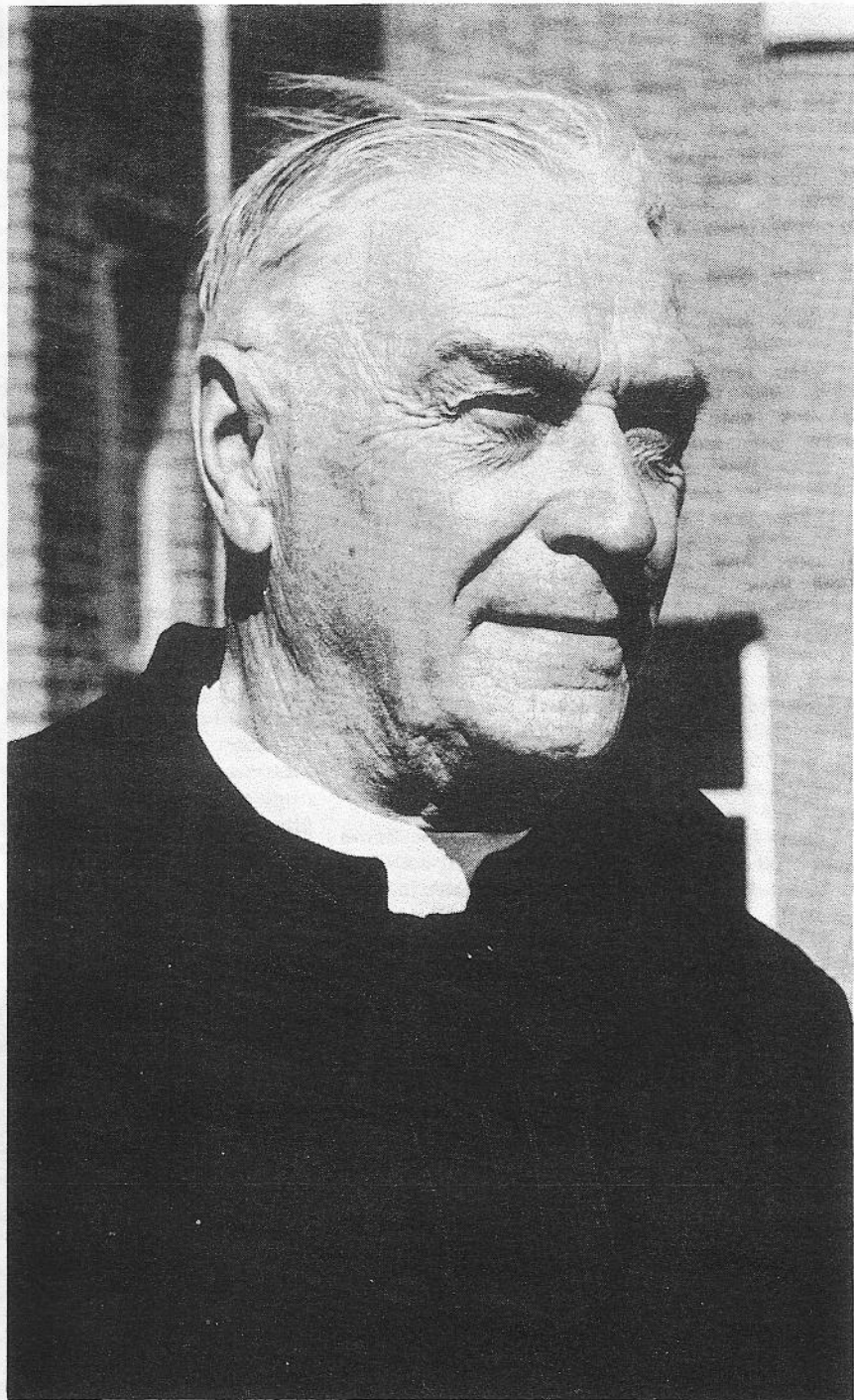


Vol. 2, no. 2
June, 1977

ST. PETER'S ABBEY NEWSLETTER



Father Matthew celebrates golden anniversary

Father Matthew Michel will celebrate the 60th anniversary of his profession as a monk of St. Peter's Abbey on July 11. Father Matthew, 80, is the longest professed member of the community and the second oldest. (Father Gregory Gasser is two months older.)

Born in 1896 in St. Paul, Minn., Father Matthew attended St. John's University at Collegeville and after his studies he came to Canada and joined St. Peter's Abbey. He made his profession of vows in 1917. (He was one of the last monks to take final vows right after novitiate. With the revision of the code of canon law in 1918, the practice of making three-year temporary vows before making final vows became the practice.)

Father Matthew studied philosophy and theology at the old St. Peter's Monastery. During this time he worked part-time in the print shop as a typesetter for the Sankt Peter's Bote and helped fold and mail the paper. He also taught classes at this time.

In 1919 Father Matthew, along with Aloysius Hergges, assisted Berthold Imhoff with the painting of the sanctuary in the St. Peter's cathedral in Muenster. Mr. Imhoff and Father Matthew became fast friends. The last letter Mr. Imhoff received two days before his death was a letter from Father Matthew.

Father Matthew was ordained in 1921. Some years after his ordination he went to the United States for further studies. He attended Harvard University, Penn State and Catholic University, Washington, D.C. From Catholic University he received his PhD in education in 1931. Back at Muenster, Father Matthew served three separate terms as rector of St. Peter's College.

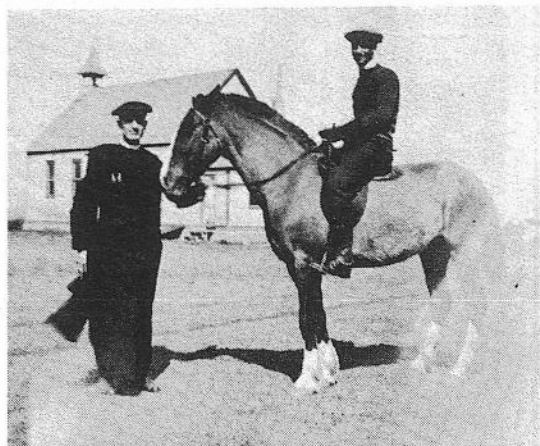
Most of Father Matthew's life in the community was spent in parish work. He can recall many trying experiences from his early pastoral work. From the abbey, he would ride to the parishes of St. Scholastica, St. Gregor or Immaculate Conception, near Carmel, on horseback. Some of these trips were made in the dead of winter in freezing cold. The one-way trip to Immaculate Conception church was 25 miles, and he would return the same day!

In 1921 Father Matthew was put in charge of Carmel parish. With this appointment came the responsibility of developing Mount Carmel as a place of pilgrimage. Father Matthew had the first Mass at Mount Carmel on Sept. 10, 1922, and he still has a list of those who received communion at that Mass.

One of the major achievements in Father Matthew's life was his work in promoting rural electrification in Saskatchewan. At a banquet in Naicam in September 1968 the Hon. Mr. Gordon Grant, Minister of Public Health and Minister responsible for the Sask. Power Corp., dubbed Father Matthew, "Father of rural electrification in Saskatchewan".

Father Matthew began his campaign for extending electricity into rural Saskatchewan in the early 1940s. At first, only a few larger places in the province had electrical service. Eventually power was brought from Saskatoon to Humboldt. In the 1940s the Saskatchewan Power Commission extended the line from Humboldt to Watson, hooking up the towns of Muenster, St. Gregor and Englefeld along the way.

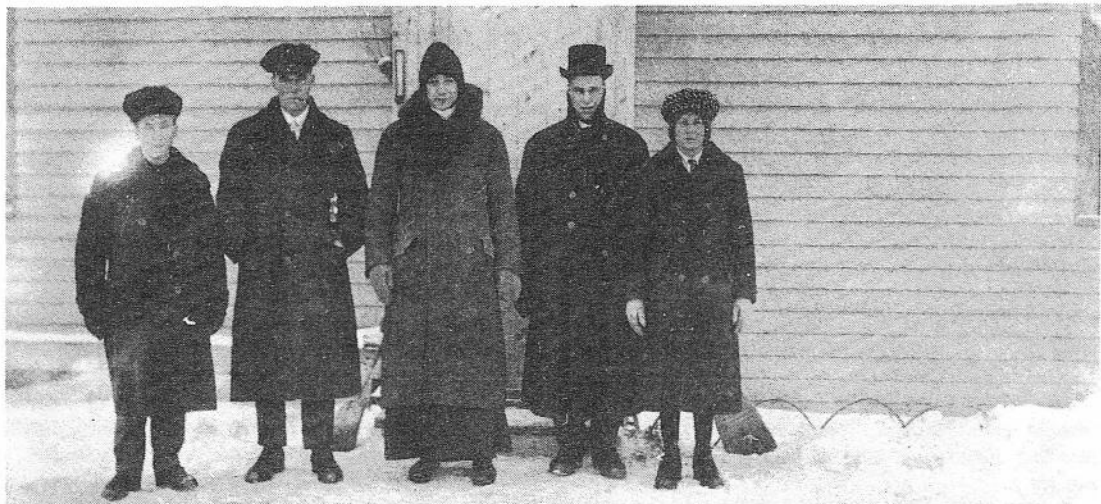
When the power came to Englefeld, Father Matthew criticized the power commission for its neglect of the farmers and smaller towns. He pleaded with the commission to try to understand the plight of the farmers. He tried to show them



Father Theodore Doecker visits with Father Matthew (on horse) in 1925. In the background is the original church at Carmel.

COVER

Father Matthew Michel, 1977



In the first class taught by Father Matthew were, from left: Loui Ludwig, Henry Therres (Bro. Benedict), Father Matthew, Tony Therres and Hugo Altrogge. The picture was taken in November 1917 in front of the old monastery. Classes were taught in the upstairs of the monastery.

that rural electrification was a must. For some years he kept knocking at its door but met one obstacle after another.

Finally Mr. H. Berry, manager of the commission, asked Father Matthew point-blank, "Can you build a power line?" With excitement Father Matthew replied, "Just give me the chance."

He hurried home to Annaheim, where he was pastor, called a meeting at the parish hall, and laid before the people all the information. He needed a sign-up of two customers per mile. Just enough people signed up.

A self-help project was organized, and Father Matthew was able to pay the men only .60 per hour. With the help of a parishioner, he surveyed the whole area between Annaheim and St. Gregor and drew maps for the power lines. A local crew was hired and the first rural line in Saskatchewan was built during the severe conditions of winter. (It was also the last time a power line was built during the winter months!) By Feb. 10, 1948 there was power in Annaheim, and it was then extended to the surrounding farms.

Three times Father Matthew was cited in the legislative assembly for his work of laying the foundations for large-scale rural electrification in Saskatchewan. And once he was even called to Regina to listen to a formal request by top SPC officials to accept a good position in the corporation at Regina.

In a Sask. Power Corp. brochure published in January 1953 an article on the beginnings of rural electrification concludes: "The work done by Father Matthew in these projects . . . included helping the committees to organize and prepare detailed maps of their areas, indicating the sign-up which could be obtained and submitting them to the power corporation, after which public meetings were held . . . He helped the committees with collections from farmers, the clearing of easements for power lines and a number of small details which must be handled by local committees both preceding and during the construction of lines. Father Matthew has always been an exponent of the value of electrification and the necessity of using it to the fullest possible extent."

Still active as chaplain at St. Michael's hospital, Cudworth, and pastor of St. Maurus church, Dana, Father Matthew has served in the following parishes: Carmel, Immaculate Conception, St. Scholastica, Englefeld, St. Gregor, Muenster, Annaheim, St. Martin, Naicam, Spalding-Dahlton-Lac Vert-Pleasantdale, Fulda, Willmont, Middle Lake, St. Benedict and Holy Family. He gave missions and retreats and for some time was attached to the retreat master's team at Queen's House of Retreats, Saskatoon. He helped build up St. John Bosco camp in its early days and supported Marean Catholic Youth camp.

Brother Thomas' guestmaster's diary

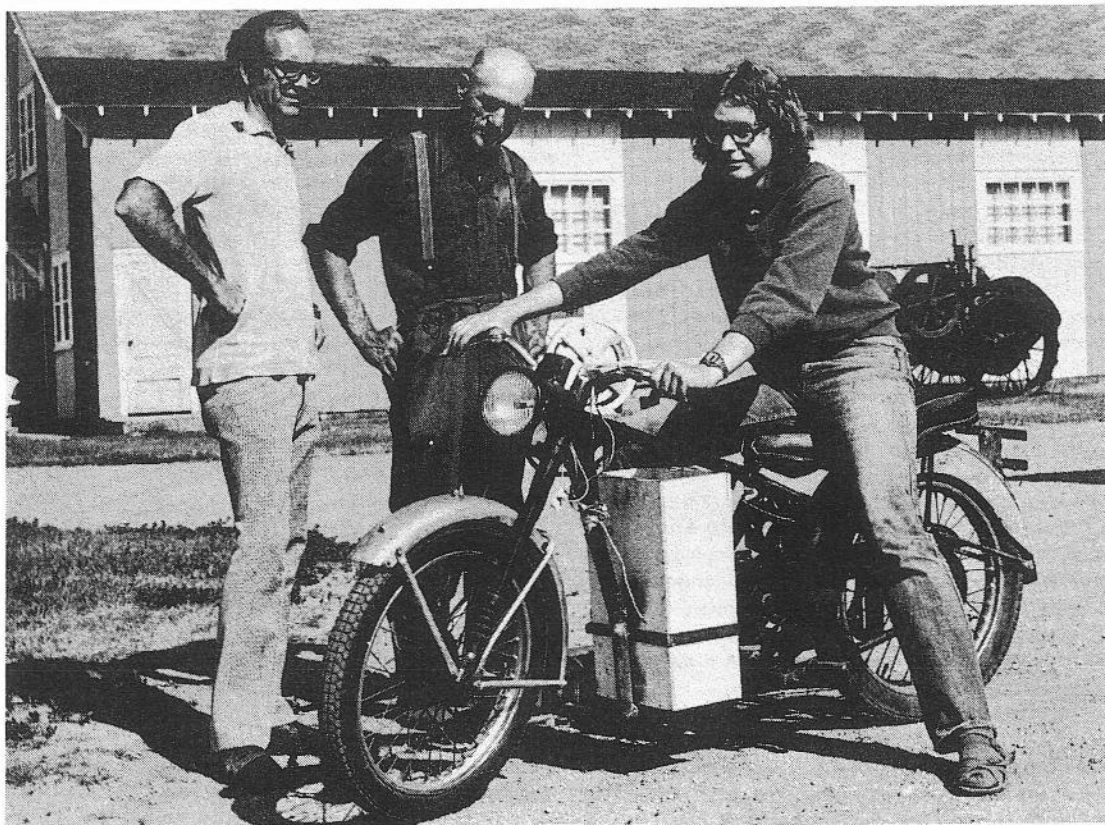
The spring months have seen many directed retreats in the guest wing: Elizabethans, Ursulines, Benedictines in groups and many other religious and lay people singly and in two's and three's. One such small group was unique in that it contained three Sisters who were also "sisters"! They were Sister Aloysia Dauk, OSU, and Sisters Verda and Matilda Dauk, Our Lady of the Missions. All three grew up in Annaheim, taught school in many Saskatchewan communities and are now retired from teaching.

The sporting fraternity continues to use St. Peter's as a meeting place. Both softball and baseball umpire schools were held here in April and May.

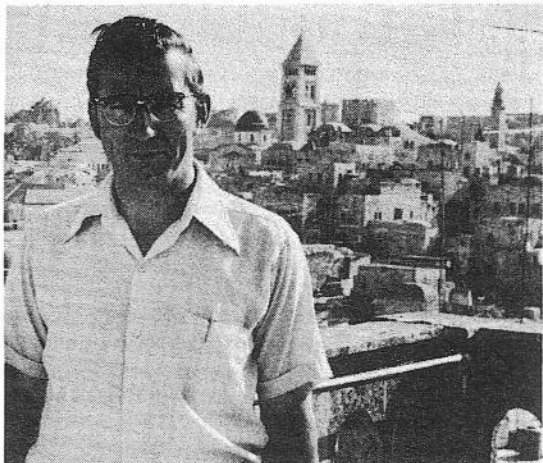
Bro. Bede's experiments in monastic live-ins

continue. In April three young women spent time at the monastery working, praying with the community and studying monasticism. From April 25-30 three young men took part in a monastic live-in, organized by Father Peter Novocosky. The three fellows were Guy Herriges of Englefeld, Tim Scott of Saskatoon and Jack Dearman of Winnipeg. Jack returned to the abbey at the beginning of June and is making an electric bike, with Father Lawrence DeMong and Brother Oswald King.

On May 1 seven prayer groups in the abbacy area had a Day of Renewal here, with 180 people coming to hear the main speaker, Father Denis Phaneuf of Delisle. The Humboldt and Muenster prayer groups used the abbey grounds again on June 17 for a picnic and evening get-together.



Jack Dearman tries out the electric bike he made, with the help of Father Lawrence DeMong, left, and Brother Oswald King.



While in the Holy Land this spring, Father Werner Renneberg checks out an Olive tree on the Mount of Olives near Jerusalem and Father Daniel Muyres is seen in the old city of Jerusalem. During their Best of the Holy Land tour (with 30 people), May 23 to June 12, Fathers Werner and Daniel visited Israel, Jordan, Syria, Italy, Greece, Egypt and Turkey.

Oxcart theatre, a troupe of actors working on a government grant to create drama out of local history, spent the first weekend of June at the abbey. They visited many old-timers in the district ferreting out particularly their religious customs, habits and convictions.

The Saskatchewan CWL convention took place at St. Peter's June 6-7. A record crowd of 360 attended the convention, 54 of them staying in our guest wing. They shore looked purdy steppin' out to the banquet.

The Humboldt AA group held its third annual round-up here the third weekend of June. The members invariably impress us with their humble honesty and their inner peace. The same experiences that break some people appear to have become opportunities for growth with AA members.

The monastic community assembled for its annual retreat June 20-23. After months of vain searching, Abbot Jerome finally landed a retreat master right in our back yard. (Front yard?) Anyway, from Prince Albert, Father Jean Papen — and what a marvellous retreat master he turned out to be. We hope he visits us often.

Ted Wood left us in June after a three month stint in the college library. His competence and his quiet friendliness endeared him to all. The same characteristics mark the Weber brothers, Russel, librarian and archivist; and Randy, printer, who live in the guest wing.

Summer is visitor season in this area, and visitors from Germany are becoming quite a common-place. It is always a pleasure to show them around and get in a bit of foreign language practice.

School groups come too, not to the guest wing usually, but for picnics on the abbey grounds, museum tours, press tours, and so on. Humboldt schools have had a number of creative projects of this sort. Brother Douglas Schmidt has helped with many of these tours.

An instructors' course in defensive driving was held at the abbey, June 24-26. "You are morally responsible for safe driving" read the big sign on the guest wing's bulletin board.

Renovations in the Michael Building (old college building) this spring will be appreciated by our guests and by the kitchen staff. Under the direction of Father Andrew Britz, Brothers Francis Fortney and Wolfgang Thiem and Leo Torborg, plus an assortment of occasional helpers, renovated the two large refectories and added dividers, to make it possible to host four separate groups. False ceilings were added, the walls repainted and new pictures hung. And as an energy-saving measure, the heating system on the bottom floor was converted from steam to hot water heating. These changes finished off the program of renovations begun last year in Severin Hall.

General chapter report

Brother Bede Hubbard was elected by members of St. Peter's Abbey as their delegate to the recent general chapter. He gives his report on that meeting for our readers. (It might also be noted that Brother Bede was the first Brother to be elected as delegate by any abbey in the 122-year-history of the American Cassinese Federation.)

The abbots and delegates of 21 Benedictine monasteries belonging to the American Cassinese Federation gathered at St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Ill., June 13-17, for the federation's 39th regular triennial general chapter.

A 35-minute drive from Chicago's O'Hare airport, St. Procopius today is caught up in two increasingly familiar problems for American monasteries: creeping suburbia and rising property taxes. The abbey recently sold its orchard, and a housing development now touches the abbey's property.

The monastery at St. Procopius is a handsome, modernistic brick structure which beautifully adapts the traditional monastic quadrangle. Surrounded by trees and lawns, the new abbey has kept its surroundings quiet and peaceful by remaining almost a half a mile away from its college, Illinois Benedictine Academy (co-educational, with 1,400 students). The high school, Benet Academy, run in conjunction with the Benedictine Sisters of Sacred Heart Convent, is a co-educational day school with about 1,200 students and is situated almost a mile away.

The general chapter's sessions were held in the college's new Physical Education Learning Center, while the delegates and abbots stayed near the center in Neuzil Hall, a student residence, and went to the monastery daily for the community Mass and supper.

The large campus at St. Procopius, separated from the abbey by a busy highway, and the growing spread of Chicago's suburbia gave a practical demonstration of one problem discussed by the chapter: monastic work and leisure in contemporary society.

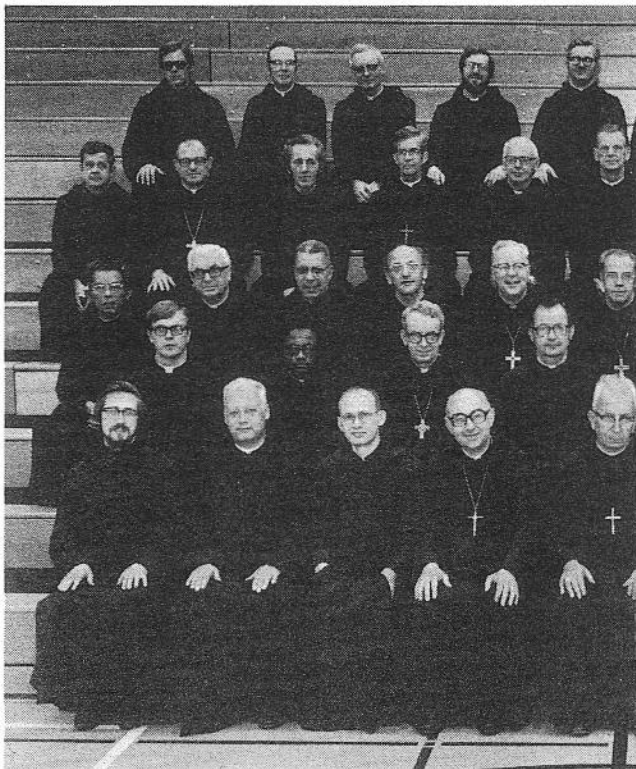
Three papers were presented on this theme by Demetrius Dumm, OSB, St. Vincent Archabbey, Claude Peifer, OSB, St. Bede Abbey, and Dr. Richard O'Rourke, St. Anselm's College, Manchester, N.H.

From the papers themselves and from both the

formal and informal discussions following the presentations, one can conclude that there is recognition in all the monasteries of our federation of the need for a balanced monastic horarium, especially one providing opportunity for holy leisure, that is, a chance to meditate on, consider and celebrate God's presence among men.

The second topic explored was stewardship. Father J. Bryan Hehir, a moral theologian who has recently received his doctorate in foreign relations from Harvard, is head of the social justice and world peace committee of the U.S. Catholic Conference. After summing up the impetus to social justice inspired by recent papal teachings, Father Hehir challenged monasteries to further Christian stewardship through their integrative spirituality, by their lifestyle, and in their education.

A third important topic at the chapter was dependent priories. These are small monasteries which are still dependent on their founding houses, but which are gradually preparing themselves for



In the front row, Brother Bede, left, and Abbot Jerome,

independence. Eight dependent priories were represented at the chapter; observers from four others were unable to attend.

The time spent discussing dependent priories and the number of them represented at the chapter are good indications of the vitality of the federation. New houses are continuing to be founded in the U.S. and in other countries, like Taiwan, Japan, Brasil, and Columbia.

Of the various other matters discussed at the St. Procopius general chapter, one, though not a topic as such but which was touched upon several times officially and many times unofficially, was the continuing trend in monasteries of the federation for more monks not to go on to holy orders. Abbot President Martin Burne, of St. Mary's Abbey, told the meeting that only 10 monks of the federation were ordained priests last year. (The 1977 Ordo lists 1,609 monks in the federation, with 50 novices.)

Archabbot Egbert Donovan, St. Vincent Archabbey, reminded the meeting that the last

general chapter in 1974 unanimously voted to petition Rome not to continue having ordination to the priesthood as a prerequisite for the office of abbot. The reply, he said, was that such cases would now be considered individually. The archabbot also pointed out that the proposed code of canon law returns to the more traditional interpretation of the church by defining the monastic state as neither clerical nor lay. Accordingly, the 1977 general chapter voted that priors of dependent priories need be in final vows, but it did not add the qualification of priesthood for the office.

This change of emphasis in the monastic life is already having effects in some monasteries: a different attitude toward pastoral work; a lessening appreciation for weekend work which removes monks from the Sunday liturgy and the Sabbath rest; and some tensions and problems in monastic formation. In order to discuss more fully this last item, the general chapter has asked the abbot president and his council to establish a committee to investigate present monastic formation.

The 1977 general chapter well demonstrates that the American Cassinese Federation is very much alive, that it is striving hard to understand and better live the monastic life, and that it is open to meeting new challenges and directions in this age of renewal.

Personnel notes

Abbot Jerome Weber concelebrated at the closing Eucharist of the Western Canadian Catholic Charismatic Conference in Saskatoon, July 3, along with G. Cardinal Flahiff of Winnipeg and most of the Saskatchewan bishops. Also taking part in the conference were Fathers Edward Benning, Roman Schneider, Leo Hinz, Werner Renneberg and Peter Novecosky.

Father Paul Kuehne was in St. Elizabeth hospital, Humboldt, June 14-18, for surgery to remove a small, non-malignant growth on his right cheek.

Father Gregory Gasser has spent the last three months at St. Elizabeth hospital where he is continuing his fight against cancer and is bearing his sufferings courageously. He was able to return to the abbey from May 4-8.

Brother John Brodner had a bout with pleurisy



right, with the abbots and delegates at St. Procopius Abbey.

and spent a week, May 31 to June 8, in St. Elizabeth hospital.

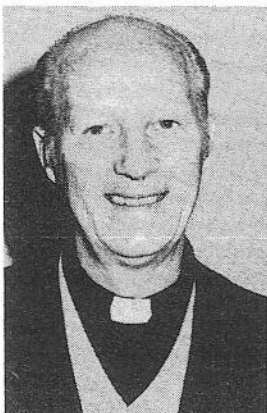
Father George Brodner, provincial CWL director, attended three diocesan CWL conventions this spring as well as the provincial convention at Muenster. At the provincial convention Father Leo Hinz spoke on church law during a panel on Family '77.

Father Martin Brodner took part in the National Council for Liturgy meeting held in Ottawa, April 27-29.

Father Philip Loehr attended a post-HABITAT meeting in Ottawa, May 26-28. He was chairman of a workshop dealing with the problem of land: land for farming, for housing, for industry or cultural purposes; and land acquired for use or speculation. He also attended the national Human Rights Convention in Banff, Alta., June 1-3. This year he



Father Xavier Benning unpacks one of 21 hives of bees on April 18. At the end of June he reports that the bees have been taking full advantage of excellent weather and flower conditions and a bumper crop of honey is on the way.



Father Angus Macdougall, SJ, left, conducted a directed retreat for eight monks, May 15-22, and Father Jean Papen preached the community retreat, June 20-23.

will be completing his fifth year with the Saskatchewan Human Rights Commission.

Father Florian Renneberg attended a meeting of the Canadian Consultative Commission on Multiculturalism in Vancouver, June 17-19.

Father Roman Schneider took part in the charismatic retreat for priests at Edmonton, April 18-21, given by Abbot David Garaets, OSB.

Father Andrew Britz attended a symposium on "Christian Initiation" sponsored by the Canadian Liturgical Society at Winnipeg, May 24-27. He also gave workshops on the new Divine Office to the Sisters of Our Lady of the Missions in Regina and Winnipeg.

Brother Bede Hubbard preached the sermon at the United-Anglican church ecumenical Good Friday service in Humboldt, April 15. He also delivered the 10th annual Mary Donaldson Memorial Lecture at the Sask. Library Association convention at North Battleford, May 13.

Father Damian Yaskowich left June 6 for Halifax where he studied Graphic Technology at the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, June 8-30. During his absence, Brian Dust replaced him on the Prairie Messenger staff.

Brother Douglas Schmidt arrived home for the summer holidays on May 15 after completing his third year university at St. Anselm Abbey, Manchester, N.H.

Brother Jude Marco asked for his dispensation from temporary vows and left the community on May 10. He moved to Humboldt and is known again as Barry Marco.

College promotes art

St. Peter's College, which has always supported and promoted the arts, has recently undertaken a project of making good art available to all who come in contact with us. Throughout the new guest wing of Severin Hall and in the Michael Building newly mounted and framed color prints are being put up.

The emphasis will be on Canadian art, but also included will be representation of the masters and leading contemporary artists. Canadian native art is slowly gaining recognition throughout the world. Our collection includes works by the Northwest Coast Indians, Woodland Indians, Haida art (with original signed silk screen prints by British Columbia Cree artist, Roy Vickers), Eskimo graphics and prints of sculpture.

St. Peter's is also showing a selection of the works of Canada's Group of Seven painters. There are also religious works.

Brother Wolfgang Thiem is constructing most of the frames, and Father Damian Yaskowich is matting and mounting the prints and deciding where they will be displayed in the various locations.

25th anniversary

When Peter Ackerman came to St. Peter's College in September 1947 memories were still fresh of the first attempt at a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta. Within a few days the new student from Regina was identified as G & S's Military Man — his bearing, his precision in speech and action, and his thumb-rule: "This is the way we did it in the airforce."

Peter Ackerman was born in Balgonie, Sask., and received his elementary education there and in Regina. In 1943 he enlisted in the RCAF, taking his ground-crew training at Brandon, Man. He went overseas in 1945 and was stationed in northwest London.

After the war he came to St. Peter's College to complete his high school and first year university, with an eye to the priesthood.

He and James Gerwing entered the community



Father Joseph



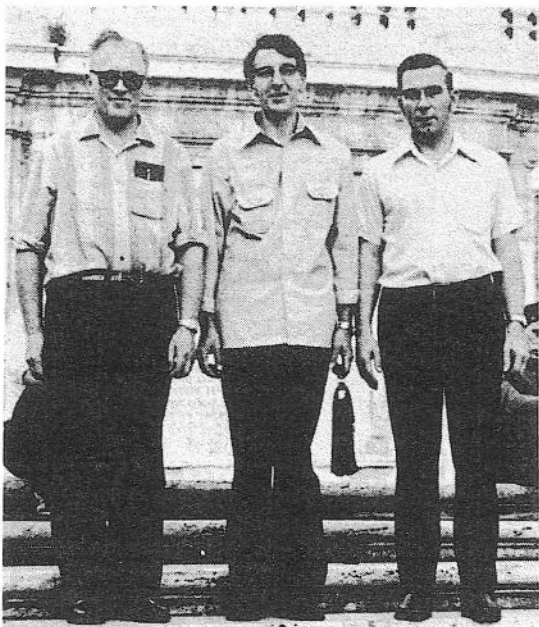
Father Damian Yaskowich prepares some prints to enhance the buildings at the abbey.

of St. Peter's Abbey as novices in 1951 and made their first profession of religious vows here 25 years ago, on June 17, 1952.

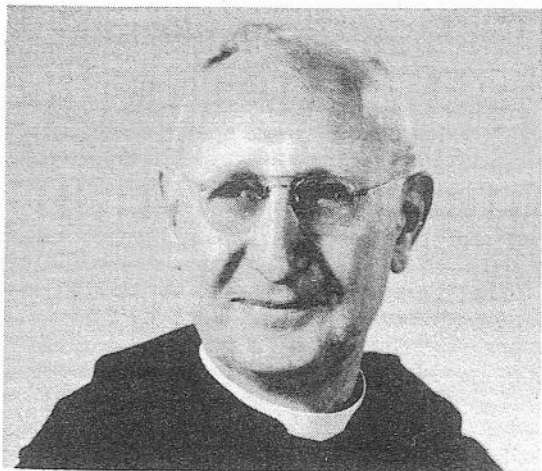
Father Joseph completed his monastic formation and his university and seminary studies at St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn. He was ordained to the priesthood on June 8, 1958, by Bishop Francis Klein.

After teaching for three years at St. Peter's and helping in the business office he became the assistant at St. Augustine's parish, Humboldt. He was pastor of St. Peter's cathedral at Muenster from 1966 to 1970. He then took off a year for studies at Catholic University, Washington, D.C., and Duke University, Durham, N.C. Since August 1971 he has been pastor of St. Anthony's parish, Lake Lenore.

Father Joseph is an active member of the Canadian Legion, and appears without fail in the Humboldt Journal picture of the Legionnaires on Remembrance Day, standing at attention while the wreath is laid before the cenotaph — still every inch the Military Man.



Father Maurice Weber, center, was visited in Rome by Fathers Werner Renneberg, left, and Daniel Muyres. Father Maurice will stay in Rome for another year of studies, after he brushes up his skill in languages this summer with visits to Paris and Germany.



Father William Gehlen, 1910-1977

Father William dies

Father William (Peter) Gehlen, 66, died unexpectedly in St. Elizabeth hospital, Humboldt, on April 22, after a hospitalization of only one day. His untimely death came only a month and a half before he was going to go to St. John's Abbey, Collegeville, Minn. for a 40th anniversary reunion of his ordination class on June 6.

Father William was born Oct. 15, 1910, at Anaheim. After five years as a student at St. Peter's College, he entered the community of St. Peter's Abbey, making his first profession of monastic vows July 11, 1931. He completed his monastic formation and his university and seminary studies at St. John's Abbey and University, Collegeville, where he was ordained to the priesthood June 6, 1937, by Bishop Joseph Busch of St. Cloud, Minn.

As a student at St. Peter's College, Peter Gehlen gave the first indications of his dramatic talent by the perfection with which he played a minor role in one of the elaborate medieval dramas staged annually by the SPC students during the '20s. During his grade 11 year he by-passed the elocution contest to capture the gold medal in the oratory contest, in competition with grade 12 and first year university students.

As a seminarian at St. John's, Father William made ample use of the new opportunities to develop his talent for the fine arts. Although barred as a seminarian from playing stage roles,

he associated himself with the Johnny Players to learn all he could about directing, lighting, stage-carpentry, and make-up. In the art and architecture departments he laid the foundation for the art appreciation courses which he later introduced at St. Peter's. Although he never had the opportunity to learn to play a musical instrument, he was intensely interested in choral singing. Immediately after completing his novitiate he became a member of the monastic schola for the singing of the Gregorian Mass propers, and also of the seminary polyphonic group. When applying for the latter he astonished his auditioner by qualifying equally as lowest bass and highest tenor.

Back at St. Peter's, Father William placed his versatile talent at the disposal of the abbey and college and abbacy with dynamic initiative. His interest and skill in dramatics brought him a warm welcome by the youth groups in the abbacy, in both their spiritual and their social activities.

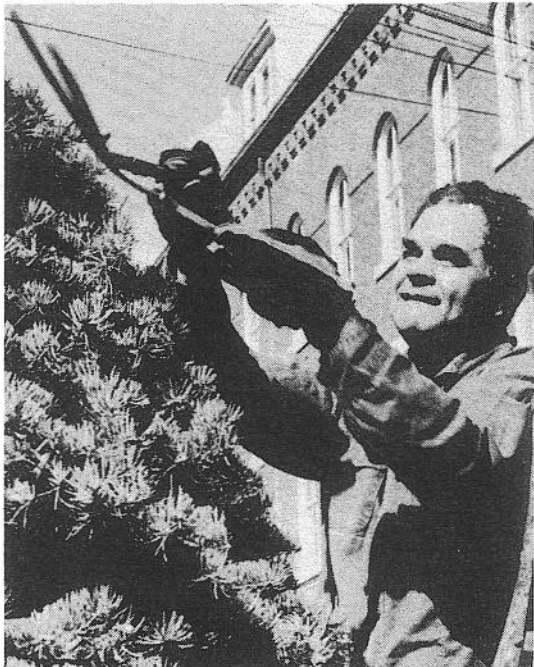
Immediately after his ordination, Father William became the regular appointee for rendering long-term assistance to sick and aging pastors, particularly Fathers Lawrence Steinkogler (d. 1950), Joseph Wickel (d. 1947), and Bernard Schaeffler (d. 1961). While assisting Father Bernard he was in charge of St. Agnes parish, Peterson, for several years.

Besides teaching, and assisting at parishes, Father William had the following major assignments: business manager and job foreman of St. Peter's Press, 1944-1959; chaplain of St. Benedict's convent, Middlechurch (greater Winnipeg), Man., 1960-1966; St. Anne's, Annaheim, and St. Martin's rural church, 1966-1971; Holy Trinity, Pilger, and St. Bernard's rural church, 1971 to the time of his death.

During the 10 years previous to his death Father William fulfilled his pastoral duties under the severe handicap of painful and at times crippling arthritis.

If you know anyone who would like to receive this abbey newsletter, please send their name and address to:

Fr. Peter Novecosky, OSB
St. Peter's Abbey
Muenster, Sask.
S0K 2Y0



Father Albert Ruetz contributes to the neat appearance of the abbey grounds each spring by trimming the hedges.

Deceased brethren

Father Victor Joseph Gellhaus, 79, St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kan., an invalid since December 1967, died on April 19.

Father William Henry Norman, 51, St. Mary's Abbey, Morristown, N.J., was killed instantly in an automobile accident on March 8.

Father Pascal Merola, 75, St. Martin's Abbey, Olympia, Wash., died on March 24.

Father Pius Stephen Pretz, 86, St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kan., died on March 26.

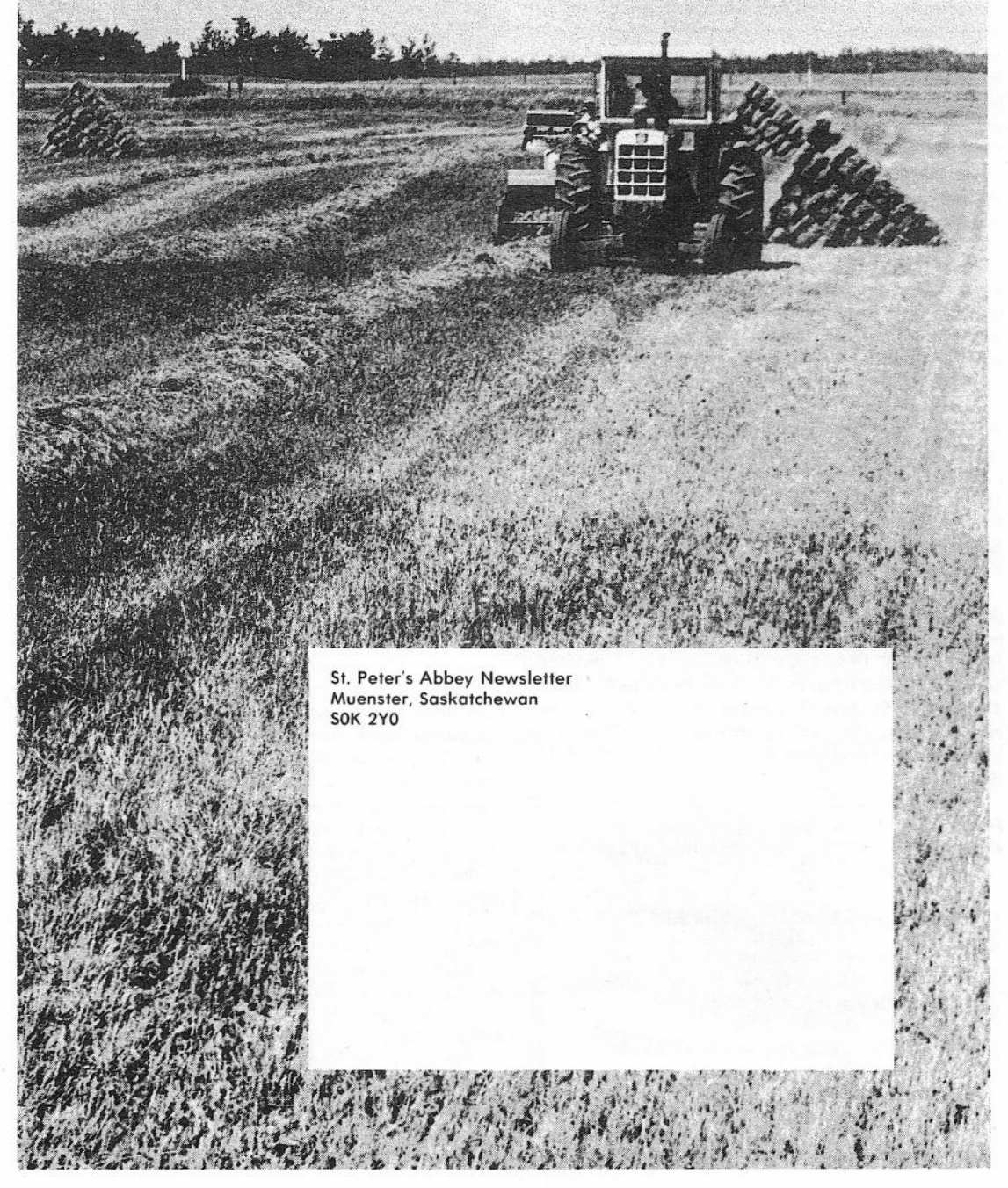
Father Cosmas Leo Schneider, 87, St. Benedict's Abbey, Atchison, Kan., died on May 6.

Brother Dominic Vanek, 89, St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Ill., died on May 14.

Father Peter M. L. Diesel, 77, St. Gregory's Abbey, Shawnee, Okla., died on May 21.

Father Augustine LaMarche, 71, Holy Cross Abbey, Canon City, Col., died on May 30, after a long illness.

Father Alexis Machacek, 85, St. Procopius Abbey, Lisle, Ill., died on June 6.

A black and white photograph of a tractor with a front loader working in a field. The tractor is positioned in the upper right quadrant, facing left. It has a large front loader bucket and a rear-mounted implement. The field is uneven and appears to be a mix of dirt and vegetation. In the background, there is a line of trees under a clear sky. A white rectangular text box is overlaid in the lower right portion of the image.

St. Peter's Abbey Newsletter
Muenster, Saskatchewan
S0K 2Y0