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## A Saint Mary’s College fixture – Brother Mel Anderson, FSC, passes away at 92



Brother Mel Anderson in 2011

Photo Andy Scheck

### By Vera Kochan

The Saint Mary’s College Community received a formal notification on May 22 from President James A. Donahue stating: “It is with heavy heart and deep sadness that I inform you that our beloved Brother Mel An-

deron, FSC, who was a Christian Brother for over 67 years and a devoted member of our Saint Mary’s community, passed away this morning.”

Born Harold Fabian Anderson in Oakland on Sept 28, 1928, he seemed destined to be linked with the name

Saint Mary’s throughout much of his life. Anderson attended Berkeley’s Saint Mary’s College High School in the 1940s; received a BA from Moraga’s SMC in 1952; was a director/principal/teacher at his high school alma mater in the 1960s; served 28 years as SMC’s president from 1969-1997; was Director of Special Projects back at his former high school during 2003, before returning to SMC in 2004 as residence hall director/instructor until his retirement in 2019.

During Anderson’s tenure as president, he was considered a mover and shaker with regards to policy changes and educational standards. A formerly all-male campus, he turned the 900-student facility into a co-educational college that grew to over 4,000 members in 1970. Anderson once wrote, “It was my conviction that men and women should share the same curriculum and classroom. Men and women should mature together. This way, they may get to know one another better on a higher level and make better choices for a spouse, for the future, for

having children, etc.”

Anderson also initiated the Collegiate Seminar – whereby a small group of students and a professor sit around a table and talk about classic works. In 1974, he established SMC’s Graduate and Extended Ed programs; oversaw dedication of the Hearst Art Gallery in 1977 and the Brother Cornelius Art classrooms in 1979; and was involved in the 1996 completion of Garaventa Hall – all this, while living on campus in one of the residence halls.

As if he wasn’t busy enough, Anderson managed to write a book entitled, “Years of Yearning: A Memoir of Saint Mary’s College 1969-1997,” which was released in 2011. The book chronicles his 28 years at the helm of SMC, including the many changes that involved political, financial, philosophical, cultural, pragmatic, liberal and conservative complexities.

During a January 2011 SMC interview, Anderson stated, “As a student of Saint Mary’s College, I was a philosophy major. That was a great help in organizing my thoughts in teaching; in

mapping out a plan; and eventually to assume an administrative position both in high school and then eventually at the college. My personal education gave me a fundamental, basic background that carried me all the way through life.”

Anderson’s Funeral Liturgy was held, fittingly, in SMC’s Main Chapel on June 1, with only close family and friends in attendance in order to comply with social distancing restrictions. However, the service was conducted via Livestream for public viewing. He was remembered for his generosity, leadership, kindness, caring, wittiness, inspiration and fairness. One mourner recalled, “He was fundamentally a humble man.”

Anderson passed away at Mont La Salle in Napa on the same day that SMC’s “Commencement” 2021 graduation ceremonies were taking place. The coincidence was noted during his funeral. The night before, he was asked by a nurse’s aide what his favorite song was, to which Anderson replied in a booming voice, “The Bells of Saint Mary’s!”



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