



Our National Newsletter Its History

By William Wicks, SFO

A good newspaper, I suppose, is a nation (al fraternity) talking to itself. Arthur Miller (paraphrased)

I have noticed that, during the past fifteen years in service to the SFO at the national level, the quantity and quality of communication has improved, say, exponentially. The use of the Internet, whether it be e-mail or websites, has been a vital tool in communication, and in bringing us together as local, and regional, and national fraternity. *I have noticed* that the quality of newsletters, in content and format, particularly at the regional level, have improved vastly over the years. The local fraternity newsletters have improved, and more fraternities have them – and they are also very good.

I have noticed that many of these newsletters rival commercial publications (including this one); the editors, now-a-days, take their tasks on as a ministry; artistic talent is integral to their work. All newsletters editors in this country deserve acclamation for this important work – they bring our Franciscan family together. However, the task of this writer is to present a brief history of our national newsletter.

The first national newsletter, titled NEWSLETTER (go figure), was published, in 1935, by Fr. Maximus Poppy, OFM, Executive Secretary, out of the Central Office. (See copy above) At that time, the Central Office was the center of communication for the national Third Order organization. The publication was intended to be a public relations tool as well as a means of communications. Following newsletters recorded discussions and decisions made at the national board meetings, and reported programs and projects that were taking place. Also listed, were the “in-turn” Provincial Commissaries (equivalent, in position, to today’s Provincial Spiritual Assistants, and equivalent, in authority, to today’s Regional Ministers), along with the Executive Board members.

Following is a list of editors of our national newsletter:

Fr. Maximus Poppy, OFM (1935 – 1946)

Fr. Philip Marquard, OFM (1947 – 1970)

Printed in Franciscan Herald and Forum
(1956 – 1964)

Third Order Intercom Published

Concurrently (1962 – 1970)

Elizabeth Ryder, SFO (1991 – 1992)

Patty Normile, SFO (1992 – 1998)

Mr. and Mrs. Antony Outhwaite, SFO (1998 – 2003)

Frances Wicks, SFO (2003 – Present)

When the friars edited the newsletter (out of the Central Office), the printing costs were divided between the per capita contributions and the Third Order provinces with which the editors were affiliated. Between 1970 and 1991, no official newsletter was published by the national organization. Much of the news was included in the Franciscan Herald and Forum. Beginning in 1991, subscriptions to the newsletter were solicited at \$4.00 per year for four seasonal issues. At the turn of the century, there were approximately 2500 subscriptions.

In 1995, a survey was taken by Executive Council to determine how to improve the newsletter, with a request for entries for naming the newsletter. From 100 entries, the one offered by Ralph Schlueter, SFO, was chosen: TAU-USA – the name given the newsletter beginning with the fall, 1995 issue.

Responding to the notion that all Secular Franciscans should receive the national newsletter, the Executive Council decided, at a Council meeting held in Philadelphia in October, 2000, that, for this to happen, a national database would have to be created. It was also decided that this database should be set up on the internet, thereby making it accessible for updating by a designated local or regional fraternity member, and that database security is of utmost importance.

A request for proposals was sent out and a private firm was contracted for \$8,000. Also, to cover the cost of the printing and mailing of the newsletter, a “fair share” increase to the Regions of \$4.00 per capita was approved by the NAFRA Council. It should be noted that the original database has been modified quite extensively by the Computer Committee. The database administrator is Bob Herbelin, SFO; and Randy Heinz, SFO is the subscription coordinator.

Today, approximately 15,000 newsletters are mailed quarterly, at a cost of less than 70 cents each. Also, the content of the newsletter is posted, subdivided into categories, on our NAFRA website by Dan Mulholland, SFO. The editor is grateful for the contributions of her staff of talented writers, the inspirational contribution of the national leaders, those representing the various SFO organizations and the regional newsletter editors for information about their region’s activities. Many deserve thanks for their contribution that makes TAU-USA a very informative and enjoyable Franciscan newsletter.

Read all about it – in the TAU-USA