

Bob Briand – Class of 1956

I was born in the summer of 1938 at my grandfather's home in Senneville, Quebec, in the West Island sector of Montreal. I spent my early years in Belleville, Ontario and Quebec City. My Dad's job as an entomologist for Canada Agriculture brought us to Quebec City in 1948 where I attended St. Patrick's School in the parish then run by the Redemptorists. Although my older brother John had gone to St. Mary's in 1947, I had never met a Redemptorist until our move to Quebec City. I joined the St. Patrick's Boys' Choir which was then run by Father Titus Campbell who had recently returned from the mission in Japan. I also remember Father Leonard Murphy, who oversaw various youth activities in the parish. In early 1951, Father Leo Rolls who was then on a recruiting trip came to our school with a presentation called « Come follow me »; a film-slide presentation and accompanying LP record complete with voice-over and the ring of a bell to indicate when to change the picture... the absolute height of audio-visual sophistication at the time! But it was the eloquent Leo Rolls himself who sold four of us on taking up the challenge. In September 1951, Pat McKenna, Gib Golden, Ray Clermont and I headed for St. Mary's where Leo Rolls referred to us as the Bloc Populaire. Over the next few years, other Quebecers followed suit including Bill Donnelly, Kevin McKeaney, and Bob Plamondon, to name only a few.

I spent five excellent years at St. Mary's and was privileged to meet and get to know several hundred young people from across the country, a broadening experience in itself. By a strange coincidence in August 1956 I found myself back in my town of birth, Senneville for my Novitiate year. I believe ours was the only graduating class to spend a complete Novitiate year in Senneville since the place was sold shortly after we left. In September 1957, we were off to St. Alphonsus' Seminary in Woodstock for a very short stay until construction of the new Holy Redeemer College in Windsor was completed, as I recall sometime in November. To this day so many years later, I can't say enough about the bright, totally dedicated Redemptorists who taught me at Brockville and Windsor. In June 1960 after 9 years I headed out into the « world ».

Unlike a number of my confreres of the 50's I didn't go into teaching but spent all of my working years in Sales and Marketing in the car business, initially at Ford Motor Company in the early 60's and then at Chrysler Canada until my retirement in 1996 after 32 years with Chrysler. This work involved moves to Ottawa, Windsor, and Moncton, as well as interim stints in Montreal, and finally back to Montreal for 16 years until my retirement. My first spouse and I had two wonderful children, Bob Jr. who has one son and now lives in Acme, Alta, and my daughter Natalie who lives in Russell, Ont. After my spouse died in 1994, I was most fortunate to meet a lovely lady whom I have since married. Claudette has brought me an extended family which includes two adult daughters, an adult son and two delightful grandchildren.

I don't seem to have the time to do as much as when I was working, but life goes by faster than ever. I'm a crossword puzzle nut, I do a bit of woodworking, simple maintenance around our house and for the kids, translation, reading, music...and occasionally, baby sitting!