

Brother Louis Fuhrmann

March 8 is the anniversary of the death of Brother Louis Fuhrmann. He was born in Lindsay, Texas, on November 24, 1930, and christened William Michael. He was the fourth child in a family of six children, three boys and three girls. He received his elementary education at St. Peter's in Lindsay and his secondary education at Subiaco Academy, Subiaco, Arkansas.

Following his freshman year at the academy, William was at home for summer vacation when tragedy struck the family. His 12 year-old brother was killed in a tractor accident while working on the farm. William returned to Subiaco Academy, graduating with the class of 1948.

Wishing to devote his life in the service of the church, he followed in the footsteps of an uncle and six cousins who were monks of Subiaco Abbey. William Fuhrmann professed his vows as a Benedictine monk on March 19, 1950, receiving the name Louis that was the baptismal name of the younger brother who died tragically.

In addition to his family and relatives who played an important role in his vocation, Brother Louis said that his pastor in Lindsay, Father Conrad Herda, OSB, had a definite influence on his decision to come to Subiaco. Another cousin, Paul Fuhrmann, also made profession with him, receiving the name Michael. The addition of these two cousin-monks swelled the ranks to nine Fuhrmann relatives living in the community at that time.

Brother Louis said when he applied for entrance into monastic life, his first assignment as a candidate was to help pick cotton on the abbey's farmland. Because he was acclimated to daily agricultural chores while growing up in Lindsay, he felt right at home as he commenced a fifty-year commitment of dedicated service to the community by faithfulness to daily chores on the abbey farm.

Bailing hay, combining beans, cutting silage, feeding and milking cows were only a few of the routine responsibilities of farm life. He was often busy operating a backhoe, loader, bulldozer or other farm machinery.

Affectionately known as Brother Louie, he was a beloved friend of many people in Logan County as well as academy students and summer campers. He was a strong supporter of vocations to the religious life. "I like our young men and regret that I don't have time to do more for them," he said. "I want them to enjoy life here at Subiaco. I hope that some will like the life well enough to stay with us."

An avid outdoorsman, over the years Brother Louie sponsored the student skeet-shooting club and assisted in football, basketball, and boxing activities. He drove a school bus to and from the games and led weekend excursions for outdoor activities such as fishing, hunting, and swimming.



Having been an academy boarding student himself during the 1940s, Brother Louis empathized with the restlessness of teenagers living away from home by being a “big brother” to them, especially helping with weekend activities and taking time to assign farm jobs to students who would walk to the abbey barns looking for outdoor work with the monks. During the summer he assisted with the activities for grade school boys attending Camp Subiaco.

Although Brother Louie’s left thumb had been severed in a farming accident, he never lost his sense of humor when quizzed about it, especially when innocent little campers would gasp: “What happened, Brother?” They were awestruck to learn that “a snake bit it off!”

An apostolate close to Brother Louie’s heart was being a good neighbor to area residents by helping with manual labor, visiting the sick and shut-ins or assisting those who were down on their luck.

Brother Louis expanded his horizons in the mid-1960s when he was assigned to missionary work on the continent of Africa. He and five other Subiaco monks worked under primitive conditions in establishing St. Mukasa Monastery in Nigeria, West Africa, where he was assigned to building and maintenance. However, a persistent kidney infection caused him to return to the United States in January 1967, a year before the fledgling Benedictine foundation had to be abandoned because of the ravages of the Biafran War.

In 1990 he was appointed farm manager and fire chief. Although he was officially retired from the abbey farm in 1999, he was “recycled” for other monastic projects, notably his “good Samaritan” role of caring for the health needs of his elderly cousin, Brother Henry Fuhrmann. For several years he assisted with the Abbey Peanut Brittle project, was in charge of the backhoe for digging graves in the abbey cemetery, and as long as he was able, simply continued doing “whatever needed doing!”

Suffering with complications from diabetes, Br. Louis moved into the Abbey Health Center in January of 2009. Several days before his death, he suffered a fall, hitting his head on a cement steps. He was treated and remained in an area hospital where he failed to respond and died on Thursday, March 8, 2012.

At the time of his death, Brother Louis was 81 years old. He had been a professed monk for 62 years. He is buried in our cemetery.