

THE GATEWAY



The Gateway

Hong Kong Lasallian Family Bulletin

January 2009

Tenth Issue

Welcome

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Ah! Number 10. A number perhaps associated with Downing Street but which, in Chinese, signifies completeness and perfection.

This is also the Chinese New Year issue. We are leaving behind the Year of the Rat and ushering in the Year of the Ox, that obstinate but hardworking animal. Many people will be hoping that the new-year will bring about an upturn in their fortunes despite the financial meltdown. In the process, a touch of obstinacy and hard-work might not go amiss. We will have something to say about the Chinese New Year later.



We return to our usual practice of including a Brother of the Month, in this instance, Brother Eugene Sharkey. This seems to be appropriate because the school of which he was Principal for 21 years is about to celebrate its 40th anniversary. Some of you will have known him and some may have heard about the boxing exploits of his family. We hope you will find this and the other articles to your taste.

There are a number of traditional Chinese New Year greetings. We end with the most popular one: **Kung Hei Faat Choy**, a hope that you will become rich!



Brother of the Month **Brother Eugene Sharkey (1926-1994)**

There are many “bits of heaven” dotting the land and seascapes of County Donegal, Ireland. Among them is an area called the Rosses. It was here, in the townland of Mullaghderg, that James Patrick Sharkey was born on the 25th February 1926. He was the eldest in a family of eleven, six brothers and five sisters.



One reason for the natural beauty of the Rosses is its proximity to the Atlantic Ocean. James was often happily out in the boats with the fisherfolk. He was to retain a lasting love of the sea and it is little wonder one of his favourite songs was “Shoals of Herring.”

If the call of the sea was strong, so too was the call to serve God. At the age of fourteen, James answered that call and headed for De La Salle Monastery, Castletown, County Laois, far from home and from the sea. There he spent two years in study and in preparation for a life of educational service with the De La Salle Brothers. He then entered the Novitiate and, as a sign of serious intent, took the habit on the 7th September 1942. He was also given his new religious name, Brother Eugene.

The Novitiate was a year for spiritual formation but before its completion there was yet another call, this time for volunteers for the missions. Brother Eugene volunteered and was sent first to a house of studies in Mallow, County Cork, where he successfully completed the school certificate examination in 1947. This was also the year that his mother died, rather suddenly, at the age of forty. It was a bad blow for her large family but they retained her strong faith and determination to face and cope with adversity.

The next phase of life was to attend a Teachers’ Training College in Strawberry Hill, London. But prior to that, Brother Eugene was sent for exposure and experience to schools for young delinquents which the Brothers ran in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Eugene was posted to Scotland in the summer of 1945. There he had to balance freedom with responsibility, something he had already learned from his upbringing.

In September 1947 he headed south for Strawberry Hill to begin the two-year teachers' training course. Many of his classmates were already army veterans of the Second World War. The excellent staff, the diverse mix of students and the balanced curriculum helped to produce teachers of exceptional maturity and competence. Brother Eugene completed the course in the summer of 1947, was allowed home for a holiday with his family, and by September was ready to leave by boat for Singapore. Brothers Edmund Matthews, Alban Lynam, Theodore Quigley and Macartan Flanagan were in the same group, while Brother Herman Fenton was the elder statesman.

The troopship "Dilwarra" left from Southhampton and reached Singapore on the 9th October 1947. While awaiting his assignment, Brother Eugene taught for a few months in St Anthony's Primary school and was then, in January 1948, posted to St Michael's Institution, Ipoh, Malaysia.

All through his four years in Ipoh he taught three secondary 3 classes, three classes of English and religion in his own class of 3A. It soon became apparent that he taught thoroughly and systematically. He worked hard and expected his students to do likewise. They did.



On Retreat in Malaysia in the early 50s. Brother Eugene, back row, second from right

However, it was probably on the sports field that Eugene left the greatest impression. Evening after evening he was on the field in shirt and shorts while his athletes warmed up. They then ran around the field with Eugene at their heels. There was no place for laggards. The school team won all before them for a few years. Brother Eugene never bragged about this and if the topic were raised he would just state the facts. He himself was not a great gamesman, apart from

playing the occasional games of football or badminton. He did, however, play a tough game of tennis, with commendable power-passing shots.

After having completed four years in Ipoh, Brother Eugene was transferred to La Salle College, Kowloon, Hong Kong, arriving there on the 27th July 1953. He was to spend the rest of his life in Hong Kong. In 1949, La Salle College had been requisitioned by the British army for use as a military hospital. The College was “in exile” in Perth Street, in somewhat makeshift circumstances, and would not be de-requisitioned until 1959. The Director at the time was Brother Patrick Toner, followed by Brother Felix Sheehan.

Eugene was asked to take English and Religion in the public exam classes of Form 5 and for the next sixteen years made Form 5A his own. His teaching method for English Composition was perhaps unique. This is how one of his students puts it: “ We were each allowed to make a mistake once and then 5 or 10 marks, depending on the seriousness of the error, would be knocked off from our total. However, if the same or even a similar mistake should recur, irrespective of its position in the essay, Brother Eugene would stop there and then accord zero marks for that piece of work. After tasting the bitterness of getting what Brother called ‘Nought’, we would exchange our essays among ourselves to weed out mistakes before handing them in”. Brother Eugene’s tactics paid off in the long run, as his former pupils will testify to this day.

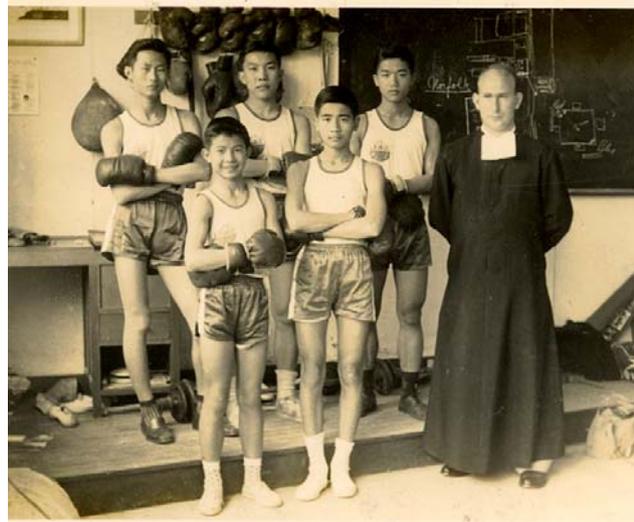
He could appear somewhat stern and spoke only when necessary. His classroom was always the most silent. Pupils tended to keep a respectful distance. Yet, here is a nice piece from one of his students at the time:



“ I came to know Brother Eugene in my final year at La Salle. He was my form master. For years, of course, he was ‘Gum Sing’, or Man from Venus, on account of his stern appearance and quiet manner. No one dared mess with him, in or out of class. To our surprise, however, he turned out to be quite amiable, with a nice sense of humour. That year we had excellent public exam results.”

Not so stern at times!

Outside the classroom Brother Eugene helped coach the athletes after school hours and he also assisted with the boarders. But perhaps he is chiefly remembered for setting up a boxing club and coaching, most successfully, boys who had never been in the ring before. There was a family tradition for boxing and Eugene's brothers did well at amateur level.



Brother Eugene with The Boxing Boys

One of his brothers, Pa, went on to compete in the 1956 Olympics and came away with a bronze medal.

It must have been this association with boxing that led to all kinds of rumours that swirled among the boys, by far the most dramatic being that Eugene, as a youth, had killed a lad when boxing and that that was the reason for his joining the Brothers!

The year 1969 brought a big change to Eugene's life. He was transferred, as Vice Principal, to a newly opened Lasallian school called Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College and in September of the same year became its Principal, succeeding Brother Herman Fenton. Brother Eugene was to be its Principal for the next 21 years.

He proved to be a fine Principal, with clear objectives and targets. He treated his teachers and office staff as responsible adults but always kept the welfare of the pupils as his primary focus. His inherent sense of fair play, his firmness when required, his insistence on good order and discipline, inspired confidence and co-operation. He saw no reason why the school should not excel and excel it did.



*The founding fathers of
Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College*



The pioneer staff of Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College

In Chan Sui Ki the boys line up in the playground every day before going to class. Brother Eugene had only to appear on the staircase for complete silence to descend. As one Brother in the community put it: "he had the imperative fluid in the eye." The students readily accepted this approach to school life and thrived.

When Brother Eugene reached retiring age in 1991 he could look back with no small pride on forty-four years of unbroken service, the final twenty-one of which were as Principal of Chan Sui Ki. He had kept his hand to the plough, working steadfastly and assiduously in the Lord's vineyard. Never one to parade his virtues, it was clear that the Lasallian spirit of Faith and Zeal was his guiding light. In community among his Brothers, this spirit was evident as much in what he did not say as in what he did. To them he was a faithful companion on life's journey, a fine community man and a man of wise counsel. He was never known to lift his voice in anger.

One Brother recalls how in company, ever the strong silent man, he would signal disagreement with the flow of argument by a smile or rub the side of his nose with his index finger, no word spoken. However, in one to one situations he could be unrestrainably voluble.



In a relaxed mood with Brother Austin de Lemos

Although Brother Eugene appeared to be a strong silent man, he had his share of health problems. Sinus was a constant irritation and required nose surgery and he had a minor heart attack in 1971. But it took another 20 years for the real villain to emerge, in the form of throat cancer. Eugene had been a pretty heavy smoker, which may have contributed to the condition. In 1992 he was put on radiation treatment followed by “heroic” surgery which involved grafting in an 8 hour long operation. There was a slow recovery but he was in pain for many months and then the cancer caught up again. He was back in hospital a couple of times before the final haul, looking for cooling drinks for his throat. When the doctor broke the news of the end to him, he bore it with much peace and equanimity.

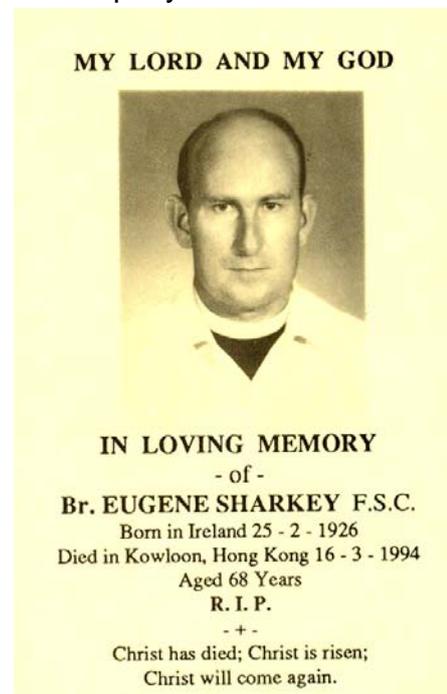
A great personal consolation was the visit of his brother Fred, to whom he was much attached, with his wife Eileen, from Australia. They stayed a couple of weeks, visiting him every day. It was a sad encounter but their presence and encouragement was much appreciated by Eugene.

The end came suddenly on the morning of the 16th of March 1994. The parish church was crowded at the funeral mass. In his homily, Brother Francis spoke of Eugene as “a deeply spiritual man whose strong faith was nurtured in the Christian atmosphere of his home in Donegal. His piety was not so much something he taught but something one caught from his gentleness, his silence, his very bearing. He never complained. He saw in all things the will of God and accepted it as such.” These traits were very close to that of the Founder, St La Salle.

One Brother, who knew Eugene well, wrote:
“I remember a Brother who was loyal and dependable, tolerant and uncritical of others. As a teacher and headmaster, he was consistent and confident in his approach and had the esteem and respect of all. He took his final illness calmly and died with a dignity befitting his lifestyle.”

After his funeral one of his 1961 past students said to me: ‘I remember Brother Eugene as a man of justice.’

What more can be said!



Family News

7th Asia Pacific Lasallian Educators' Congress (APLEC) Evaluation

The Hong Kong Delegates to this Congress as well as members of the Organizing Committee met for an evaluation session on 13th January 2009. The Congress had a great bonding and inspiring effect on them. They will send the result of their evaluation to the Lasallian Services Commission for future APLEC reference.



Principals' Conference



The Conference was held on 15th January 2009. The agenda included video clips of our Lasallian Mission in China, discussion on management and curriculum matters as well as succession planning.

There was also time for individual school updates.

Lasallian Education Council

The Council met on the 17th January 2009. Members reported on school management and development issues, on Lasallian formation and on our Lasallian Mission in China. There was a preliminary discussion on the visit of our Superior General, scheduled for the 24th to the 26th of March 2010.



Hospitalization of our Dean, Brother Herman Fenton

Brother Herman, having collapsed in the chapel during Mass, was admitted to hospital on the 19th December 2008. The doctors were concerned about his low blood pressure irregular heart beat and weak kidney. In hospital he remained perfectly alert and every day pleaded to be discharged. After a marathon 33 day his wish was granted and he is now back home. Brother Herman will be 96 in April 2009.



Hong Kong's Heritage

The Royal Asiatic Society, Hong Kong Branch, invited Mark Huang, author of 'Sons of La Salle Everyone', to share on our Lasallian story in Hong Kong. The sharing took place at the Helena May Club on the 9th of January 2009.

His presentation was appreciated not only because it was rich in content but also because it included a showing of precious pictures. Here are a few of them.



Victoria Harbour in the 50s. St. Joseph's College on Hong Kong Island is in the foreground and La Salle College on Kowloon Peninsula is across the Harbour.



The beautiful chapel that was under the 'Dome' in La Salle College



Post-war Boarders

Coming Highlights

The 40th Anniversary Celebrations of Chan Sui Ki (La Salle) College will be officially launched on the 7th and 8th of February. The School will be open to the public on both days.

The Christian Brothers Schools Sports Association will hold its annual Athletics Meet on the 16th February. This brings together athletes from our secondary schools.

La Salle Primary School Sports Day

The annual Sports Day of La Salle Primary School was held on the 17th of January 2009. Former Principal, Mrs. Elizabeth Pau and her Old Boy husband, Mr. Pau Shiu Hung, were the Guests of Honour. The Meet was held in La Salle College in ideal weather conditions.



FAITH, SERVICE, COMMUNITY

An Old Boy who works in the financial sector recently gave a presentation to Hong Kong and overseas investors concerning business development in China. The introduction to his presentation was an interesting and touching reflection on our traditional Lasallian values:

In this difficult time, I adhere to 3 simple words - Faith, Service, Community. They shape my basic character. I always apply these 3 words in my work and my endeavours.

These 3 words make me strong enough to know when I am weak, and brave enough to face myself when I am afraid.

They teach me to be unbending in failure, but humble and gentle in success.

These 3 words teach me to translate words into actions and not to seek the path of comfort.

They teach me how to face stress, difficulties and how to rise up to challenges.

These 3 words teach me to be a man of daring and to stand up in the storms of life. Yet I also know I have to have compassion on those who fail.

They teach me to take a look at myself before I accuse others.

These 3 words teach me to have a heart that is clean and a goal that is high.

They teach me to reach into the future without neglecting the past.

They teach me to always have an appetite for adventure over love of ease – that's why I always love to enter into new markets.

These 3 words create in my heart a sense of wonder, an unflinching hope in the future, and an appreciation of the joy of life. All in all, these 3 words teach me how to face the current financial turmoil and make me believe that: 'Yes, I can.'

In Remembrance

We pray for the repose of the souls of our departed Brothers.

Our Brothers	Service in HK	Date of Death	Place of Burial
Ater Rourke	1887-1888	06-01-1888	Hong Kong
Corentin-René Pennarm	1912	27-01-1925	France
Hermenegild Cerna	1894-1897	25-01-1890	France
Hubert O'Leary	1931-1935	27-01-1941	Malaysia
Ivarch Gaubert	1884-1889	17-01-1919	Vietnam
Michael Jee	1964-1965	18-01-1998	Malaysia
Patrick Nelson	1887-1889	28-01-1921	Burma
Pius Kelly	1964-1979	16-01-1981	Ireland
Isidore Savaria	1948-1950	30-01-1963	France



Brother Pius Kelly



Brother Fintan Michael Jee



Brother Ivarch Gaubert

Oriental Flavour

Chinese New Year of the Ox

Because the track of the new moon changes from year to year, Chinese New Year can begin any time between late January and mid-February. This New Year of the Ox begins on the 26th January 2009.



Google image

Chinese New Year is the oldest Chinese festival and has many traditions. For some time beforehand, households are swept clean because it is believed the cleaning sweeps away the bad luck of the preceding year and makes their homes ready for good luck. Brooms and dust pans are put away on the first day so that luck cannot be swept away. Some people give their homes, doors and window-frames a new coat of red paint. Homes are often decorated with paper cutouts of Chinese auspicious phrases and couplets. Purchasing new clothing, shoes and receiving a hair-cut also symbolize a fresh start. On New Year's Eve, families gather together and have a large, traditional meal. On New Year's Day children will wake up to find a red envelope filled with money and sweets under their pillows.

Chinese New Year ends with the lantern festival on the fifteenth day of the month. Traditionally, this festival gave a chance for young men and women to come to know each other. For Chinese people, the fifteenth day is Valentine's Day.



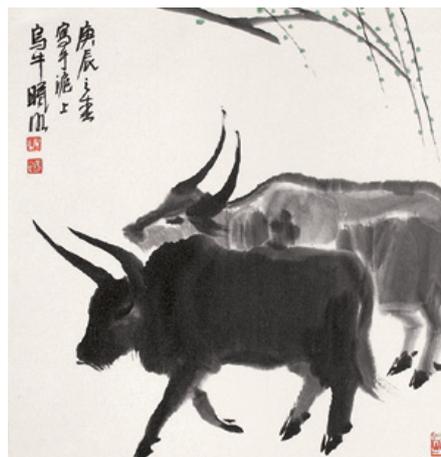
Blessing

Year of the Ox: an Obstinate Year

Legend has it that in ancient times, Buddha asked all the animals to meet him on Chinese New Year. Twelve came, and Buddha named a year after each one. He announced that the people born in each animal's year would have some of that animal's personality.

People born in the Year of the Ox are patient, speak little, and inspire confidence in others.

They tend, however, to be eccentric, and bigoted, and they anger easily. They have fierce tempers and although they speak little, when they do they are quite eloquent. Ox people are mentally and physically alert. Generally easy-going, they can be remarkably stubborn, and they hate to fail or be opposed. They are most compatible with Snake, Rooster, and Rat people.



Rat	1924	1936	1948	1960	1972	1984	1996	2008
Ox	1925	1937	1949	1961	1973	1985	1997	2009
Tiger	1926	1938	1950	1962	1974	1986	1998	2010
Rabbit	1927	1939	1951	1963	1975	1987	1999	2011
Dragon	1928	1940	1952	1964	1976	1988	2000	2012
Snake	1929	1941	1953	1965	1977	1989	2001	2013
Horse	1930	1942	1954	1966	1978	1990	2002	2014
Sheep	1931	1943	1955	1967	1979	1991	2003	2015
Monkey	1932	1944	1956	1968	1980	1992	2004	2016
Rooster	1933	1945	1957	1969	1981	1993	2005	2017
Dog	1934	1946	1958	1970	1982	1994	2006	2018
Boar	1935	1947	1959	1971	1983	1995	2007	2019

Wishing our readers a very happy Year of the OX

心想事成，身體健康！

