



A History of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States

Volumes I - III, Our OFS History (1917 – 2007)

by William Wicks, OFS

Years ago, I presented a proposal to the Executive Council that I write a history of the Secular Franciscan Order in the United States. It was going to take me not more than three years, and it would be contained in one book. Seven and a half years and four books later, it is complete.

The idea of writing a history was inspired by the content of four boxes that I received in the mail from the daughter of Jerry Rome, OFS. Jerry was a former Vice Minister who had recently passed away. The boxes contained meeting minutes from the 1920s and many unidentified photos of friars. These friars, with the help of Tertiaries (Secular Franciscans of that day), were instrumental in bringing our Order to where we are today; they were the shoulders on which we presently stand. I thought they, friars and Tertiaries, must be acknowledged; we owe it to them to get to know who they were and what they did for us.

The books are more a chronicle of events than a history. Many historians have a tendency to write position papers. I tried to keep my own opinions out of the writings.

There have been many perks associated with this labor. I have experienced many wonderful times: traveling to the friar provinces for research — staying at the friaries; conversation with the friars and listening to their stories; discovering the treasures of our history; visiting beautiful St. Bonaventure University where our archives are stored and working with our very capable archivist Sharon Deveaux, OFS.

It has also been a blessing to work with my editor, the

very capable Elizabeth Allen, OFS, who would drive up from San Diego to work with me. We would work all day; Frances would cook for us. And we would end the day with a DVD movie and a glass of wine.

A few words about Volume III, which covers the years 1979 to 2007 inclusive of the 2007 Quinquennial Congress. The major subjects covered by this book are:

- Regionalization
- National Statutes
- Formation (Guidelines for Initial Formation were, and still are, important)
- Communications (including *TAU-USA* and Internet Communications)
- Apostolic Commissions — with the two All Commission Conferences
- Youth Commission and the Ecumenical and Multicultural Committees
- The Quinquennial Congresses
- An Appendix that includes a list of leaders from 1980 to 2006.
- A chapter on celebrations that include days away and Franciscan experiences

These books cover the years up to 2007. Consequently, neither FAN, JPIC nor the FUN Manual are included; those will be major topics in Volume IV — which, hopefully, the historian who follows me will compile and record.

Thank you for giving me the honor of being your historian. I hope I have been worthy of this commission.

All four books: Volume I (1917 – 1942), Volume II A/ B (1943 – 1978) and Volume III are available from Smoky Valley Printing (see back cover).
