

# MARIST NEWSLETTER

Marist Brothers • Province of Melbourne

• Volume 42 • Number 8 • September 2011 •



**Brother Oliver Clarke,  
Marist Brother**



**Brother Brian McGrath,  
Marist Brother**



**Father John Carnie,  
Redemptorist Priest**

*Farewell to three great men who lived their respective vocations faithfully to the end.*

*May they rest in peace*

**From the Provincial - Eulogies for Br Oliver, Fr Carnie and Br Brian - Struggling With Our Complexity - Remar and the Exodus Community - St Michel, Vanuatu**



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*Marist Newsletter* of the Marist Brothers Province of Melbourne is a private publication for the dissemination of news, notices and articles of interest among the Brothers, the affiliated members of the Province and our lay associates who serve on Committees of the Province.

Copies are sent to each of the Brothers' Communities in the Sydney Province as well as to the General House in Rome and to some other overseas Marist Communities.

**The Editor welcomes contributions and suggestions**  
**from our readers**



**Our deceased and their families...**

- \* **Br Oliver Clarke**, Karama, Darwin. Died July 30, 2011, in his 97th year. A Marist Brother for 76 years.
- \* **Fr John Carnie CSsR**, Kew. Died 10 August, 2011 from complications following surgery. Member of the Redemptorist Monastery in Kew; an affiliated member of the Marist Brothers; Chaplain at Marcellin College, Bulleen, for over 25 years.
- \* **Br Barnabus Newman**, Randwick. Died 18 August, 2011, aged 87.
- \* **Br Clarence Cunningham**, Campbelltown. Died 18 August, aged 87.
- \* **Br Brian McGrath**, Forbes. Died August 31, 2011, after being admitted to the Orange hospital having suffered a series of strokes.
- \* **Bernard Halpin**, Shepparton. Died 10 August of a heart attack at 66 years of age. A former Marist Brother, who spent 1 year at Traralgon, 4 years in Forbes and 9 years in Bunbury.
- \* **Helen Skehan**, Cobram. Died 16 August after 27 years of home care following a car accident. Relative of Br John Skehan, Macedon.
- \* **Pamela Marcelle Monro (née Stone)**, died August 15 aged 93 years. Sister of Rosemary McBeath (Auntie of **Br Nick McBeath** (dec.)) Often joined the McBeaths to visit Nick in the Solomon Islands and Pakistan to help the Marist ministry.

**For those who are unwell ...**

- \* **Br Eugene Dwyer**, Coburg. Currently at Brunswick Private Hospital for rehabilitation through speech therapy and physiotherapy.
- \* **Br Charles Howard**, Campbelltown.
- \* **Br Austin Stephens**, Netley, Adelaide.
- \* **Br Kevin Hogan**, Netley, Adelaide.

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# *From the Provincial*



September 7, 2011

Dear Brothers,

I write this from Adelaide, where today we held the requiem and burial of Brian McGrath. It was a quiet and dignified gathering with family and friends and Brothers. Our thanks to Sacred Heart College community for meeting the hospitality demands being made upon them.

There is a touch of Spring in the air and we are beginning to catch a glimpse of the sun even if we have to wait until midday. I hope that you too are enjoying the lift in spirits which warmer sunny days bring.

Let me say at the outset that I am most appreciative of the warm hospitality that is offered to me as I travel around the Province. That said, I can now remind you that Spring is also a time for some spring cleaning in our houses. Now is a good time to order that skip and remove the unwanted equipment, old chairs and gear that can clutter up our living space and storage areas. St Vincent de Paul Society might also be the beneficiary of some of our personal accumulations and our shelves of books could possibly do with some "culling". It's time also to empty out the "left behind" clothing that seems to accumulate in the Visitor's room. This is an annual requirement; but if we leave it to the end of the year, we will find ourselves too busy to attend to this. It's the lot of a provincial to remind communities about the stewardship of our goods and property. I am sure that you appreciate that.

At our last Provincial Council meeting we spent a lot of time beginning to finalize the appointments for 2012. There was a lot of follow-up work to do; but Brian McGrath's death and consequent obsequies has meant that there was an unanticipated gap in our dialogue with people. This will be picked up throughout the next few weeks. I am grateful for your understanding.

The Formation of a New Australian Province continues with various meeting happening around the country. You will soon receive the third edition of Nexus.

Yours fraternally

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Mr Julian Casey".

Provincial

# EULOGY FOR BR OLIVER CLARKE

## DECEASED 30 JULY 2001

BR JULIAN CASEY, Provincial



### Introduction

We gather at this Eucharist and ceremonies in this Champagnat Chapel to bid farewell and take our leave of our Brother Oliver (Denis Austin Clarke, (with the well-known initials “D A C” and commonly referred to as “DACCA”), our much loved and respected Brother, our colleague, our friend and trusted Provincial Councillor over many years. We give thanks for his life and we pay tribute to him as a wonderful person and Marist Brother.

Following a cerebral haemorrhage, he declined rapidly and died, in a matter of hours, in Darwin at the age of 96. We have been blessed that he walked so joyfully among us. He is at peace whilst we are left simply to remember and reflect on how his long life of 96 years was a source of inspiration to us.

When someone who is large in our lives and in our history as a Province leaves us, we are left with many memories. The history of our Province has the indelible imprint of this one man. We remember Oliver’s spontaneous good humour. We remember his wise and caring counsel. We remember his organization, his punctuality and watch checking. We remember his deep, strong voice leading the singing in Karama, we remember his yarns, his irreverent bantering; we remember the insight which he could frame in such ordinary and direct ways. The

twinkle in the eye and the wry smile would signal some astute observation, perhaps embroidered with a quote from his reservoir of readings.

There are a host of stories, but so difficult to recount, so tricky to paint the context and so challenging to get the punch line right. Try as I might to include them, I can’t do justice to him and I have to leave these to your conversations around the luncheon.

### Karama



### *KARAMA COMMUNITY*

### *Brs Joe Hughes, Oliver Clarke & Marius Woulfe*

His last 16 years have been spent in retirement at Karama, a suburb of Darwin. He was supported in a loving way in his last years by Brothers Joe Hughes and Marius Woulfe. They have both done a terrific job in encouraging him to keep his freedom and independence and yet they kept a careful eye

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on him. Right to the end, he was regular as clockwork, on the dot for prayer, meals and insulin injections. He shopped, he took public transport, he led the singing and read at daily Mass, he looked after his own laundry and prepared his own breakfast and lunch. Right to the end, he enjoyed his occasional cigarette, a pre-dinner whisky and a red wine for the meal. He engaged in banter, argument, political critique and conversation. Both Joe and Marius shared with me their admiration for Oliver and the privilege it was to be an important part of his life in his last six years. As a Province we are deeply grateful for the care they lavished upon such a widely respected and much loved Brother.

### **Early History**

Son of Michael and Mary Clarke, he was born in Moora, WA 1914. In my last chat in mid-June, Oliver told me that his maternal grandfather (Dirk Brobble) was Dutch and we conjectured about some possible Dutch characteristics he inherited.

From 1916 to 1930, Mary his mother, and then in 1920 Michael his father, were the teachers until 1930 at the one teacher school in Dandaragan, a small community on the Moora River, 140 kilometres from Perth.



Records show that his parents were excellent teachers with more scholarships being awarded to Dandaragan children during his parents' term than any other country school in WA. The family of six boys and parents lived very simply behind the school in a cottage. Oliver spent his early formative years in this educational environment, where

he developed his love of reading and his gift for well-crafted language, and his precision with words.

Then, in 1928, he headed off to St Ildephonsus College, New Norcia, where he completed his Leaving Certificate, and distinguished himself as a fine athlete, President of the Sodality and Captain of the First Eighteen Football, as well as receiving the Br Stanislaus prize for a high standard of conduct, study, sport and universal popularity among those who knew him.

After a preliminary year in the Marist Juniorate at Mittagong, NSW, he entered the Novitiate, was professed in 1936 and had his post-Novitiate formation in teacher training in 1937.

During those times of upheaval and eventually war, there was little or no opportunity for university degrees, which was something that he was always conscious of and sensitive about. However, his qualities as a teacher were recognized early and he was appointed to the important post as teacher to the young Juniors at Mittagong. He stayed there for six years, forming the hearts and minds of those aspiring to be Marist Brothers.

### **The Teacher**

Juniors who later became Brothers spoke of their admiration of Oliver for the things he could do, his dramatic talents, his strengths, his abilities. They loved him for his caring way, his enthusiasm, his sense of fun and his good humour.

He was a wonderful teacher as Fr Pat O'Connor a former student at Rosalie writes:-

“Under him, Shakespeare ceased to mean agonies of boredom and pedestrian exegesis of the text. We

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found that Shakespeare could actually be funny as our teacher acted out all the parts before our delighted eyes. Br Oliver as Bottom the weaver, Br Oliver as Titania!! What a revelation of their comic spirit! What a balm to the funny bone!”

As a teacher, Oliver knew his stuff, prepared well, and explained clearly. But that's not what made him a great teacher, that's what made him a competent teacher. What made him a great teacher was that he truly cared about and, in true Marist fashion, loved his students. He gave them his time and lots of it. He saw and admired their good qualities and overlooked their limitations. He listened to them and let them know he cared about them. They were inspired by his joyful spirit that seemed to embrace the worth and the wonder of them all. He took them seriously and they trusted him. This is where the trust that the Brothers had for him began; a trust that was to last down through so many years.

### **Principal**

Within a short time his qualities of organization and thoroughness and his great ability to relate to Brothers and students, had convinced the Provincial to appoint him as Principal. In 1943, at the height of the Second World War, there he was on the Rockingham beach, enjoying his first holiday home, when one of the local Brothers threw sand over him, woke him up and told him the appointments were out and he was the new Director of Rosalie in Queensland. So began his long period of being Principal: Rosalie, Ashgrove (1945), Hawthorn (1947) Northam (1953), Griffith (1950), New Norcia (1954) and Wangaratta (1961).

As Principal in pre-war school buildings, he found himself leading a post-war generation,

boosted by the arrival of the first wave of European migrants and baby boomers crowding out the schools. There was a huge back-log of maintenance, no government assistance and with inflation running at a high level, maintaining the value of school fees was difficult. It was challenging times indeed. Some Principals or Directors at the time responded by being penny-pinching and niggardly about expenses and being over-demanding and over-working the Brothers on the staff. The Brothers on Oliver's staff were happy to be on the staff and many have commented on the wonderful spirit and morale of his communities. He worked hard and long himself and expected and rewarded hard work on the part of others. So many have commented on just how good a Director and Principal he was.

So Oliver displayed his own brand of organization and dedication. He brought leadership, coherence, quality and good humour to the schools. He was always at ease with himself, carrying his responsibilities without fanfare or trumpets, relating to others with trust and respect.

### **Councillor and Vice Provincial**

On returning to Victoria, he was appointed to the Provincial Council in 1962 and remained there for 14 years as Councillor to three Provincials. He was Vice Provincial from 1964 to 1975 and, in his usual meticulous style, took their place during necessary and sometimes prolonged absences.

He was an inspiration to successive generations of Brothers and Provincials. He was without pretension. His humanity was deep and sensitive. His knowledge of Brothers with their individual histories was extensive, as was his kind understanding of human nature. He could strike up an easy

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relationship with the most problematic of Brothers. He understood that essential to our spirituality is a Marial spirit which creates an awareness of the presence of God intimately in our lives, and that our vocation as Brothers is to be present to all with whom we come in contact. And I am sure that many people, both Brothers and lay, received significant personal affirmation and support during times of great personal decisions.

He had a great amount of common sense. He was a very learned person, but he could relate to persons of almost any background with great humanity, humour, compassion and understanding, characteristics which all served to qualify him for a most trusted position among the Brothers. He wasn't swayed by political correctness or theoretical abstractions; he was prepared to be more direct and was compelled simply to do the right thing. He was authentic and although he disliked cant and humbug, he believed that no fellow human being deserved to be dismissed with contempt or indifference.

Given the qualities that made Oliver a treasured advisor and confidant, he never forgot where he came from. He never lost his grounding. He never forgot the people he knew along the way. He never lost his contact or interest in the Brothers or friends as individual people. As far as I could tell, he never seemed to forget anything. He had an extraordinary memory.

### **Marist Newsletter**

Oliver began the Marist Newsletter in 1969 and stepped down in 1989. It was a period when many were coping with changes in Religious Life. He did much more than maintain an excellent vehicle of communication. In his own special way, he quietly maintained an extraordinary ministry

to the Province, serving the unity of the Province, strengthening our sense of identity about who we were and keeping us in touch with our heritage. He provided us with that important sense of continuity, maintained our links with one another and with our friends, recorded our history as it was being made and interpreted it with his wisdom, his faith, his compassion and deep love for all things Marist. The Newsletter was consistently looked for by communities spread across the nation and was eagerly received by many in other Provinces around the world.

Although he invited people to contribute, he had to do much of the writing and reporting himself. Those who did contribute found their modest efforts sensitively and discreetly improved, blunders kindly clipped in favour of the facts and the most limping prose deftly but unnoticeably transformed.

His own contributions were masterly and scrupulously researched. He took us through the human stories of Brothers who graced our obituaries... loving accounts of the great and small, each revealing the character of the Brother as he was, the truth about these Brothers, revealing hope and nobility despite the weakness, foibles and idiosyncrasies.

### **A Quieter Life at Templestowe 1990**

Oliver became the first Province Archivist and set about protecting our story from distortion, thereby enabling future writers and historians to have a reliable resource for interpreting and chronicling our history. He ensured that the memory of trials and tribulations, of achievements and triumphs, would be an



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accurate one and established a treasure trove of well-organized and indexed material for future historians. He educated himself about Archives, took an interest in the professional association and became President of the Catholic Religious Archivists association.

He took on gardening, read every conceivable book specializing in roses, and set about establishing the roses that now adorn the front of the Templestowe Province Centre. Always a master when it came to teaching dogs obedience, he became friends with Curly and Noxy. His cooking followed the recipe book to the letter and number. While he was fiercely independent, he was also doggedly loyal, and his loyalty extended beyond people to other groups including the Melbourne Football Club. Then after 20 years at Templestowe, he took an exploratory trip to Darwin, returned and indicated that he would like to be appointed to the Karama Community. Although there were some reservations about his request, I trusted his judgement and he went on to live the last 16 years of his life there happily contented.

### **Health**

As happens when one is ageing, Oliver from the age of 60 had the challenge of living life to the full in spite of a number of health conditions:- two heart attacks, deafness, diabetes, dermatitis, shingles, inflammatory polyarthritis, stomach haemorrhage and ulcer. He faced all these with great equanimity, discipline and determination. The man who faced, but triumphantly overcame, all these challenges was of the same clay as the rest of us. But he was of a different mould. His life reminds us that our

hope is tested not only at the end of life, but at each point in our journey on earth when we are confronted by ill-health and diminishment.

### **Conclusion**

In the coming feast of the Assumption we celebrate the fullness of Mary's life in union with God. In researching on and remembering Oliver's life and times, I am impressed by how seriously he entered into a reflection on Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Throughout his life he came close to Mary, always had a flower before her image... always a flower... and made her a partner in his life. He developed a special relationship with God that comes to us through fidelity to Mary's way. The Assumption speaks to us about God's love which simply cannot be contained. It's a reminder that we are destined for fulfilment and we can know that people like Oliver are no longer characterised by struggle and growth but by fulfilment, absolutely attained. Life for Oliver is now really lived to the fullest.

So we celebrate Denis Austin Clarke being called into the Kingdom. Let us give thanks for his 76 years of Marist Life across Australia. Let us respond to the challenge which his life offers us and purify our hearts that we may be ready and worthy to join him in that Kingdom when our own hour comes.

*Br Julian Casey*  
Provincial  
August 9, 2011



*Br John McMahon*



*Br Julian Casey,  
Provincial*



*Brs David Blay & Nello Facci*

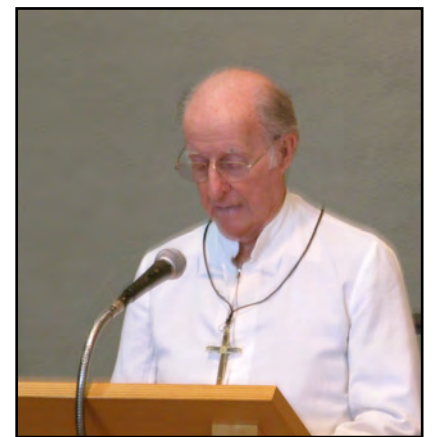


*Frs Len Thomas, Gerard McKernan & Jim Scannell*



*Br Joseph Hughes*

*Requiem Mass  
celebrated at  
Marcellin College Chapel  
Bulleen*



*Br Marius Woulfe*

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# *Eulogy for Br Oliver Clarke*

**Br Joseph Hughes, FMS. Darwin. [Extracts]**

**Brother Oliver!** The mere mention of the name brings a wry smile to the faces of all those who knew him – smiles, not because he was eccentric in any way but because we all have such fond memories of him. To the men, he was a man’s man. To the women, he was a “lovely man”. To all, he was a real charmer.

Born to Michael and Mary Clarke in Moora in Western Australia in 1914, the babe who 20 years later was to become Brother Oliver was given the names Dennis Austin. If you note his initials you will see the origin of his nickname with the Brothers, “Dac”, which was extended to become “Dacca”. To his acquaintances at the supermarket he was known as “that lovely old gentleman” and to certain members of his Marist community at Karama he was simply known as “the oldfulla”. To the surviving members of his family, his nieces and nephews, he was known as “Uncle Denny”. We are so pleased to have his niece, Judy, with us this evening and we extend to her our deepest sympathies. No matter how Oliver was addressed it was always with great affection and respect mixed with a little bit of humour.

Oliver was a great man to have in Community. He was a very prayerful man and was a great support to the Brothers with whom he lived. He was a very wise man and his opinions were always respected except when it came to the rating of Marius’ culinary performances and to the degree of appreciation he had for the same man’s jokes. How often did we here the lament, “If I have heard that once, I’ve heard it a thousand times.” His lovely human qualities which endeared us to him so much were a product of his serenity which he

possessed in abundance and this in turn was the result of his being at peace with himself, his world and his God.

His daily routine was so predictable that any breach of it would forewarn us that something could be wrong. Such was the case last Wednesday. He didn’t come up to the Community Room for his evening meal. Marius investigated and the alarm was raised. Oliver was sitting on the side of the bed totally confused. It did not appear to be sugar this time so the ambulance was called. We anticipated that he would be back later in the evening or early next morning. Such was not the case. He had suffered a mild heart attack. Subsequently, the hospital informed us that Oliver had endured a massive stroke. The Brothers then, with Father Luis, went to his bedside where the last Sacraments were administered and the Salve Regina was sung. Oliver left us very peacefully the next morning at 10 past 7.

We are very deeply indebted to his prime carer, Dr Marilou Capati, for her professionalism and love and to the medical staff at Royal Darwin Hospital who showed such care and affection.

Brother Oliver is a real Marist icon. While we mourn his passing, we celebrate a life well lived. We celebrate the life of a man who was intensely human, very approachable, very warm, a man blessed with great wit and intelligence, simple in the good sense of the word, complex also in the sense that he was able to keep you guessing. What a man! May he now enjoy the reward of everlasting life!

***Memorial Mass in Darwin***

***Bishop Eugene Hurley  
at the Lectern***



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## *Tribute to Br Oliver Clarke from a Former Student*

Br Oliver was headmaster at Rosalie (1944-45), and at Ashgrove in the immediate years after WWII (1945-46). One can only imagine the difficulties he had to face as he tried to re-start the College, which had de-camped to Tambourine during the War. Not only did Br Oliver carry a full teaching load, he was the religious superior of the Brothers who were colourful characters in their own right. Old Boys of that period will remember: Brother Claver ("Bull") who looked like Friar Tuck on a bad day; Brother Chanel ("Charlie") who smoked the forbidden weed and tootied around Brisbane on a motor bike; Brother Ferrer who was a little severe for us frivolous hobbledehoys from Ashgrove, Rosalie, et al.

I first fell under Oliver's spell at Rosalie. He was a revolution! In the classroom and out! His predecessor, who will remain nameless, had made the study of Shakespeare transcendently boring. Oliver changed all that. He made us see, in the eye of the imagination, what it was like to march with Coriolanus, and, most enchantingly, plot mayhem in the Dream. His Puck was mischievous, but his favourite character was Bottom the Weaver – hilarious! At Ashgrove his Lady Macbeth was terrifying. Once again, Oliver deployed a different voice for each of the characters. We students were transported!

Oliver also taught, or tried to teach, a course called Apologetics. This was a course in Church teaching. Even Oliver could not redeem the whole boring business! An honourable defeat! Determined to make us cultured hobbledehoys, Oliver would do things like escort to the City Hall to learn about classical music from such brilliant teachers as Sir Bernard Heinze. To continue the intercultural process, he hired two women, Mrs Gilroy and her assistant, Valerie (whom we all fell in love with – in vain, because she would choose the great 5/8, John Brosnan).

One of the several human qualities that were on display in Oliver's life was his sense of humour. When I asked him to write a reference for me, something I needed to be accepted by the seminary I was applying to, he threw up his hands in mock despair and cried out to the heavens: "Must I perjure myself?!" I was convulsed! This is not to say he didn't have his faults, victim, like all of us, of Original Sin. I once saw him go berserk when he found one of the Juniors reading a scurrilous newspaper called 'Smith's Weekly'. Underneath that witty, charming exterior, obviously there lurked an explosive temper!

Oliver went on, after two years at Ashgrove ("He could charm the legs off an iron pot," said one Ashgrovia mother) to head up other schools. I visited him at New Norcia, Western Australia, where squadrons of flies tormented the monks and students alike – not to mention visitors! He also did a stint as Vice Provincial of the Brothers. I reminded him that Thomas Aquinas had said: "It's one of the tasks of the Religious Superior to raise the level of mirth in the community." No problem there!

He spent the last years of his life as convivial company for the Marist community in Darwin, where I visited him in 2006. It was clear that he was raising the level of the mirth of the community! If I had to choose someone to make the last years of my life joyous, well, it's pretty obvious, from the above, that I would choose .....Bottom the Weaver!

P.S. When is the College going to honour former headmaster, Br Oliver, with a room or a plaque, or some memento?

**Written by Father Pat Connor, SVD,  
Bordentown, NJ, USA. Ashgrove – class of  
1946.**