

For family, friends, & alumni of Cistercian Preparatory School

CCISTERCIAN IRVING TEXASONTINUUM

Spring 2020

**TRUE
TO
FORM**

Class of 2020

Telling the Story
of Cistercian's

**TEXAS
HISTORY
TRIP**

*Recollections from
its grandfather,
Rodney Walter,
with Tom Pruitt*

IN MEMORIAM

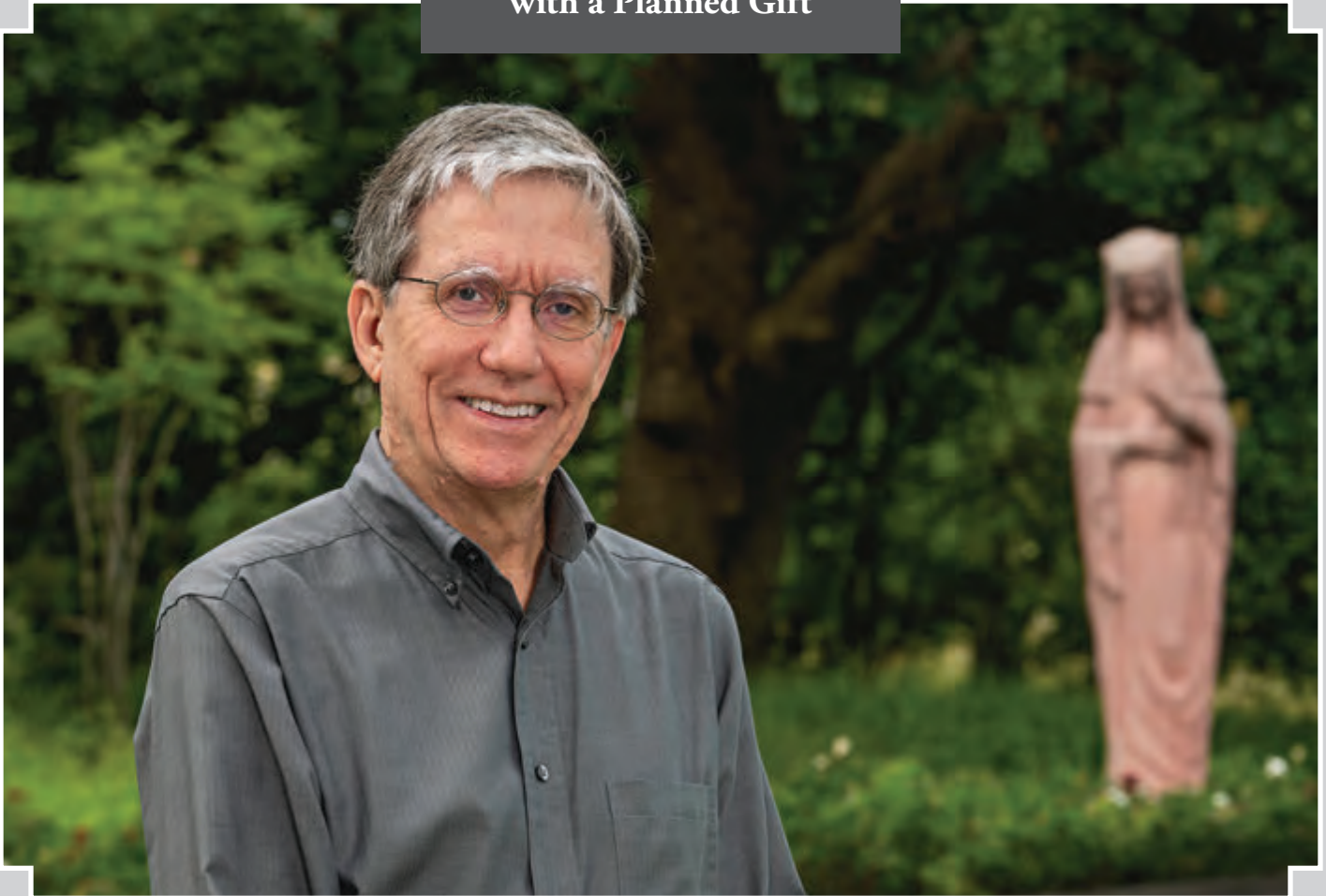
Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy

June 23, 1936 – May 20, 2020



Fr. Philip '00 leads an
online class during the
COVID-19 pandemic

Remembering Cistercian with a Planned Gift



D.C. SIMMONS '75

I arrived at Cistercian Preparatory School in the First Form, following my childhood friend Mark Kinzer who was already a student in the Pre-Form. Mark had told me the School was wonderful, and I could not wait to start. I was amazed by the School, but even more so by the love and care provided by the Cistercian Monks. At Cistercian, I received the education and formation I needed to be successful and lead a good Catholic life.

Today, I am impressed with the growth of the School and the quality of its graduates. I am especially delighted to see the Abbey flourish with new vocations, ensuring the continuation of this institution long into the future. I am pleased to be one of the founding members of the Memorare Society, and I plan to figure Cistercian prominently in my estate plans.

MEMORARE
SOCIETY

To remember Cistercian with a planned gift, contact Erin Hart.
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CONTINUUM

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Cistercian Preparatory School was founded with the aim of preparing talented boys for the colleges of their choice by challenging their minds with excellent academic programs, molding their character through the values of Catholic education, and offering them guidance with both understanding and discipline. Cistercian Preparatory School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, creed, nationality, or ethnic origin in the administration of its admission and education policies, financial aid programs, athletic programs, and other activities.

Letter from the Headmaster

The Eyes of Texas are upon you

*The Eyes of Texas are upon you,
All the livelong day.
The Eyes of Texas are upon you,
You cannot get away.*

In reading through the spring edition of the *Continuum*, my thoughts went back to this popular song I remember from my childhood. Admittedly, the connection is a natural one, given the feature article in



Fr. Paul McCormick

which Mr. Rodney Walter, the legendary "grandfather" of the annual Texas History Trip, shares his wonderful recollections of its founding and first several decades. I know both current students and countless alumni will be inspired by Mr. Walter to recall their own lifelong memories and lessons, much in the vein that **Jess Clay '13** does in his always humorous and insightful column, "Afterthoughts." It is just one of many great disappointments this year that the COVID crisis has prevented our Third Formers from touring the Texas State Capitol together.

There is also a nice connection with our lead feature article on the graduating Class of 2020. For this expression, "The eyes of Texas are upon you," was frequently used by University of Texas President William Prather during his tenure as the University's third president to conclude his speeches to graduates, meaning that the state of Texas was watching and expecting students "to go out and do great things." Similarly, given the outstanding young men of the Class of 2020 and the palpable talent and passion that have characterized their eight-year journey here at Cistercian, we all, along with their Form Master **Fr. Philip '00**, expect great, great things from them.

Finally, with the recent passing of Cistercian's significantly impactful former Headmaster and Abbot Fr. Denis Farkasfalvy, these verses remind me that Fr. Denis is now up there enjoying a well-deserved rest. Nevertheless, I must believe, given how much he cared for our School and Monastery, that he is also keeping a very close eye out for all of us. And, true to form, probably making some pointed recommendations to our guardian angels!

Fr. Paul

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News & Notes

Cistercian robotics lends a hand

Fusion Corps finished second and received the Creativity Award in their only competition before the season was cut short by the pandemic. Looking to be good stewards of their time and talent, the team changed tack and started working with current parent Dr. Annie Kahn Vaughan to build protective shields for physicians doing intubations. The team also designed a stand to hold N95 masks while they are being disinfected. Reflecting on the team and season, Fr. Mark said, "The 'COVID-19 season' will hold a special place in the history of our team. In my mind, it is a time to remember those members of the Class of 2020 — **Kyle Blessing, Winston Hartnett, Davis Jackson** and **Brandon Williamson** — who are the last of the founding members of Team 6672 Fusion Corps to graduate Cistercian. Without their leadership, talent, dedication, perseverance, and patience (with me), this team would not exist. In a strange way it is fitting that Fusion Corps started and ended with one-competition seasons, yet so many alumni, parents, faculty, mentors, and members of the FIRST organization recognized the potential of this team."



Team 6672 Fusion Core

Solid season for Mock Trial

Cistercian Mock Trial was one of five teams at the Region 10 Texas High School Mock Trial Competition to sweep all three preliminary rounds while gathering all winning ballots. After a very difficult final round, the team narrowly missed advancing to the State competition. "Each year, the Cistercian Mock Trial Hawks have increased their knowledge and skills," sponsor Rwan Hardesty said. "This is the first time the team has been able to sweep all the preliminary rounds. Next year, the goal is to make it to the State competition!"



Mrs. Hardesty, Assistant Jack Bitterman '14, and Mock Trial Team.

Cart Weiland '04 visits with juniors

The junior class was excited to hear from **Cart Weiland '04** about his time as a speech writer for Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Senator John Cornyn. He is currently a policy



Cart Weiland '04

advisor on immigration issues. Cart showed the boys a clip of Senator Cornyn on the Senate floor talking about efforts to help Houston during Hurricane Harvey, and he included some Cistercian alumni as examples. "It was particularly striking to see a Cistercian graduate being able to affect change on such a macro level," junior **Saish Satyal** commented, "possibly changing the lives of hundreds of thousands of people with just his words."

Annual Day of Service

Upper School students had their annual "day on" as they participated in community service events across the Metropolis on MLK Day. The boys dispersed to several sites to serve, from packing boxes for kids at Feed My Starving Children to preparing meals for local DISD children at Hunger Busters.

"I'm very proud that essentially the whole school — students, faculty and staff — takes a day to serve shoulder-to-shoulder," Fr. John Bayer said. "Days like MLK Day remind me that I am a student alongside everyone else, and that we are all learning together from the true teacher, Jesus Christ, who came to serve rather than to be served."



2020 Jim & Lynn Moroney Award winner

Charlie Williams '70 is yet another example of the type of exemplary men Cistercian aims to produce. Honored at the Park Cities Club in January, Charlie was introduced by class-mate **Kevin Johnston '70**. Charlie accepted his award with humility while expressing his gratitude for the role Cistercian has played in his life.



CPS takes Religion Bowl

Cistercian won this year's Rev. Thomas Cloherty Diocese of Dallas Religion Scholars Bowl held in Plano. Fr. Ambrose sponsored the middle school team which included **John Paul Jacob (Form IV)**, **Josh Hays (Form III)**, **George Birdsong (Form II)**, and **James Hays (Form I)**. "Under Jacob's solid leadership, the boys worked very hard individually and as a team to prepare to make a strong showing at the tournament," Fr. Ambrose beamed. "We'd gone cold for two years without a win, but we have reclaimed the title and are now the winning-most school in the diocese!"



Religion Bowl winners

Rising senior heading to Sierra Leone

Tom Lewis '73 and his wife Dr. Cathy Schanzer chose **Aidan Smithson '21** from the junior class for their medical mission trip to the Southern Eye Institute in Sierra Leone. Aidan's internship will be delayed until the next school year. "While it is unfortunate that we can't go this summer, I'm extremely thankful to Mr. Lewis and Dr. Cathy for hosting me, and I'm looking forward to helping those in need in January." The Institute provides services like diagnostic examinations, eye glasses, and cataract surgery at no cost to patients.

International exchange with Cistercian

This year's student exchange program was a busy one with several students attending Cistercian throughout the year.



Kristóf Fodor, right, stayed with several Cistercian families, including the Gambows (Tom '24 and Sam '20)

Kristóf Fodor traveled from Hungary to attend senior classes while taking turns living with the Dunikoski, LeSage, Arras, Gambow, and Hartnett families during his stay. "We had a great time taking Kristóf to the rodeo at the State Fair Arena," Mrs. Gambow

replied, "and we all enjoyed learning about his family. We hope to do something like this again."

The upcoming exchange program to Szent Imre Gimnázium for this year has been postponed. Rising senior Emmanuel Barajas will make his trip once travel can be arranged safely.

Visiting from Argentina, Martín Achinelli and Santiago Casarín became temporary members of the sophomore class. Martín, who stayed with the Fraccaroli family, had a strong command of the English language already and played soccer with the JV team, scoring two goals in a single game including a beautiful free kick.



Argentinian students Martín Achinelli and Santiago Casarín, left, with Señorita Kennedy and Fr. Anthony, center, and host students Matthew Martin and Masaki Fraccaroli, right.

Living with the family of sophomore Matthew Martin, Santiago became more and more jovial as he learned English during his visit. "He liked to make paper cranes in the classroom, of all differ-

ent sizes, which he left with us," Fr. Anthony recalled. "There are now paper cranes all over the VIA classroom — a reminder of our Argentinian buddy." Santiago played basketball on the JV team and was one of the biggest contributors in one win — scoring more than 20 points in that game!

Matthew Martin and Masaki Fraccaroli are looking forward to visiting Argentina soon.



Form VI with the exchange students

News & Notes

Cistercian hosts DFWPE's Education in Color Job Fair

On a Saturday in January, over a dozen private schools set up booths in the Cistercian lunchroom for the Education in Color Job Fair organized by DFW Private Education. Representing Cistercian, Fr. Paul met with and collected resumes from over 20 candidates from diverse backgrounds interested in teaching, coaching, and counseling. As is common on many Saturdays during their season, the Robotics team was hard at work building their robot, so many of the teaching candidates, especially those interested in math or science, had the opportunity to see our robotics team in action — something truly inspiring to any educator.



Left To Tell author speaks to Upper School students

Mr. and Mrs. Bob Mohr, parents of **Trey Mohr '05**, arranged a presentation in February by Immaculée Ilibagiza, author of the



Immaculée Ilibagiza

New York Times Best Seller, *Left To Tell: Discovering God Amidst the Rwandan Holocaust* (2006). Her book is an autobiographical work detailing how she survived the Rwandan genocide. Speaking before the Upper School assembly, she gave a first person account of the ordeal she endured and how she learned to forgive and pray for her perpetrators.

Upper school curriculum changes

In light of the changing needs of our students, a series of revisions was made to the Upper School curriculum with even more to come. Last year, senior government was turned into a one-semester course in order to make time for economics in the spring. Starting in January, the second semester of calculus included two paths, STEM calculus with Dr. Newcomb and finance calculus with Fr. Lawrence Ph.D. In the science department, sophomores will take physics, and juniors will take chemistry beginning next fall. Finally, in the theology department, church history will now be taught to the freshmen, and fundamental theology will be moved up to junior year. All of the changes should better prepare the boys for college and professional life in the 21st century.

Cistercian alumnus is 2020 Pulitzer Prize Finalist in Drama

Press clippings continue to come in for *Heroes of the Fourth Turning*, a play by **Will Arbery '07**. Will is currently a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in Drama and is also a recent recipient of the Whiting Award, another prestigious writing award accompanied by a \$50,000 prize! Readers can see Will's profile in the fall 2019 issue of the *Continuum*.

In light of Will's recent accolades, it was an easy decision for the faculty and staff to choose *Heroes of the Fourth Turning* to read and discuss. They spent a Saturday afternoon quoting and arguing about scenes from the play. When told how much discussion his story sparked among his former teachers, Will replied, "[It] makes me so happy to know that my work could provide some good conversation and debate. All I could ever hope for."



Will Arbery '07

Quiz Bowl going strong

On the road for a high school tournament in Shreveport last October, Cistercian's large contingent split itself into four separately registered teams (A, B, C and D), and in a large, all-day, round-robin format involving over 15 total teams, proceeded to finish with respective records of second, third, fourth, AND fifth places... a rare, and rather charming, feat. More recently, at the annual tournament hosted by Cistercian rival St. Mark's, our two upper school teams took second in the varsity division AND first place in the junior varsity division. "We hope to be just as competitive next year," Fr. Augustine said, "but for a full season, with state and national tournaments at the end!"



Saish Satyal '21 and John LeSage '20, center, were 'anointed' after the National Academic Quiz Tournament in Shreveport.

Work of Heart Award's latest winner

The Catholic Foundation selected Gerald Edwards, Cistercian's campus safety officer, for its Work of Heart Award. Current and alum parent Iona Fernandes was not surprised that Gerald won, noting that he "takes the trouble to address the children by their names" during pickup after school and offered her son **Zachary Fernandes '25** running tips for cross country. Among the criteria for the award is "simply going the extra mile for an individual student, family or the community."



Congratulations to Mr. Gerald Edwards, our campus safety officer, on being awarded a Work of Heart Award from the Catholic Foundation!

Faculty and staff focus on teen suicide prevention

Cistercian opened the spring semester with an in-service presentation by Vanita Halliburton, co-founder and executive chairman of the Grant Halliburton Foundation (GrantHalliburton.org). "SAFE! Issues Facing Today's Youth and How We Can Help" focused on teen suicide prevention and how to recognize the warning signs of mental illness in young people. Mrs. Halliburton also made the important point that statistics reveal mental illness is not the only cause of depression and suicide. The school hopes to bring Mrs. Halliburton back to speak to both parents and students next year.



AIA Dallas celebrates architecture and the Cistercian Abbey

The American Institute of Architects was delighted to recognize the Cistercian Abbey with their 25-Year Award. This distinguished honor recognizes architectural designs of enduring significance and is conferred on a project that has stood the test of time for at least twenty-five years. With its distinctive and simple yet modern look, the chapel has won many awards over the years. Architect **Gary Cunningham '72**, who designed the Abbey Church in addition to other renovations and additions to campus, views the recognition as "a testament to the Cistercians' stable, ascetic vows."



The monastic church rises 40 feet high and covers an area of about 5,800 square feet. It is constructed of 427 huge blocks of Texas limestone, each weighing 4000–5000 pounds, that are held in place by thick mortar and the compression of their own weight.

Fr. Julius translates Holocaust survivor's recollections

Klára Kardos, a Catholic woman of Jewish descent, was taken to Auschwitz in June of 1944, at the age of 24. She survived the horror of Auschwitz and was freed in May of 1945. Years after her return to Hungary, she wrote of her camp experiences in *The Auschwitz Journal: A Catholic Story from the Camps*. Fr. Julius completed the translation of her book from Hungarian to English in time for the 75th anniversary of the liberation.



Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy

June 23, 1936 – May 20, 2020

The German poet Rainer Maria Rilke, in his *Sonnets to Orpheus*, one of several of the poet's works that Abbot Denis published in Hungarian translation, praised Orpheus thus: "His heart's a perishable press / of a wine that's eternal for men," and the poet encouraged his own heart in another sonnet, "Whatever pattern you're part of most intrinsically / (even just for a moment in the life of pain), / feel that the whole is meant, the glorious tapestry." For many, Abbot Denis embodied these words he knew well, bringing forth in us the truth our hearts need and fitting his life and ours into the glorious tapestry.

Abbot Denis (Miklós) Farkasfalvy was born in Hungary on June 23, 1936, in the ancient city of Székesfehérvár, the youngest son of István and Mária Knazovitzky Farkasfalvy (siblings: István, György, Mária). He entered the novitiate of the Cistercian Order in Zirc, Hungary on March 19, 1955, at the age of 18, and persevered in monastic life for 65 years, until his death in Dallas, Texas on May 20, 2020.

Abbot Denis's enchantment with Cistercian life came early. He and his brothers were educated by Cistercians in his hometown until their school was suppressed in 1948. He first visited the abbey of Zirc for a large celebration at Easter 1949 when he was not quite 13 years old, and the monastery too was already under threat of suppression from the Soviet-backed government. The experience affected him profoundly, and he resolved to become a monk, priest, and teacher like the men he saw there, "A decision I never found reason to question or regret... In some sense those two days shaped the rest of my life," he wrote.

Cistercian schools were closed in Hungary, but the 1000-year-old Benedictine Abbey of Pannonhalma remained open, and Fr. Denis would attend high school there as an "oblatus" of Zirc. The strong curriculum, monastic presence, and enchanting church aided his rapid spiritual development. Zirc was officially suppressed on October 15, 1950, but in 1955 Fr. Denis joined the clandestine novitiate operated by the saintly and wise Fr. Lawrence 'Sigmond, vicar for the abbot, who was imprisoned at that time. Fr. Denis pursued his early monastic formation in Budapest, under the cover of being a Law student (the only grade lower than A he received there was a B in the mandatory course on "Marxism and Leninism").

Thus Fr. Denis was on hand during the vast student demonstration of October 1956 that led to the brief downfall of Soviet rule in the country. During that short period, the abbot of Zirc was released from prison, and with the encouragement of Fr. Lawrence decided to send young monks out of the country, even though their formation was only beginning – he rightly feared they would be denied the opportunity for education and ordination in Hungary. Thus, at the age of 20, shortly after his first vows as a monk, Fr. Denis passed through Austria and found his way with others to Rome. There, from 1956–1962, he completed his theological studies at the Pontifical Athenaeum of St. Anselm.



Fr. Denis was devoted to the work of theology. Later on, he completed another degree, in Sacred Scripture, at the Biblical Institute in Rome (1974–75, 1984–85), though with interruptions because of his immense labors in the school and monastery of Dallas. He became an accomplished theologian, and the lifelong work he dedicated to the study of St. Bernard of Clairvaux, of the Virgin Mary, and of Sacred Scripture have left significant marks on Catholic theology. He published many works

of theology in both Hungarian and English, and his abilities garnered him the attention of St. John Paul II, who appointed him to the Pontifical Biblical Commission (2003–2013). His translations of the Psalms and hymns for the Roman Breviary in Hungarian are highly regarded. He helped establish the theology curriculum at the Cistercian Preparatory School and taught theology at the University of Dallas in the 1960s, and more fully from 2004 onward. He considered it an important task he shared with other monks to help the new university enter into the great renewal of Catholic theology that came with the Second Vatican Council.

But compared to his other labors, his work as a theologian was often unnoticed. When Fr. Denis came to Texas in 1962, shortly after his ordination to the priesthood in the monastery of Lilienfeld in Austria on July 9, 1961, he took up residence in Fort Worth, where he served as chaplain to the Sisters of St. Mary of Namur (who helped him learn English) and worked toward an M.S. degree in Mathematics at TCU – for the sake of the newly founded Cistercian Preparatory School. Fr. Denis finished his degree in 1965 and taught Mathematics for more than 40 years, not only as work but as an opportunity to see at least briefly into the soul of almost every student of the school. In this as in so many other regards, Fr. Denis showed himself both extraordinarily talented as an individual and yet also deeply dedicated in obedience to the good of the community.

Fr. Denis served as the second headmaster of Cistercian, from 1969–1974 and then 1975–1981, and was the Form Master of various classes, graduating in 1974, 1981, 1982, and 1991. The lasting impact of his work at the school simply cannot be expressed. Although he did not found the school, his brilliant, intense, insightful, and decisive attitude cleared the atmosphere of confusion and allowed him to instill the extraordinarily high ideals he and the community envisioned for education. Under his tenure the school first reached its basic plan – not only in the sense of, for example, building a gymnasium and hiring certain excellent teachers who remained for decades, but also in the deeper sense





of cultivating what the community of a Form and of the school mean. Not without great difficulty and many obstacles did he lay the groundwork that future headmasters would build on. Fr. Denis knew from experience how important it is to dedicate oneself to the young, and against all odds and with the assistance of many exceptional people in Dallas and elsewhere, he brought to completion his predecessors' great struggles to preserve the Hungarian Cistercian tradition in priestly ministry and education.

The monastic community of Dallas elected Fr. Denis as their second abbot on Easter Monday, April 4, 1988; he served for four terms, until his resignation in 2012. When Fr. Denis became abbot, the future of the monastery was still uncertain. Few young men had joined in the preceding decades, and with the reopening of the mother house of Zirc in 1989, it was not clear whether Hungarians would remain here. But Fr. Denis was certain that his role was to build here a lasting home for the vision that had inspired the Hungarian refugees from the beginning. He guided the project of several alumni that completed the basic plan of the monastery by constructing the uniquely beautiful Abbey Church. As the two-ton blocks of limestone were slowly stacked on top of each other, it became clear to all that someone wanted this place to remain.

This new visibility and show of confidence began to bear fruit in the internal renewal of the monastic community. In 2002–03, shortly after the tenth anniversary of the chapel's consecration, a stream of more than a dozen young American vocations began to flow in from the Prep School, the University of Dallas, and elsewhere. Fr. Denis attributed this growth not only to the new willingness on the part of the monks to imagine a brighter future for this place, but also to the heavenly intercession of Fr. Lawrence 'Sigmund and the many sacrifices (even martyrdom) of so many Hungarian monks in the 20th century.

Abbot Denis was able to see through to the larger picture of history and the highest ideals without ceasing to be a man of intense practicality; he did not give himself or others the chance to become dreamy or worry about possible

discouragement. In the history of the abbey and school that he wrote the year before his death, he concludes, "The search for excellence must be conducted with inquisitive and self-searching eyes, forbidding any

tendency toward extremes.... Equidistant from destructive perfection and a cult of mediocrity, the way of perfection pleasing to God is a *via media* in which humility and love are practiced by imitating Christ." No one who met Fr. Denis was left unimpressed; as was said of St. Bernard, he was *amore terribilis, terrore amabilis*, terrifying in his love, loveable in being terrifying. He was unsparing in his efforts to bring into reality the vision of peace he first had as a young boy visiting Zirc, to transmit and perfect what was best in Hungarian Cistercian life, and to offer himself generously to the many souls who found a father, brother, and friend in him. He became a convincing witness to the truth of Christianity and the beauty of the monastic life. Through him God has undoubtedly left an important mark on the monastery, school, and university, on the whole city of Dallas (he won the Catholic Foundation Award in 2016), on theology throughout the world, on the Church at large, on the history of our whole Order, and on countless individuals.

Fr. Denis is survived by his sister Mária (Marika), to whom he always remained very close, and by nieces and nephews Miklós, István, Margaret, Kinga, and Zsolt. He often visited with his nephew Miklós and eagerly followed his career as a cultural critic.

Fr. Denis died from Covid-19 on May 20, 2020, after long struggling with complications from the many illnesses he suffered, compounded by having contracted the new virus just days before. At home the monks were praying a rosary for his peaceful death, and he was accompanied to the end by monks who could visit him at least through a window at the hospital.

The rosary was held at 7:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 24, in the Abbey, and the funeral on Monday, May 25, at 2:00 p.m., followed by burial in the Abbey's crypt. Because of present circumstances, these liturgies were closed to public participation but livestreamed on the CistercianDallas YouTube channel. It is still available to be viewed. Details of an in-person gathering will be shared at a later date. If you would like a holy card from the Funeral Mass, please email Brigitte Gimenez at bgimenez@cistercian.org with your name and address. Donations in Fr. Denis's memory can be made to The Abbot Denis Farkasfalvy Endowed Scholarship Fund at <https://www.cistercian.org/giving>, or checks may be mailed to Erin Hart's attention at Cistercian Preparatory School, 3660 Cistercian Road, Irving, TX 75039. •



TRUE TO FORM



Class of 2020

Fr. Stephen Gregg '01

Jim Reisch

If you came, in an off hour, into the senior classrooms this last year, you would have seen a gaming zone: various board games stacked around, one being played by a few on the teacher's desk, some others on students' desks, surprisingly rarely on the floor – and the side board, the one teachers can't really reach, would be covered with labyrinthine statistics and rankings of the various players through the year. At one point, a faculty member remarked to me with awe-struck joy, "Can you imagine, students their age, just happily playing games?" Surely, I thought, this person has seen our students play games before. Or has society come to this, that we have such a low view of young men that when a few seem decently polite and like a good game, we think it is a miracle and consider our institution a success? But, laying aside my cynicism for a moment, I began to think he was onto something: the spirit of simple contentment and play cannot be taken for granted, even here. These recent graduates probably did not realize that what seemed so obvious

and fun, even anti-scholastic, to them, was revelatory for us who observed them.

As an alumnus looking at a group of recent graduates, perhaps the first way to connect to them is to ask not, Where are they going to college? Who was their Form Master? What was their average score on this or that? Who won which award? What sport did they dominate? What hijinks did they perpetrate? – but rather: When were they born? That is, With what point in the rather longer chronology of my life can I connect to these younger men so I can learn something from them?

The Class of 2020 was born on 9/11. I exaggerate, yes, but in fact two members of the class were born on September 12, 2001, the day after the epoch-making terrorist attack, and yet another was born on September 13. Thus all of them came into this world around that strange moment; their impressionable, half-conscious early years were filled with the urgent news of that time, of terror and war, of insecurity about

The spirit of simple contentment and play cannot be taken for granted, even here.

the future, of a new and more frightful world. This coincidence of birth makes it all the more curious that they graduated from a Cistercian with its classrooms closed for a viral pandemic that makes them ask now many of the questions we who were young in 2001 asked then: What will happen next? Will college continue as normal? What should I cancel and what should I resume? And a virus's target list is less selective than a terrorist's, so it is even harder to see the future.

For some of us who lived through 9/11, the shock had the beneficial side effect of interrupting the normal timeline of our own progress and of opening wider vistas – fearful but also less earthbound visions, perhaps. Much had to be reassessed. One wonders what a younger child growing up in and around the Dallas of those times absorbed, what is his typical character? Would growing up in such a shocked world produce young people who are timid, passive, seeking basic emotional security, quiet, well adapted to a peaceful suburban lifestyle?

These recent graduates are sweet, docile, generally respectful, restrained, playful – but I do not think it is because of a timidity enforced upon their characters by the combative times they have grown up in, a combativeness that goes far beyond those terrorist attacks of almost two decades ago. No, there is a distinct positive value in what we see in these young men, not a repression.

We sometimes think that what a school like ours should produce, uniformly, is groups of ambitious, bold, brilliant, disciplined, devoted, passionate, fiery young individuals highly qualified and interiorly prepared to

storm the highest places in this world. But the place I write from is a monastery, not a weapons factory. When I reflect on these graduating seniors, and all the charms and frustrations they

present, I find something that makes me, as a monk, feel more in touch with what I am doing here and what the true character of this place is.

What I see in these young men is not a hunkering down in some timid way, but an innate sense of the beauty and goodness of a close-knit community. Of course, high school is no utopia, and the foundation of it is a lot of grinding difficulties and personal challenges and feuds and bad feelings, and all of that familiar stuff. No heaven on earth. But within the daily round of difficulties, there is also the instinct for community and peace, founded on the almost excessive closeness of a Form's experience of each other for years and years. One experiences plenty of stress and anxiety at the age of 18, but here there is also room for something more.

The game rankings on the side board accompanied a traditional senior display: the countdown of days until graduation. But then, one day, this was joined by “Days until Coronavirus shutdown: 0,” and that turned out to be true, as the announcement went out later that afternoon that Spring Break would start early and we had no clue when, if ever, we would come back. Seniors always have a long list of lasts – last home game, last tournament, last essay, last party, last class mass, last Dorito munched in this particular corner, all of it – but suddenly all of the lasts turned out already to have passed them by without being accounted such. Thus, by a happy coincidence, the last Friday the seniors



Fr. Philip with members of his form



The games go on

were on campus was for our arts festival, BraveArt, probably the most festive Friday there can be. For the last few years, BraveArt has had a special significance for seniors because they alone can sign up for a metalworking workshop with alum father Mike Uhrick (Michael '14, George '15). They cherish the opportunity to work with welding torches, but more importantly to choose the design of the sculpture that will stand as a rusting reminder of their class after graduation. The sculptures really do mark campus. I remember a visiting couple walking near the sculpture of a huge, segmented, rusting iron claw rising from the ground, and the wife saying, "You can definitely tell it's a boys' school" – and she meant that well. Among other pieces, we have the iron hawk flying by the upper parking lot, St. Michael standing guard outside the chapel, and Atlas fooled into permanently holding up the globe.

The Class of 2020, like all others, was secretive about what sculpture they would create with Mr. Uhrick. Their Form Master, Fr. Philip, did know that they had asked him for a picture of a robed figure – that is, a picture of Fr. Philip himself. Naturally enough, Fr. Philip thought they were going to make a statue of him, with a little concern about scrap metal's quality as a medium for portraiture. What the group produced is indeed a hooded, robed figure, but with a kind of baton for a blade. My immediate thought was somewhere between "Nazgul!" and "Ninja!," but the correct idea was more like "Jedi Knight." After all, these seniors kept themselves equipped with lightsabers at their desks for much of the year. So they produced this robed and armed figure, with something of a Cistercian scapular and cincture, but with classic Jedi kimono top and hood, raising his lightsaber with that steady stance someone of my age associates with old Obi-Wan confronting Vader. A figure both intimidating, calm, and reassuring.

The monks have always been a magnet for this kind of fantastical association. When I first met my Form Master, Fr. Roch, not only his attire but especially the sound his accented bass made through the speaker he carried around his neck to amplify his voice made it clear to my ten years that he was acting the part of Darth Vader. That turned out not to be



quite true – it wasn't an act – but I think the willingness to make the imaginative connection was a good sign that we wanted this interesting man to mean something more for us than just a homeroom administrator.

That our seniors are capable of doing something similar, turning a photo of their Form Master into a metal Jedi Knight, is a good sign: the simple joy of imaginative life is capable of meshing with and transforming the day-to-day experience of Cistercian, even on what turned out to be the last Friday of their senior year.

When we look to a graduated class, it is only natural to associate their character with that of their Form Master. Fr. Philip is not a mystery. His interests, at least in this world, are mainly card and board games, movies, Filipino TV shows, and balancing junk food with calorie counting and exercise. Also, men's fashion, but this seems to be more a Lastimosa family trait than one cultivated in the monastery – though a monk's shoes are one of his most distinguishing characteristics. You can map a significant portion of Fr. Philip's interior life with lists he will gladly share with you: top tens for things like "where to get the best French fries in malls across the globe," and more like top one hundred for movies. His interest in such things is systematic, not frivolous. Similarly, his anxiety-reducing interest in the Rubik's cube turned more or less directly into the work of formulating the School's class schedule. A game is not just a game, and ranking is a habit of the soul.

These are qualities that a teenager can connect with pretty easily. In fact, the Class of 2020 is using board games to keep connected even now – playing together online, often with Fr. Philip. One of Fr. Philip's specific goals from the start was to share some of the best movies with his Form – broad success with *Double Indemnity* and *Creed*, not so much with *Sabrina* and that version of *Les Misérables* that wasn't a musical. Or was *Millions* the worst? Opinions vary. French fries, popcorn, and chips were easy connections: at breaks the seniors would often pile into Fr. Philip's office to consume whatever giant case of stuff they had brought

– Geary with those horrible spicy things or Salhab with something actually healthy – or to taste some Filipino snack from Fr. Philip's mother. Friday trips to Wendy's were a staple of class culture... a

The Class of 2020 is using board games to keep connected even now – playing together online, often with Fr. Philip.

One way to be
all things to all
men is simply to
remain one thing
all the time.

little rebellious, since Fr. Philip's undisputed favorite is Chick-Fil-A.

The Class of 2020, then, found many natural ways to absorb their Form Master's particular qualities by mere exposure. These things are just part of who Fr. Philip is, and his decision was simply to try to make something of them for the students. Use what you've got. He also knew, going into Form I with this class, that he wanted to try to find ways to teach them gratitude. Reflecting on his own youth at Cistercian, he remembered how little he thought then on the many good things granted him and how much easier it was as a young man to focus on the annoying or downright bad. Teaching gratitude is not easy; probably the best way is just to keep doing good things for someone so that they have something for which to be grateful. After all, to inspire that moment of gratitude is not simply a lesson. So Fr. Philip instituted a gratitude moment, when one student was basically assigned to indicate (without sarcasm) at the end of the day what people were grateful for, sort of like going around the table at Thanksgiving. Perhaps this is one factor that went to make the Class of 2020 more generally polite and thankful with teachers, guests, maybe even each other.

Anyone can see that a Form Master is hired, drafted, Shanghaied – or whatever the word is – not because they are saints or have a complete vision of what a human being's education should be or some glorious plan, even less for their sense of humor, taste in movies, or fashion. Rather, this particular role relies more plainly on the simple foundation of a spiritual commitment. We might think that the ideal

Form Master is one who can adapt himself to all temperaments, know the right word for every situation, the answer to every problem from Form I Latin to college decisions and beyond. Fr. Philip was not going

to be this ever-adapting character of infinite variety; his careful lists change slowly if at all. But he knew, from his experience, that there is another way. He, like almost all of those monks who have served in this role, shows that one way to be all things to all men is simply to remain one thing all the time. Consistent stability can have the same effect as adaptive variety, and monks are meant to be of this stable kind. I doubt the Class of 2020 often asked themselves, "I wonder how Fr. Philip will react to this or that." He is not a mystery and likes the rules to be clear and consistent, and not just for games.

Fr. Philip's inability to hide the exact consistency with which he assesses all things is amusing to outsiders. But it is, after all, a valuable trait, and inner consistency can only be the result of diligent work. In his own way each member of the class became acquainted with this interior stability through their Form Master, much like Fr. Philip surely did through his, Fr. Julius. When Fr. Julius taught us novices Cistercian history, he would cite the old aphorism *monachi sicut quercus*, "monks are like oak trees" – that is, stable, long-lasting, hardy, indestructible, good for construction (and for shade) – they just last through history. I think also of what Richard Powers wrote of another kind of tree in his novel *Overstory*, which won the Pulitzer last year: "Yet still this tree has a secret tucked into the thin, living cylinder beneath its bark. Its cells obey an ancient formula: *Keep still. Wait.* Something in the lone survivor



Senior soccer



Form VIII football

**Study & friendship,
truth & delight,
go together,
are intensely
demanding but
boundlessly
rewarding.**

knows that even the ironclad law of Now can be outlasted. There's work to do. Star-work, but earthbound all the same." Like trees, monks reach up and out by digging in and down.

If the members of the Class of 2020 have learned that they are who they are in a settled and stable way, and there's no sense in pretending otherwise or getting anxious about it, then they are reaching a kind of maturity that has nothing to do with other achievements and outlasts the "ironclad law of Now."

Staying in place and allowing time to open the "secret tucked into the thin, living cylinder beneath the bark" is for people, like for the tree, a real mission. Cistercian offers its students a lengthy tenure of years here. By the end, this leads to plenty of bruises and unpleasantness, but also means there is time to get over it and find an ease in the long-familiar place. It takes active attention of course: as when on their junior and senior retreats these students took time to ask forgiveness for things they had done and express gratitude for the good in others. I think back to a conversation with one member of the class over Christmas break, when he spent most of the day in soccer practice and then working with me on *Reflections*. He was worn out from practice, but was thinking of how satisfying it was at the same time. Not because these seniors happened to lead one of our best soccer teams yet, but because "you know your role, and you know everyone else knows your role and their own role, and after years of practice we can just flow together perfectly." He realized the classroom and the whole school are like this too: everything was intensely challenging, but you knew the teachers, the places, the classmates, you could easily flow into conversation, knowing what

to expect, you did not have to worry constantly about strange surprises, just the usual difficulties and gracious peace amid them.

Respectfulness, present gratitude, discipline, docility, playfulness that is not chaotic – once students have more or less acquired these qualities as a group they are ready for something more, for an experience that transmutes docility into an inquisitive energy. This is the mysterious transformation that good schools and classes aim for, in which the individual's discipline provides the foundation not for his own conquest, but for a higher, shared form of learning, the true academic enterprise that brings minds to life together within the joy of considering the world around them. One of the main ways we try to bring this transformation to our seniors is through the now-familiar seminar program. A seminar is a curious thing, standing at once at the highest end of a curriculum and demanding the most from the individual, while actually being a communal experience geared toward the shared exploration of a problem. It is a risky thing, because it leans so heavily on the student's personal discipline and communal engagement.

I can't go into what the experience was like for all the seniors, but as an example of something only these seniors have had the possibility of doing, we can note one group: the "Cold Warriors," the eight or so students who participated in the Cold War seminar with Peter Saliga. From one point of view, the goal of the seminar was the obvious one of engaging with the history of that era through close reading of political speeches, cabinet meeting notes, policy briefings, personal letters, and so on. But the other goal was for the seminar to take



Homecoming



BraveArt

on a life of its own, which it did even before school began in August. Mr. Saliga told the rising seniors that he wanted to include Orwell's *1984* in the course, but there would simply be no time during the school year – would anyone be interested in getting together just for fun? And indeed they did, with some wonderful summer sessions hosted by the students, discussing the novel and the principles of communism while eating barbecue and enjoying pool time – the freedom of the Western World, indeed.

So priceless was what they found in that seminar, well placed in the bunker-like underground classroom in the hillside lodged deep within the upper school building. The students would come to class a little early to ask what musical selection was “on the menu for the day.” The further they went, the more excited they became – the opposite of the usual senior disease. Saliga says they developed a “casual comfortability with each other” that was sincere and made room for these young men not only to perfect an academic skill but to begin forming political, historical, artistic ideals, to find ways to share and form them together. The burgeoning of mature life.

The experience of the Cold Warriors down in the bunker was not one of sheltering-in-place, of hiding within a stainless-steel bubble of privilege. What these seniors and their classmates already realize is that study and friendship, truth and delight, go together, are intensely demanding but boundlessly rewarding. At the same time, they cannot help but see that, in the world into which they are now departing, as in the post-9/11 world into which they were born, this kind of communal experience simply cannot be taken for granted. The Class of 2020 has had the chance here, as Wordsworth wrote, to “feed this mind of ours in a wise passive-

ness.” They have not been blasting through the halls taking us by storm; rather, by respectful, cheerful, dedicated work and friendship they offer us a much-needed glimpse of a good fraternal community. They can be for us a “type of the wise,” as Wordsworth writes of the skylark (let it replace our iconic Hawk for a moment):

*Leave to the nightingale her shady wood;
A privacy of glorious light is thine;
Whence thou dost pour upon the world a flood
Of harmony, with instinct more divine;
Type of the wise who soar, but never roam;
True to the kindred points of Heaven and Home!*

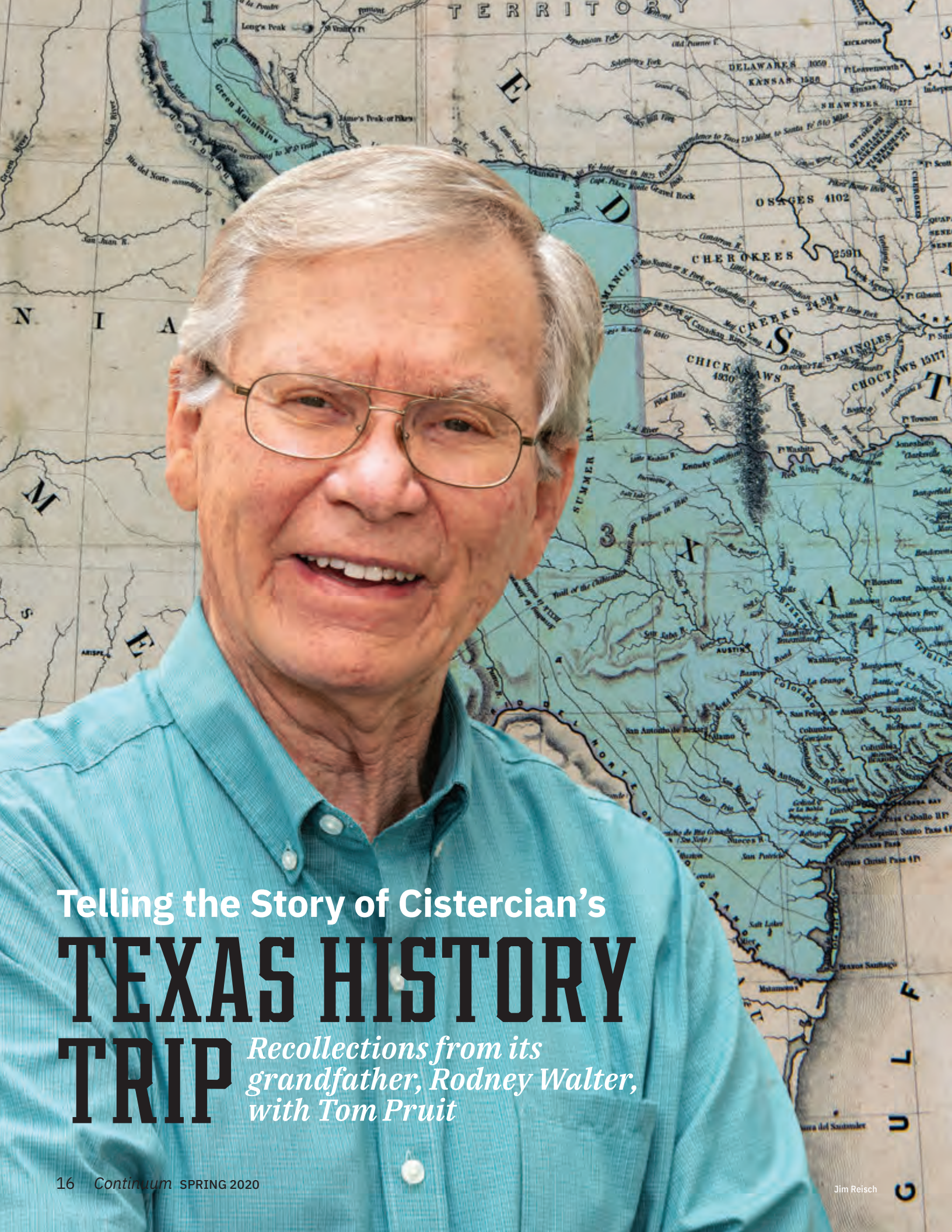
This class, in its own way, reminds us of the “instinct more divine” that stands at the root of our School and community, the kindred points we need to link home and heaven. May they pour this harmony upon the world. •



Senior seminar



Class of 2020 Form I



Telling the Story of Cistercian's

TEXAS HISTORY

TRIP

*Recollections from its
grandfather, Rodney Walter,
with Tom Pruitt*

Here we were, my cousin Tom and I, new Navy recruits soaring through the air somewhere over Texas on our way to California. Neither of us knew much about our home state passing below. In those days, Texas history was not taught at Sacred Heart Catholic School in Muenster, Texas, and I doubt that our meager school library had a single book about it. I had a notion of the state's unique shape and size, but its history remained a mystery to me.

Once my Navy service was completed, I entered the University of Dallas, became acquainted with the Cistercian monks who taught there, and in my senior year, 1964, I learned that their prep school was searching for a teacher. Fr. Damian, the School's first headmaster, interviewed and hired me to teach Texas History. Acknowledging that I knew too little about the subject, I completed a correspondence course with a professor at Texas Tech during the summer before the School's fall opening date in 1964. I was excited by what I had learned about my home state and was anxious to share its story with Form III, the Class of 1970.

The following school year, Fr. John Vereb was teaching civics to Form IV and approached me with the request to drive his class to Austin to visit the Texas State Capitol and learn firsthand the workings of the state's government. The previous spring, Fr. Damian had offered me and fellow teacher Paul McArdle an additional \$100 a month if we would get a bus license to drive the daily bus routes as well as any extra road trips. The Class of 1970 was going to Austin, and that spring marked the first of many



1989 trip for the Class of 1994. The bus left from the lower parking lot, and everyone was ready for a quick departure. All luggage had to fit in the overhead racks on the bus, and this task was always accomplished.

of the Class of 1970, I think most would remember the Capitol and some of the sightseeing, but I'll bet all could probably recall our motel. The trip occurred on one of the days of the annual Texas Relays.

As a result, all of the rooms other than ours were occupied by other high school boys and girls and their chaperones. As

one might imagine, the swimming pool was an early attraction; Father John and I had to keep a vigilant eye on our eager swimmers. As evening approached and as the "attractions" began to thin out, curiosity led our boys to see what else might be happening. We finally managed to round them all up and get them settled in their rooms. As all who came along on later trips know, the

definition of "in your room for the night" is much different for tired adults than for amped up young men. Much of the trip home, in my big overhead mirror, I observed that most of the boys were asleep — as was Father John. Afterwards, he announced that he would never do the trip again.

With that first trip, the precedent had been set, and the Class of 1971 expected a trip too. The following year, I inherited Fr. John's civics class. Paul McArdle agreed to accompany me and suggested I add the Johnson Space Center and expand the trip to two nights. It proved to be a wonderful experience and remained a stop for a number of years. The Space Center is not far from the San Jacinto Battlefield, so

trips to follow.

Despite the warm temperatures of late spring in 1966, the boys were smartly dressed in the required coat and tie as we hit the road. The high point of that first trip was the tour of the Capitol. Afterwards, we drove through the University of Texas campus and then up the north bank of the Colorado River. I think we visited nothing else. If one were to ask the members



2003 trip for the Class of 2008. Fr. Peter '73 and Greg Novinski '82 run through the checklist before departure.



1998 trip for the Class of 2003. Chaperones have always been a key to making the trip a success.

yet another stop was added.

With small variations, the Class of 1972 trip was essentially a carbon copy of the previous one. This time, we received a personal visit from then Governor John Connolly, welcoming us to the Capitol. In later years, one class visited with Governor Bill Clements in his private office, while another had the opportunity to observe Governor Preston Smith as he welcomed two Alabama-Coushatta tribal representatives, dressed in their chiefs' attire, there for an official function. Later classes were welcomed by Representative Will Hartnett '74, who once made arrangements for Governor Rick Perry to meet us as we departed the House Chamber. "One of the highlights of my eleven terms in the House was standing on the House Floor every two years and asking the boys to stand *en masse* in the House Chamber to receive a round of applause from Representatives. It is vital for the continuation of our democracy that young people see the building where our state laws are enacted," said Hartnett.

In addition to visiting the Capitol Building, a photo confirms that by 1968, we were visiting the Old Land Office Building which housed the museum of the Daughters of the Republic of Texas on one floor and that of the Daughters of the Confederacy on the other. This site soon became a must for every class. The Land Office and the Governor's Mansion are the only remaining government structures built before the Civil War. In 1990, the two museums were forced to move to make room for what today serves as the official visitor center for the Capitol, and both museums have since been permanently closed. After the museums were closed, a visit to the LBJ Library on the UT campus was added. During those museum visits, the first floor docent would line the boys up to peer up a narrow spiraling staircase. According to one tale, a murderer once dragged his victim up that spiraling staircase to somehow dispose of the body once he reached the top!

Their first night in Austin is one the Class of 1972 will never forget. Upon our arrival at the Chariot Inn, we learned that Martin Luther King Jr. had been assassinated. The news put a damper on the rest of the trip, and a very lively class suddenly became



1968 trip for the Class of 1972. This picture was taken on the day that Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. The students are in front of the Land Office Building in Austin, one of two state structures built before the Civil War.

rather docile as they sat in their rooms in front of television sets, both that night and the next, following the news accounts and watching the outbreak of riots all over the country. The trip continued, however, and we were off to Houston to visit the Space Center and San Jacinto the next day. Nearby to our hotel, the Las Vegas Motel on South Main, was "the

Eighth Wonder of the World," the Astrodome, and we had tickets (\$1.50 each!) to an Astros game. When we walked into the facility, our collective jaw dropped. Although today such sports facilities are commonplace, such magnificence was new to us, and we were in total awe.

Within a few years of starting my career at Cistercian, I was teaching Texas Geography to Form IV and Texas History to Form III. What I was learning and sharing with the boys was exciting, and I ambitiously planned and received approval for a five-day, four-night trip to Houston, San Antonio and Austin. In April of 1969, we headed to Houston where we visited San Jacinto and the Battleship Texas before taking in an Astros game and touring the Space Center. From there, we were off to San Antonio with brief stops near the place where the Goliad Massacre occurred and at the Spanish mission church, La Bahia.

The next morning our adventures in San Antonio began as we headed first to the beautiful missions of San Jose and Concepción and then on to the Alamo. Our walking tour ended at a lot near the site of the present day Tower of the Americas. The Tower (which had been designed by Dallas architect O'Neil Ford, who designed Cistercian's Middle and Upper School buildings as well as the tower at the University of Dallas) would become a favorite stop for students upon its completion.

The afternoon in San Antonio included a hike to the Cathedral San Fernando, the Spanish Governor's Palace and La Villita, where we would cross the narrow street on the village's north side to the San Antonio River to view the iconic Arneson River Theater. Never lacking hams amongst the boys, some of our group would cross to the other side, where the stage was located, to entertain us while

the adults were taking the opportunity to rest up for the next hike to the Institute of Texan Cultures. Our last stop before dinner was the aforementioned tower for a ride to the observation deck. Nearly every class had one or two boys who preferred to keep their feet on the ground! For years, the Bonanza Steak House was our final stop for dinner before returning to our motel for the night.

From San Antonio, our travels took us to the LBJ Ranch headquarters and Johnson City, the boyhood home of the president and the place from which he announced his successful initial bid for a seat in the U. S. Congress. Back on the road again, we headed east for Austin, the last stop on our tour where we generally followed the itinerary of previous trips. Heading home, we made one stop forty miles east of Waco at the Fort Parker restoration, the site of the capture and abduction of Cynthia Ann Parker, mother of the last great chief of the Comanche tribe, Quanah Parker.

Future trips would see small itinerary alterations including stops at the Alabama-Coushatta Indian Reservation, San Felipe de Austin (the site where Stephen F. Austin set up his headquarters), Fredericksburg by way of Luckenbach, and the Inner Space Cavern.

The scant records in my possession point to 1971 as the year I implemented a significant change to the trip. The plan was to take the Class of '75 and '76 on the trip, but separately. Five days times two was daunting, so the Houston leg was dropped for both classes, which meant the trips could be made in just three days. Each trip to Austin found us trying to work in more places, including a visit to the Court of Criminal Appeals, the Texas State Library



1994 trip for the Class of 1999. Top: Students taking a break after visiting the LBJ Library. Middle: Students enjoying a Dairy Queen meal. Bottom: Fr. Matthew with students visiting the Mission San José in San Antonio.

and Archives, and the Texas State Cemetery.

Early on, the idea behind the boys' wearing of coats and ties at certain times during the trip was to impress upon them their role as ambassadors of the School. At mealtimes, despite a few violations of proper decorum, it seemed to work; we always had people stopping to chat with the boys and to comment to their chaperones on how well our group was behaving. The wearing of the uniform on these trips, however, was soon abandoned because it proved impractical to hang them from the overhead racks on the bus, and the times simply became less formal. It became the rule instead for the boys to wear long pants and a collared shirt on the first day for visiting the Capitol, but shorts and T-shirts for the remainder of the trip.

The uniform may have impressed people, but it did not magically transform its wearer into a well behaved boy. Always a learning experience for me, the trip was a kind of on-the-job training. My first lesson had to do with room arrangements.

On the very first trip in

1966, the one and only trip for Fr. John, I realized that we did not have a block of rooms for the class; being scattered throughout the hotel made it next to impossible to monitor. For every subsequent trip, I requested adjacent rooms. The strategy behind the block request was simple: once in their rooms for the night, the boys were concentrated in one area so that any loud activity might be contained by flanking those rooms with those occupied by adults or better behaved students. Also, I quickly learned that like-minded boys tended to group together if given the chance to decide their own room assignments. This allowed me to assign groups strategically, a plan

which usually worked, but not always. Middle school boys with more freedom than usual occasionally led to the need to write letters of apology to irate patrons who did not have a restful night!

By the time we arrived home and unloaded, the bus had accumulated much refuse and needed a good cleaning. This was done by “special volunteers” (aka rule breakers) selected by a conference of chaperones and supervised by Fr. Matthew. We never had a shortage of “volunteers,” but we eventually had to lower the threshold of qualifying misbehavior. Either the boys in the latter years were better at following the rules or were more adept at hiding their violations.

As the Texas History Trip evolved over the years, the need to get students more intellectually involved became apparent. I began assigning each boy one historical or geographical aspect of the trip to research and present orally to his classmates. This pre-trip activity required his fellow classmates to take notes during his presentation. Each boy wrote their research notes in a small pocket-sized notebook which would also be used to take notes on the trip. It is not unusual for an alumnus to remark to me that he still has his notebook.

The Texas History Trip Parent Meeting developed out of necessity in the late 1970s. The year before I called for the first parents’ meeting, one of the youngsters thought it smart to bring a bottle of liquor along on the trip. At that inaugural meeting, I made a strong appeal that parents supervise packing and inspect luggage to make sure that all questionable

items were absent.

Only once more, to my knowledge, did a student attempt to smuggle alcohol on the trip. This time it was cleverly hidden in what appeared to be an unopened soda can. Thus a rule was born: no soft drinks allowed, a rule which had a beneficial side effect; it all but eliminated the constant requests for unscheduled bathroom stops.

Of course, alcohol would take first place on my list of prohibited items, but the list would grow over the years as the inventive geniuses dreamed up more mischief. Looking at my old notes, I found prohibitions including balloons, fireworks, shaving cream, Vaseline and similar ointments, knives, cigarettes, cap pistols, Chinese stars, gag or trick items or other such novelties like gunpowder, VCRs, saran wrap, and water guns. There was, however, one exception made for a knife on the trip: a Bowie knife could be purchased at the Alamo and turned over to a chaperone for safekeeping until it could be reclaimed by its purchaser in the presence of his parent(s). The same rule applied to bullwhips. Each year, it seemed, brought

new challenges and a steadily expanding list of contraband!

One can’t recount memories of the Texas History Trips without noting that things didn’t always go as planned. From a broken down bus (twice near Lampasas!) to the retrieval of two students left behind at the Texas State Cemetery in Austin to the time my luggage didn’t make it on the bus, there was never a dull moment. Sometimes, it is in these unexpected moments that the best memories are made.



1998 trip for the Class of 2003. Top: Students at the Sam Bend Entrance to Longhorn Caverns. Middle: Students listening to a talk in the Indian Section of the Institute of Texan Cultures. Bottom: Rodney Walter and Peter Saliga showing off souvenirs in front of the Alamo.

The practice of adding the Form Master and chaperone dads began with the Class of 1972, and these brave souls would become indispensable additions to future trips. In the beginning, I simply asked dads individually if they would like to go; when I had filled my quota, I stopped asking. As the years passed, I found dads asking me if they could go, and as more time passed, far greater numbers than I needed were volunteering their services. So I created the requirement that the first dads to get a written request to me would be first in line to go. This arrangement worked well until I started getting the required requests from dads whose sons were not yet in Form III! One day, as I was pondering the fairness of continuing to honor these early submissions, my phone rang. The caller (a woman) had a request that her husband be placed on the list of trip dads. I explained that he would have to meet the requirement as described above. Then, because I was curious, I asked her his name. When I informed her that I did not recognize it, she told me that she didn't expect me to, for her son had not yet tested for Form I. That call confirmed that a better system was needed, and the Texas History Trip lottery was born.

What the trip has become today began as an idea. It was put into practice, added to, subtracted from, corrected, adapted, discussed, debated, worried over and prayed about. It is hard for me to comprehend how all this came to be—and to give an account of it is even more challenging; so much has been lost to the passage of time. I was privileged to be part of every trip, in one way or another, from the first one in 1966 to the one in 2010, but I certainly did not do it alone. I should add here that the Class of 2014, although ready and anxious to be treated to their excursion, did not get to go. The flu pandemic of 2009 prompted the headmaster to exercise caution and cancel the trip; that class holds the dubious distinction of being the only Cistercian class (until the current one, the Class of 2025, again because of a pandemic) to not take this annual excursion.

The Texas History Trip could never have happened without the blessings of the headmasters, the patient assistance of school staff, the trust and support of parents, the invaluable assistance of



2015 trip for this year's seniors, the Class of 2020.

the form masters, the gracious help of the dads who gave of their time, plus the willingness of Fr. Matthew to assist for so many years. All these people contributed to what has become an important ingredient in the boys' Cistercian experience. One person in particular deserves a special recognition, Patrick Mehen. He came

to my rescue when issues with my health made it impossible for me to drive the bus or, sadly, even just to tag along.

I will be forever indebted to everyone who played a role in establishing this tradition. I wish somehow I could share the joy I feel when former students tell me they have revisited some of the trip highlights with their families, or that they fondly recalled their



2012 trip for the Class of 2017. Class in front of the Alamo.

trip when they came across their hidden-away notebooks. One particular student who left Cistercian after his junior year went on to become an ER doctor and was working in a local hospital, the services of which I was in need of a few years ago. After my admittance, he walked into the examination room and began our conversation with these words, "Hello Mr. Walter, I still have my Texas History Trip notebook."

Amen. •

Sports

Soccer Undefeated Heading into SPC Semifinals

Coach J. P. Walsh knew going into the soccer season that he had a very dedicated group of seniors and plenty of experience. What he did not know, however, was how his team would score offensively. He needn't have worried. By season's end, they had scored 84 goals and allowed only nine for the season. Even more incredible, 19 different players scored for the Hawks, led by **Evan Anderson '20** who tallied 17. This number of contributing scorers in high school is unheard of, and



Reefe Harrison '20

Coach Walsh attributes their success to his senior leaders and their willingness to do whatever it took to win. His players requested to train every day possible during the Christmas and Thanksgiving breaks. The camaraderie, skill and competitive nature that was forged in these training sessions allowed them to make up for what they might have lacked in skill or speed.

While Anderson led the Hawks in scoring, **Jakob Quarles '22** and **Chase Frutos '21** stepped up with eight assists each. This unselfish play was another characteristic that allowed Coach Walsh's team to conquer the regular season unblemished. It did not matter to this group who got the credit, as long as they got the job done. This was never more evident than during their home win over rival St. Mark's. Anderson scored a rebound attempt off a free kick from **Hogan Jones '20**, while taking a big hit from the goalkeeper. The entire team hunkered down after this goal to hang on for their most important regular season win of the year.

Entering the SPC Tournament with an undefeated record and the number two seed put a target on Cistercian's back. They won their quarterfinal game 2-0 by taking an early lead over a very talented St. John's team despite losing senior defensive stalwart **Stephan Salhab '20** to injury. Unfortunately, their

dreams of an SPC Championship were thwarted against Kinkaid in the last minute of double overtime. The boys were one minute away from a penalty kick shootout to determine their fate. In a true testament to this team's grit and determination, they came back the following day to secure third place, finishing the season with only one loss.

All SPC performers were Anderson, Frutos and goalkeeper **JB Hudnall '21**. All North Zone performers were **Oscar Anderhub '20**, Jones, **Zain Dabbous '21**, **Beto De Los Santos '21**, and Quarles.

Youth Movement for Hawks Basketball

Jack Dorn '05 entered his first season as head coach of the varsity basketball team with only one returning player from last year's varsity team, **Jack Schieferdecker '20**. This allowed for multiple new faces on the varsity



Jack Schieferdecker '20

team but was cause for some growing pains throughout a tough conference season. Starting from day one of practice, Coach Dorn will tell you how hard this team competed and how much they enjoyed spending time with each other. The group never got down on themselves or each other, and a big part of this was their leadership. Schieferdecker (a captain) and senior classmates **Timmy Ngo '20** and **Anthony Peterman '20** did a tremendous job along with junior captains **Daniel Horlick '21** and **Sam Laber '21** of setting the example for what expectations the basketball program has going forward.

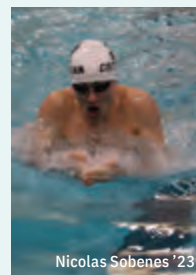
Defeating Ft. Worth Country Day at home was a key SPC victory that kept the Hawks' SPC Tournament hopes alive. **Oliver Currin '22** hit a three pointer with under 15 seconds remaining to give the Hawks their first lead since the first quarter. In the end, the Hawks played hard all season but fell short of qualifying for the SPC Tournament.

Schieferdecker was named to the All-SPC team, and **Aidan Smithson '21** was named All-North Zone. Schieferdecker also qualified for single season Hall Of Fame status with 325 points on 55% shooting for the entire season.

Despite the departure of Schieferdecker and his classmates, 13 players who made their varsity debut this past season will return next year.

Aqua Hawks on the Rise, Place Eighth at SPC

Coach Jeff Veazey will admit that the Cistercian swim program has been rebuilding the last two or three years.



Sam Gambow '20

They have taken this time to commit to hard work, focus on strength, and improve their sprint times in the pool. This year at SPC, the fruit of their labor began to show as they finished eighth in the conference, their highest in a few years. And,

for the first time in Cistercian's history, every relay team scored points at the meet. The Aqua Hawks cohosted the SPC Tournament with Hockaday, which provided a great opportunity for our community to shine.

The Aqua Hawks were led by captains **Sam Gambow '20** and **Nico Walz '20**. Gambow was the leading point scorer for the year and earned points in the 200IM at SPC. There were also strong showings throughout the season from **Evan Ringdahl '21** and **Mark Van Kirk '21**, as well as **Nicolas Sobenes '23** and **Nicholas Ringdahl '23**. The younger Ringdahl earned points in the 100M Breaststroke at SPC, quite the accomplishment for a freshman! Coach Veazey also noted tremendous improvement from another freshman, **Matthew Sickler '23**, and a talented group of rising freshmen as further reason for optimism going forward.

Spring Sports Halted Amid COVID-19 Pandemic

The baseball, tennis, and track and field teams had high hopes for the spring season but were grounded before competition even started. We would like to recognize our seniors who were unable to complete their final spring sport season:

Baseball – Patrick Geary, Timmy Ngo, Anthony Peterman, Jack Schieferdecker, Andrew Arras, Ethan Barhydt

Tennis – Brandon Williamson, Nico Lopez

Track and Field – John LeSage, Stephan Salhab, Sam Sloan, Kaosi Unini, Nico Walz.

Essential Business

For this is what America is all about. It is the uncrossed desert and the unclimbed ridge. It is the star that is not reached and the harvest sleeping in the unplowed ground. Is our world gone? We say "Farewell." Is a new world coming? We welcome it – and we will bend it to the hopes of man.
– Lyndon B. Johnson

Those words appear across the twentieth and twenty-first pages of a U.S. passport. Beneath the LBJ quote is a scene of cowboys on horseback, driving lean longhorn cattle across a less-than-fruited plain. It is the most Texan of all the great American tableaus depicted in the passport book – even if the snowcapped purple mountains in the background nationalize it a bit beyond the Far Western peaks of the state.



Jess Clay '13

I have thumbed through my passport before, while waiting to board or while going through customs. It now sits idle on my desk, a totem of a planned trip to Mexico that was cancelled back in March alongside the rest of life's more interesting activities. But

I cannot complain about my lost travels, because the Third Formers have missed out on a far superior trip that required no passport. They have missed out on the Texas History Trip, and I know that my loss pales in comparison to theirs.

For those who have not had the distinct pleasure of going on the Texas History Trip – and for those who have had it untimely ripped from them by a global pandemic – there are two key components: the history and the trip. The history portion is memorable. When my form went, we toured the Capitol, the Bob Bullock Museum, and the Texas State Cemetery in Austin; the Alamo, several less-celebrated old Spanish missions, and the Tower of the Americas in San Antonio; Longhorn Cavern in Burnet; and Luby's in several places. We had tour guides at the Capitol and Cemetery, each distinctive enough that I reckon I could still pick them out of a police lineup. I remember tales of some of the more colorful inhabitants of the Cemetery: Josiah P. Wilbarger, scalped by the Comanche and left for dead, only to be saved by the maggots that inadvertently disinfected his wound; Albert Sidney Johnston in the killing fields of Shiloh, his leg so numb from an old dueling wound that he failed to notice as his knee-high riding boot filled to the brim with blood; Willie "The Devil" Wells, inventor of the batting helmet and mentor to Jackie Robinson. I leave the rest of the history to the Third Formers and Mr. Walter, who even without this year's trip surely know more than I can ever remember.

More edifying, in the long run, were the less historical aspects of the trip. These lessons came primarily during the

bus rides between sites and at the motels we patronized. The motels, in particular, comprised a decidedly new world from the one we knew in the Metroplex. Like the conquistadors who preceded us in the region five centuries before, we explored it with equal parts vigor and bewilderment. We discovered the ubiquity of Texas-shaped waffle irons across the Lone Star State's motels, as well as TV channels which ran movies about black-market organ thieves in Brazil. We discovered that a Hill Country biker rally occasionally coincides with the Texas History Trip, and that many of its attendees stay at the same places as intrepid history-trippers. We discovered Vault, a since-discontinued energy drink comprised of roughly 10% high fructose corn syrup, 10% caffeine, and 80% yellow dye Number 5. It made Mountain Dew look like La Croix, and it kept one boy awake all night and trembling the entirety of the next day.

The trip contained multitudes, and it meant many things to many people. But above all, I think the trip meant freedom. It meant a chance to travel for once in your life without a mother watching over you, and a chance to learn the costs and benefits that come with life on the road. At the time of the trip, the oldest member of our form had just turned fourteen, and the youngest was twelve. In some ways, the trip marked a last frontier of boyhood and the first few unsure steps upon the precipice of adolescence.

In the years since the trip, I have traveled far beyond the I-35 corridor. I have spent many more nights at motels while on the road – some better and some worse, but most just about the same except for a conspicuous dearth of Texas-shaped waffles. I have taken many more trips, and I have shared many of them with my old Cistercian classmates. But I have remembered none of them so well for so long, for the same reason we do not appreciate subsequent breaths as much as the first one when we swim and come up for air.

As I think about the Texas History Trip, I think too of Lyndon Johnson's words on the passport's pages. Perhaps the trip was not so grandiose as his vision of America. But for us, at the time, it was no less important. It was the unsavory motel and the undrunk energy drink. It was the obedience not quite reached and the paternal chaperone sleeping fitfully aboard the unquiet bus.

We need not ask ourselves if a new world is coming, for it has already arrived. It is hard to imagine anything – even a stalwart like the Texas History Trip – emerging from this epidemic unchanged. Yet I wish for the current crop of Third Formers and those who come after them to someday undertake trips of their own across the state. It is worth knowing history, and worth knowing that we live through it. I hope the boys welcome the new world while appreciating the old, and that they bend it to their hopes. •



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Post-Pandemic Musings



Fr. Roch Kereszty

By the time this issue of the *Continuum* is published, I don't know if the "curve" will have been flattened, but I hope that we will feel confident that we have survived the worst of this virus. Most of us, I suspect, have not yet digested the enormity of what has hit the entire planet. A tiny mutation of a tiny virus, visible only under a microscope, jumped from some unfamiliar animal in China and spread over the whole earth, disrupting, sickening and killing human beings everywhere, with no respect for borders, continents or social classes. It has certainly

succeeded in shaking up our sense of security: we are clearly not in control. When a beggar told the French King Louis XIV, "Your Majesty, I must live," the king replied, "I don't see its necessity at all." A cynical reply but a great philosophical truth. Our existence is not necessary. It is an incalculably random chance that we are alive. And tomorrow we may die. How do we deal with this?

If I knew only about this biological life, I would conclude that the human being is an absurd accident of random evolution. He craves unending life and happiness, but it is only a question of time before he is extinguished by an indifferent universe. If there is a god, I wouldn't want to have anything to do with him because he is a cruel, capricious tyrant who enjoys cutting down people when they are most flourishing. If all I knew were this biological life, all I would do is eat and drink and curse the originator of this senseless universe.

But I have found another way of looking at the world. The beauty of the rising sun, the budding leaves of the old oak tree in front of the abbey, the hummingbird's avid

sucking of honey from the flowers in the monastery's courtyard: all of this speaks to me of a beauty infinitely beyond what I see, a mere glimpse and foretaste. When I talk with my confreres, my former students and friends, I sense a spark of goodness, wisdom and love that speaks to me of another world. Goodness, love and truth, and people in whom goodness, love and truth are growing, give me the promise and taste of eternity. Then the historical evidence for the world of the Bible — the words and deeds of Jesus, his resurrection — make perfect sense to me.

I still understand myself to be part of a cosmic evolution, but of an evolution whose final phase is joining the risen Christ in the Father's glory. This life is still walking toward my end which might wait for me at the next step, but it is a great adventure to know that all of this is part of my Father's plan. He is a tough, and at the same time tender, father who allows good and bad to happen to me and to each one of us in order to give us the hard evidence of our mortality and a glimpse of our eternal communion with him. •