

## Brother Henry Fuhrmann

July 6th is the anniversary of the death of Brother Henry Fuhrmann. Edward Fuhrmann was born July 6, 1920, in Lindsay, Texas, the first of eleven children of Willie N. and Margaret (Orth) Fuhrmann. He attended St. Peter's School in Lindsay and then farmed and worked in the area until he was 21 years old.

Influenced by a vocation homily by his pastor, this young man felt God's call to follow in the footsteps of two uncles and two cousins who were monks of Subiaco Abbey. On January 19, 1942, with the prayers and blessing of his parents and pastor, Edward Fuhrmann came to Subiaco Abbey where he professed his vows as a monk of our monastery on September 8, 1943, receiving the name Henry.

Just as Brother Henry's call to monastic life led him to Subiaco Abbey, following in the footsteps of four Benedictine relatives so, too, did his youngest brother and several cousins follow in Brother Henry's footsteps, becoming monks of Subiaco Abbey.

After his profession, Brother Henry was assigned to the carpenter shop where he had shown great promise during his candidacy and novitiate working under the tutelage of Subiaco veteran craftsman Martin Schriver. During this time he helped Mr. Schriver turnout many enduring and beautiful pieces of woodwork, including the tables and chairs in the monastic dining room, the abbot's pontifical throne (used until Vatican II), and the cedar tabernacle used each year during the Holy Thursday liturgy.

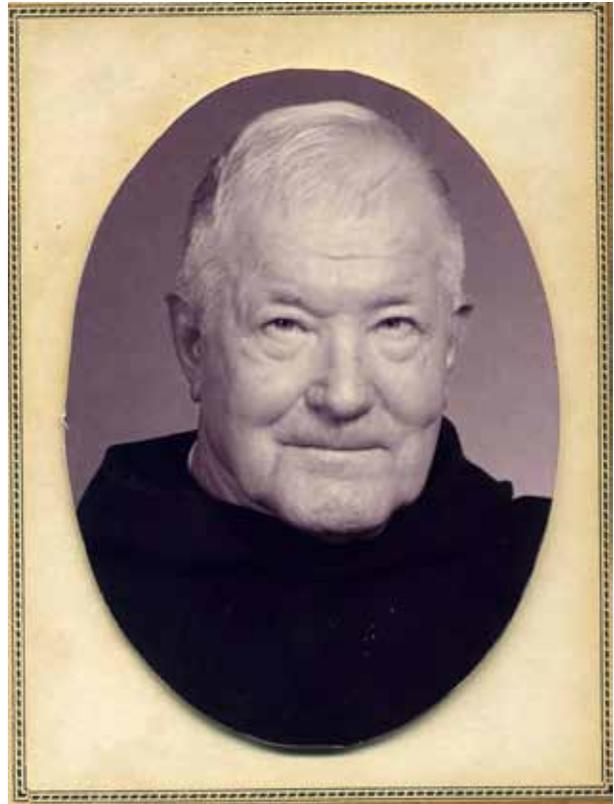
Brother Henry's dream came true when his next appointment was to work on the abbey farm—an assignment that he would love and cherish even in his retirement years. He took to heart St. Benedict's admonition to pray and to work: Brother Henry's spirit had the gentleness of a lamb; his body, the physical strength of an ox.

During five decades of work on the farm, Brother Henry witnessed many transitions, perhaps the greatest being the close of the dairy/and sale of the milk cows in the early 1960s; he then became manager of the abbey's beef farming.

Sowing and reaping crops, dealing with adverse weather conditions, fixing broken machinery, and the hundred-and-one other necessities known only to a farmer were part of Brother Henry's half-century of dedicated agricultural work. His strong faith and his generosity endeared him to neighbors and friends.

In 1976 he spent three months at Santa Familia Monastery in Belize, Central America, helping with farm and construction work. Other than this short interval away, Brother Henry's entire monastic life was spent at Subiaco.

His favorite outdoor pastime was fishing. In his heyday, he—along with other fishermonks—regularly provided a full Friday fare for the monastic tables. He always enjoyed a lively game of “sheep-head” or dominoes at evening recreation.



Reminiscing during his golden jubilee year in 1993, Brother Henry said: “I went through the usual smooth and rough until profession in 1943.” And summing up the years spent on the farm he concluded: “We had a very busy life and we want it so.”

From the mid-1990s, Brother Henry resided in the monastic Health Center where he evidenced heroic patience and gentleness in dealing with his infirmities, especially as his health steadily declined under the ravages of Parkinson’s disease.

During these years of declining health and final illness, Brother Henry was faithfully attended by his cousin, Brother Louis Fuhrmann, with whom he had shared decades of work on the abbey farm.

Brother Henry died peacefully at 11:50 a.m. in the monastic Health Center on his 84th birthday, July 6, 2004. Although in declining health, Brother Henry’s sudden death of apparent cardiac failure, was unexpected.

On Friday, July 9, Abbot Jerome Kodell was celebrant and homilist for the 10:00 a.m. Mass of Christian burial and performed the final obsequies. In his funeral homily for Brother Henry, Abbot Jerome said: “Brother Henry came to our community in 1942, at a time of uncertainty in the country after the Depression and during WWII—when there were few young candidates for the brotherhood. It wasn’t a time of uncertainty for Abbot Paul, who was exerting energy in every direction to complete the effort of bringing Subiaco out of the ashes of the 1927 fire. He saw this strapping young Texan as a sign of hope, an answer to prayers, and he put him to work, which is just what Henry wanted. But he wasn’t here only for work. He worked hard—legendary—but he also prayed hard, in the sense that he did not cut corners on the spiritual observance, which was the reason he came.”

“All of us have stories about Brother Henry. I will mention a couple which typify his spirit. He was always a man in a hurry, and he would trot everywhere, even carrying a bag of cement under each arm. . . . While he was convalescing from knee surgery a few years ago I told him, I guess the hardest thing of all this is the therapy. ‘No,’ he said, ‘lost time.’”

“Once when he and Brother Louis were working in the hay field, Henry got his hand in the tractor’s fan and cut it severely. After sewing him up the doctor said, ‘you won’t be able to work for a while.’ Henry replied, ‘You mean this afternoon?’ When he was immobilized in the Fort Smith hospital the night after he broke his neck, he motioned for me to come over. I leaned over him and he said, ‘And the fish were just beginning to bite.’”

At the time of his death, Brother Henry was 84 years old and had been a professed monk for 60 years. He is buried in our cemetery.