

For "THE FRIAR"

My Brother, the minor brother

Kevin Cole, aka James Robert ("Jimmy"), was born in 1928 in St. Mary's Hospital in Decatur, IL, to Russell and Marie (Foley) who farmed outside nearby Dalton City, IL. English (Presbyterian)-Irish (Catholic) ancestry.

His older brother, Russan, had entered Mt. St. Francis Seminary in 1938 (thru the sponsorship of John Loftus [who had himself been guided by a Fr. Untermeyer (?)] who had been a Friar of IC Province and had secularized into the Springfield (IL) Diocese and had been Pastor of a Parish in Raymond, IL). Kevin followed Russan to MSF in 1940.

Educated in Order schools at MSF, Angola, Carey and Rensselaer (NY), he was ordained to the priesthood in the Louisville Cathedral in 1952. His class was the first one to omit the first two years of college at the Mount (they were made Novices to thwart the possibility of being called up into military service as World War II was winding down in 1945). He & his classmates (Vic Waller, Tim Byrnes, Berard Marthaler and Emmanuel Klump) never did make up those two years (and it never seemed to show on them!).

Kevin began priestly service by being Secretary to the then-Provincial, Wenceslaus Hertvik. He was blessed with secretarial skills.

But he was soon to begin his pilgrimage thru the parish friaries of the USA Upper Midwest: He was Associate or Pastor in Broken Bow (NE), Frenchtown & Lorain (OH), Lansing (MI), Valley Station (KY), Terre Haute & Seelyville (IN), and Milwaukee & Waupun (WI).

He taught for a while at Toledo Central Catholic High School in OH, operating out of the "Cherry Pit" friary. He taught for a longer time at Bellarmine College in Louisville.

As a kind of personal sideline, he was Chaplain (reaching the rank of Lieut. Colonel) for the KY Air National Guard (& the U.S. Air Force). He spent time with the Guard in Korea during the "Pueblo" incident. He enjoyed telling a "thousand" stories about his Korean experience (and also about the Guards' weeks of "Summer Camp" in Biloxi, MS). The Air Guard and their C47s and the winds of Korea and the storms over the Pacific "cured" him of flying. After he left the Guard, he never flew again. Once, while at MSF, I read in the "Courier Journal" of the wake of a Lt. Colonel of the KY Air Guard, same age as Kevin, in eastern Louisville. I attended it, identified myself, and learned that he was still wonderfully and warmly remembered by many of the Guard-- and that was about 20 years later!

His last years of service were in Waupun, WI, where he was Assoc. at St. Joseph's and also Administrator of the nearby Missions of Brandon and Springvale. He loved doing priest-work, and was loved by many of the parishioners.

He contracted a lung cancer and phlebitis and an aneurysm and a gangrenous toe around age 61. He had two major surgeries (cancer & aorta replacement) and one minor one (removing a clot in his left groin). He was given some 30 radiation zaps and many (often very painful) x-rays and scans and "oscopies."

His body & his spirit struggled valiantly, but there was too much wrong with him. Fr. Robert Bayer went up to Fond du Lac to "hear his confessions." The Provincial, Wayne, went up and had a private, comforting, encouraging tete-a-tete with him.

So Kevin died at 11:10 in the evening on Wedn., Sept. 25th, at the Grancare Nursing Center in Fond du Lac, WI (one of his favorite cities). There was a funeral Mass in Waupun; and then one at Mt. St. Francis on Sept. 30, where he was buried on a grand and glorious day.

It would take another essay to address his lovingnesses, his addictions (and the rehab centers), his many strengths & joys. Suffice it to say, for now, that he surrendered very nobly to Sister Death when she came to call