at Wetaug, Ill.

1901

Jan. 10 — Prior Oswald Moosmueller, OSB, dies
April 26 — Fr. Alfred Mayer of St. John's Abbey appointed prior

1902

Aug. 12 — Fr. Bruno makes first exploratory trip to Saskatchewan. Second trip, end of September
Dec. 22 — Cluny monks vote in favour of relocating to Canada

1903

Jan. 4 — Prior Alfred and Fr. Bruno — first trip to colony area
Feb. 25 — The same two make second trip. April 13, a third trip
May 12 — Cluny monks plus some from St. John's Abbey leave for colony and arrive at homestead Ascension Day, May 21
June 2 — Fr. Peter Windschiagl arrives at Muenster.

Oct. 10

— Sunday mass June 28 asks 60 - 70 people present to bring poplar logs to construct first church for Muenster (20' x 40')
— Second migration from Cluny with Fr. Leo and Br. Rhaban and carloads of Cluny books and property arrive at Rosthern

1904

Feb. 11 — First issue of *St. Peter's Bote* printed
March 21 — Last monk, Fr. Mathias Steger, leaves Cluny and arrives at Rosthern with remaining property

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Regular contributors: Abbot Peter Novecosky, OSB; Martin Brodner, OSB; Lawrence DeMong, OSB.

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Logo by Kurt Van Kuren, OSB.

Farm finishes harvesting in May

The crops last fall (2002) were fair, but much of the canola did not ripen before winter weather set in. Along with many other farmers, we did not finish harvesting last fall. We still had a 100-acre field of canola to harvest. About 20 acres were harvested after it had rained and snowed. Snow mixed in with the kernels made it necessary to dry the grain. This was done by pumping dry air up from the bottom of the bin through the grain.

About 80 acres of canola remained unharvested in the field. By May 12 the potholes had dried up and although the ground was still very wet all over the field, the swaths lying atop the sturdy canola stubble were completely dry and a great cloud of dust from the foliage followed the machine.

There had been very little loss from seeds shelling during the winter or this spring. The field produced about 30 bushels of canola to the acre. To his great joy the hopper on the combine filled more rapidly than the operator expected.

For various reasons the canola is



Herb Dyck harvesting canola on the abbey farm May 12

said to be of the lowest grade, called Sample. But it is expected that the price will still be about \$6 a bushel. The payment has not been received as yet, so we are still living in hope. Also, the jury is still out determining whether it

was better to harvest the crop along with the snow last fall or wait until this spring. In either case there is ample reason to thank God. Many farmers did not have the crops our area had last summer.



Large semi trucks coming to the abbey and college with supplies had difficulty in negotiating the corner between the abbey and farm buildings. A number of large spruce trees fell victim to this dilemma. Shown in the picture is Loehr's Trenching tearing stumps out of the ground and loading them on to a truck for disposal.

Truck entrance to abbey enlarged



Pioneer Benedictine monks: First days on homestead

By Martin Brodner, OSB

One hundred years ago, May 21, 1903, the first seven pioneer Benedictine monks arrived on the southwest corner of their monastic homestead about one mile south of the present Muenster.

An interesting question is: How did they spend their first days on a homestead with no roads, no houses, no villages in sight, but only open prairie land and bushes and the Wolverine Creek passing through their land from northeast to southwest?

Fortunately, eight years later, in early 1912, these pioneer monks got the idea of jotting down some details on how their first days unfolded, ideas which could serve as a basis of a future history of the abbey. Their stories were published in 15 instalments in the *St. Peter's Bote* from March till July 1912. (Unfortunately, the overload of other more necessary work caused the completion of these stories to be postponed and finally discontinued.)

Omitting the first six instalments and the first part of the seventh of this mini-history of the abbey, we take up the history with the description by Br.-candidate Alois Gleissner. Leaving Rosthern May 16, 1903, they arrived at their homestead on May 21. Here are the events as they occurred during the first few weeks.

The monks had spent the first night (May 20) at the Humboldt Station, a frame building belonging to the telegraph company, south of the present Humboldt.

"On Thursday, May 21, at 3:30 a.m., we got ready to travel, all in an eager mood and without breakfast. It was the Feast of the Ascension of the Lord, and all wanted to come to the monastic land before noon, participate in the first mass, and be the first to receive holy communion...

"However, only Prior Alfred and Fr. John Balfrey persevered on empty stomachs. (At the time strict fast from midnight was required in order to receive communion the next day.) Finally, shortly before noon, we reached the Wolverine Creek on the southwest quarter of S 18, T 37, R 21, west of the 2nd Meridian. Quickly the tent was pitched

on the east high shore of the creek and an altar erected. Prior Alfred celebrated the mass...

"In the afternoon we took a closer look at the land and the landscape. All were satisfied with it. In the evening we picked up dry grass with which we filled our strawbags (Strohsacke). Lying down and sleeping at night was the priority. The cookstove stood out in the open. Since it rained off and on, it happened that Br. Cook, in preparing the pancakes, had more water than lard in the frying pan. As it once happened in preparing biscuits in the rain, the rain playing a spoiling trick, the cook in a moment of desperation took the "witness" of his cooking skill, now turned into dough balls, and threw them into the nearby Wolverine Creek.

*"... that in all things
God may be glorified."*

— Benedictine Motto

"After two days we moved a half mile farther north and pitched our tent there. Nearby we cleared a spot east of the creek to prepare a temporary stable for our horses. We already had it half completed and the roof covered with willows and turf. Then someone tied a horse to the supporting post, the horse pulled against the pole, wrecking the entire building.

"After this we moved another half mile north and built a log monastery on the west side of the creek on section 19. This log house was 14' x 16' with a window on the east. This hut served as a kitchen, dining and sleeping room. The holes were plastered with clay, the roof consisted of sod and ground. For benches we had two boards nailed on top of posts driven into the ground. The table was of similar construction. Prior Alfred sat on a pepper bucket (Pfefferkuebel) while taking his scanty meals.

"When it rained a black brew dripped down from the roof and by chance directly into the dishes or stove.

Opposite the log house we set up two tents, the one to store the oats, horse harnesses, packages, etc. The other was our chapel. The dog usually lay beneath the altar. Prior Alfred had his bed in this chapel tent. Fr. John made a kneeling bench in these first days, which was used during the rosary and litany. The rest of the community knelt on the cold ground. While praying the rosary we had to murder many a mosquito which pestered us most at this time. We bought a cow from the Ecker family that had a homestead six miles west of us. This cow always got tangled up in the rope with which it was tied to a post. At night the cow came so close to our log house that she broke the only window in our house.

"From the Flory family we bought our first four chickens. They usually deposited their eggs behind the altar, i.e., when the dog was not there, or when they did not want to be embarrassed by his presence. On one occasion we found an egg on top of the altar. The poor chickens did not know where to go, and in their urgency they sneaked into the chapel-tent at an unobserved moment.

"Once the log house was completed, we ploughed half an acre for potatoes. We also planted some oats. The potatoes still grew well but the oats did not ripen. It was good feed for the cattle in spite of this. This was THE BEGINNING!" — Br. Alois, OSB.

Fr. Rudolph Palm (cleric) was sent to Rosthern to gather means of livelihood while the remaining priests and brothers gathered firewood, ploughed the prairie and dug the cellar for the monastery. Prior Alfred chose a place a quarter mile north of the log house. What invigorated the enthusiasm of the small band even more was the arrival of Fr. Peter Windschiegl on June 9, 1903.

The farm grows. As soon as the log monastery was completed the monks erected a 72' x 12' log barn for animals and poultry. In his Aug. 31, 1903, letter to Abbot Peter Engel of St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn., Prior Alfred was able to report: "We need a great quantity of hay as we now have four teams of horses, one yoke of oxen, three cows, two pigs and 30 chickens. Fr. John Balfrey is our architect and carpenter."

From Fr. Rudolph's own memoirs

By Werner Renneberg, OSB

Fr. Rudolph is one of our amazing and dedicated pastors. He was born on a farm in the Burr district, St. Scholastica Parish. He joined the monks at St. Peter's in 1955 and was ordained to the priesthood in 1962.

As a priest he taught high school at St. Peter's College, was sports director for the boys and also served as prefect of students. He was appointed subprior and later prior in the abbey and also served in various parishes.

Fr. Rudolph was very athletic, excelling in the various sports as a student and later as prefect. But this came to a sudden halt on Nov. 3, 1977. He loved hunting ducks, but on that day, in a freak accident, he shot himself in the back. He was rushed to the University Hospital in Saskatoon where the surgeons did what they could. But there had been so much damage done to the spinal cord that he has been a paraplegic ever since. However, there was enough spinal cord left so that he had movement in his legs which later allowed him to walk with leg braces and crutches. But most of his life is spent in wheel chairs.

Adjusting to this new life was very difficult. There were periods of depression and chronic pain. Medication for controlling the pain was unsatisfactory. It was only in 1986 and 1987 that two operations in Plains Health Centre, Regina, Sask., called laminectomy and dorsal root entry lesions, did away with nearly all of the pain.

In June 1979 Fr. Rudolph was given charge of St. Gregory Parish, St. Gregor.

During all this time he was suffering excruciating pain in his legs, even though there was no feeling in them.

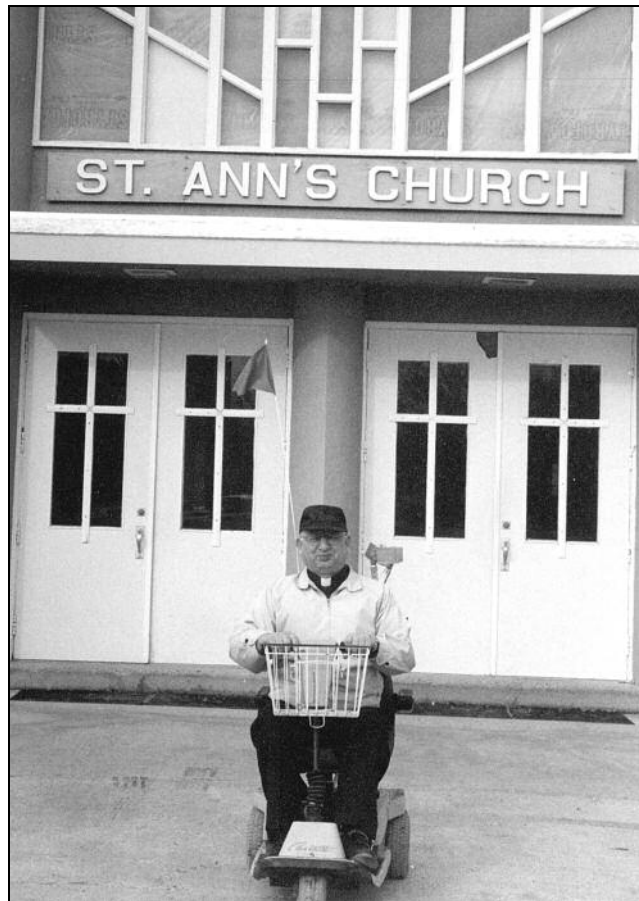
Some call these "phantom pains," but the brain says the pain is indeed real.

He is very grateful to the members of the parish for the care and concern they showed during those difficult years.

After the 1987 operation that did away with the pain, Fr. Rudolph was given charge of St. Ann's Parish, Annaheim and later of both St. Gregor and Annaheim.

In July 1998 he was given charge of St. George's Parish, Naicam, along with that of Annaheim. He is still pastor of the two parishes and his residence is Annaheim.

Being the athletic type, Br. Oswald King, now deceased, made a three-wheel cart for him out of bicycle parts. It is operated by a hand-powered crank and is a familiar sight during the summer in Annaheim and on the roads going in the four directions. This machine has logged many miles.



Rev. Rudolph Novecosky, OSB

Along with this contraption Fr. Rudolph also has an electric scooter. He drives a Buick Century car that has its controls modified so that it can be driven without the use of feet.

For some years in Annaheim Fr. Rudolph had a housekeeper. But since she died he has managed to live alone with home care doing most of the domestic work.

Hats off to someone who has overcome hurdles that are hard even to imagine!

Fr. Francis Lohmer dies

Continued from page 2

the people, making it too hard for the school children in winter and too easy for the young to party in the summer.

When the community voted, only two dissenting ballots were counted in the parish. Parishioners smiled, noting that his housekeeper could at least claim to have cast one of them.

Lohmer spent the difficult years of the council in Humboldt, the former

abbacy's largest parish. After that he laboured in Watson, Cudworth and Annaheim before becoming the chaplain of St. Mary's Villa, a senior citizen home, and pastor of the small rural parish of Burr.

He was 84 when he was assigned to the villa and, in typical fashion, he wondered why the abbot asked him to work among "all those old people."

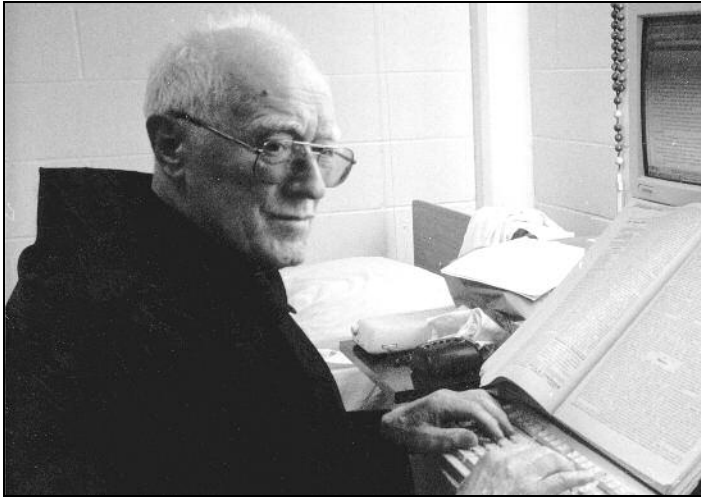
(Taken from the Prairie Messenger, Feb. 5, 2003)

*In your last will and testament
please remember St. Peter's Abbey.*

Our legal title is:

**ORDER OF
ST. BENEDICT**

Muenster, SK S0K 2Y0



Modern scribe

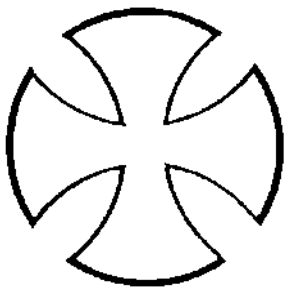
Scribes, according to the dictionary are, among other things, individuals who copy or translate manuscripts. Pictured here is Fr. Werner, translating German into English from the *St. Peter's Bote*, 1907 - 08 edition. Three volumes, 1904 - 07, are available for sale. Vol. 4 is nearly complete. As time goes on he hopes to continue translating. Items in the booklets are local St. Peter's Colony news, editorials, general concerns, letters to the editor, reports on travel by foot, wagons drawn by oxen, mules, horses, railway and ocean vessels, along with occasional current humour in the early 1900s. These booklets, 8 1/2 x 11 inches, ring wire bound, may be obtained from St. Peter's Abbey at Muenster.

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Check our web page at:
www.stpeters.sk.ca

Deaths: remember the faithful departed

Since the last newsletter the following have passed into eternity:

Nov. 16 — Br. Gordon Barnard, OSB, 69,
Assumption Abbey, Richardson, N.D.

Dec. 22 — Fr. Brendan L. Smetana, OSB,
90, St. Vincent Archabbey, Latrobe, Pa.

Jan. 1 — Br. John Floyd Anderl, OSB,
86, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn.

Jan. 11 — Fr. Stanley Vesely, OSB, 89, St.
Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Ill.

Jan. 22 — Alexander Kondorosi, 80,
Oblate of St. Peter's Abbey, Muenster,
Sask.

Jan. 28 — Fr. Francis Bernard Lohmer,
OSB, 100, St. Peter's Abbey, Muenster,
Sask.

March 4 — Peggy Juliana Mahon, 86,
Oblate of St. Peter's Abbey, Muenster,
Sask.

March 14 — Fr. Omer Wendelin Maus,
OSB, 90, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville,
Minn.

March 16 — Fr. Gervase Joseph
Soukop, OSB, 83, St. John's Abbey,
Collegeville, Minn.

March 17 — Fr. Alfred Hilary Tegels,
OSB, 80, St. John's Abbey, Collegeville,
Minn.

March 18 — Fr. Andrew Wendelin Pier,
OSB, 93, St. Andrew's Abbey,
Cleveland, Ohio.

May 12 — Fr. Anselm J. Llewellyn,
OSB, 90, St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchi-
son, Kan.

May 12 — Grant Maxwell, Oblate of St.
Peter's Abbey, Muenster, Sask.



Vespers in the abbey cemetery during the retreat.