

Brother dies, trees go unpicked

By PAUL CATALA
Tribune Correspondent

ORIENT PARK — With the onset of spring, many of the colorful flowers on bushes and shrubs dotting the Mary Help of Christians School campus are blooming.

Oranges are ripe and ready for harvest, a basket placed underneath each tree to collect the fruit.

About this time each year, Brother Francis Boccotti usually tends the grounds and prepares to harvest the groves at Mary Help, a 72-year-old Catholic day and boarding school for boys located just south of Eastlake Square Mall.



Boccotti

But this spring, for the first time in 46 years, the baskets usually brimming with oranges remain empty. At age 82, Boccotti died Sunday of heart failure at Brandon Hospital.

A funeral Mass was held for him Thursday morning at the campus church. In attendance was the school's 135-member student body, 13 priests from around Florida and New York, fellow brothers and about 55 friends.

"We'll miss not having him around. He showed us how to plant plants, put them in different soils and when to pick the oranges," seventh-grader Russ Selgert, 12, said

See FRUIT, Page 2

The Tampa Tribune, Friday, March 11, 1994

Fruit basket under tree lies empty at brother's death

■ From Page 1

just prior to the service. "He was real nice and outgoing. I'll really miss him."

Selgert was one of hundreds of boys who Boccotti befriended and motivated during his years at the school. Even though he worked as the school's gardener, farmer, cattleman, repairman and treasurer's assistant, he always had the chance

to share his knowledge with the students.

During the time he spent at Mary Help, Boccotti was the sole caretaker of the school's 80-plus head of cattle, 2,000 orange trees and the gardens on the 100-acre campus. He also ran errands and collected donations for the school.

Victor Galan, 57, a nuclear power engineer in Scottsboro, Ala., said Boccotti's ability to manage young

boys without scolding them was one of his greatest attributes. Galan attended the school from 1948-55.

"He worked with tolerance and patience. He personally set examples with all the children," Galan said by telephone from Alabama.

Boccotti was born April 2, 1911, in Camalrago, Milano, Italy. In 1936, he left the family farm and immigrated to Newton, N.J., where he

became a member of the Salesians of Don Bosco religious order.

He entered the novitiate in 1937 and became a brother in 1944 before moving to Mary Help in 1948 when it was still an orphanage.

Boccotti survived by two brothers and two sisters, all living in Italy. His body will be flown to Ghent, N.Y., where it will be buried Saturday in the Salesians Cemetery.