

BIOGRAPHY of
Father Julian Otto Krusling
As related by his brother
Father Lawrence R. Krusling

Father Julian, born in the post World War I era, was the sixth of eight children. He was the third boy and the sixth child to be born with red hair.

He and his brother Bill, two years his senior, teamed up to become the "dynamic duo" of those years. Billy and Julian were often in difficulty, "what one didn't think of, the other did" type of behavior.

An unforgettable memory of Julian in his early years was the "typhoid fever incident." His illness disrupted the family to quite an extent. He lost his hair for a while and his buddies called him "Baldy." He recovered with the usual scars on his legs and his scalp. This illness made quite an impression on Julian, but more so for his family, for they realized they could have lost him, so severe had been the fever.

Julian's early studies weren't impressive. Though the ability was there, he was too involved in "running around," and "getting into nonsense," as my mother termed it. He was only five years old when our father died, so he didn't have many recollections of our Dad. When our mother remarried, Julian was about ten or eleven and he found it rather difficult to adjust to a "new Dad." Our stepfather, however, did exercise enough discipline to keep order when problems arose.

As I recall, not any of us children had a really close relationship with our stepfather. Though he was a good man in the early years of marriage to our mother, he was a "Prussian-type" of disciplinarian, who insisted on the old-world style of discipline. Then, too, our stepfather had learned English in New York, so he spoke English with an eastern accent and many German "isms" interjected. This disciplinary approach affected Father Julian as a young boy growing up and I'm certain he used some of these Prussian techniques when disciplinary problems arose.

Julian's high school career at Elder High School proved to be a good experience for him. He played a bit of football and became famous for one incident. Our mother had insisted that he eat a huge sauerkraut and spare rib dinner preceding one memorable game, "so he'd have enough strength to play football." What happened? Following a particularly vicious tackle from a member of the other team, Julian vomited right on the field! Following this incident, Julian was encouraged to become "team manager." He did just that, and he was considered the best manager they ever had.

It was at this time in his life that he made a complete turn towards spiritual and intellectual improvement. Whether it was his closeness to the coach, as well as the

Priestly influence he experienced as manager, or some other force at work in his soul, he suddenly decided that the life of a priest was what he wanted. His grades were better, his conduct improved, --he was motivated. He began to attend church services more frequently and by the end of his senior year at Elder High School, he was ready for the seminary.

Lacking the required number of Latin credits, it was necessary that he spend a year studying "Special Latin." This put him a year behind, but it was providential, for it furnished the meeting ground with another student who eventually became Julian's closest friend and confidant, Father Carl Will. Their friendship was a deep and lasting one as they shared their talents, consoled each other in the academic setbacks, enjoyed each other's confidences, and shared each other's joys throughout the years, until Father Julian's tragic death in 1956. Outside the immediate family, there was no one who felt his loss more than his bosom friend and confidant, Father Carl Will.

Father Julian's ordination was a happy event, but I recall his two worries. For some days before his ordination he had been working on restoring some antique furniture, one of his hobbies that brought him real delight. In the process his hands had become stained with paint remover. Julian feared that Archbishop McNicholas would notice his hands and would pass him up on ordination. He also had a persistent cough, which he tried very hard to suppress during ordination ceremonies. Fortunately, he was able to control his cough and for some reason his stained hands went unnoticed, and he became "Father Julian Otto Krusling." This was February 28, 1948.

Father loved his first assignment as history teacher at Elder High School and his parish residence at St. Aloysius in Elmwood, with Father Muehler as pastor, now deceased. He enjoyed teaching, as well as traveling in his "Karryall Kamper" with his high school students, throughout the western states. He always took "movies" of the scenes he visited, especially historic landmarks and shrines, and later he would show them in his history classes.

The great project he was so proud of as a remembrance of his days at Elder High School was the beautiful grotto he built and dedicated to the Blessed Virgin Mary. It was, and still is, located behind the Elder High School building. It was a joint project that he and many of the students planned, built, and dedicated. The lovely shrine is today visited by many of the students, especially by the athletic teams of Elder High School before and after their games.

In 1952 he was thrilled by his appointment to organize and establish the first Central Catholic High School in Middletown, Ohio.

I recall Julian's calling me and asking me to accompany him to Middletown to visit the site of the "new" building that was to be the site of the "coming Fenwick High School." As we stepped inside the door, the smell of must and mold assailed our nostrils. What could one expect of a building that had not been occupied for many years?

As we dashed hither and thither among the cobwebs and over creaky floors, Julian would point out...."This will be the office....this is the science room....this will be the auditorium..." His enthusiasm didn't rub off on me, however! All I could see was one, big, huge, never-ending project. When we went down to the basement, the dirt, the grime, the mustiness met us like a wall..., but Julian could see the athletic department, restrooms, storage and boiler rooms in his mind's eye, as if they were already there.

However, knowing my brother with his indomitable spirit and especially how he would love to "accept a dare," I knew deep in my heart that somehow he would get this filthy mess cleaned up and ready to go when the time came for the opening of school in the fall.

I was visiting Father Julian in his office on Labor Day when, to our surprise the Archbishop dropped in. What a transformation had been wrought in that old musty building! I was very proud of my brother when the Archbishop complimented him on getting the job done in time for the opening of school. The Archbishop also expressed his appreciation that the "Principal" had gotten the Sisters, the lay faculty, parents, friends, and even some of the future Fenwick students, recreating a school out of a moldy, dilapidated structure.

I recall my brother's love of carpentry, and evidently he had found some men in Middletown who shared this love. Principal among these, I believe, was Dick Harmount. A strong bond of friendship between them was welded during those months of strenuous work, and as week followed week, the bond became stronger. They stopped only for an occasional bottle of beer, and then back to work.

One horrible job they worked on remains in my memory. They discovered that storage space was needed, so the only place left was the attic! Here again, it was Father Julian and Dick Harmount who labored in the stifling summer heat, bravely enduring the odors from the pigeons who made their home in the towers - piecing together lengths of cast-off, second-hand lumber, until they managed to complete a couple of areas suitable for storage.

The choice of school colors was a matter of real concern to Father Julian. He wanted something that would contrast starkly with Middletown High School colors, even though he had a special affection for Elder High School's colors - purple and white. St. Lawrence, his family parish in Cincinnati, also had these same colors. However, he really liked "crimson and gold," and so they became Fenwick High School's official colors, as well as the splendid and inspiring motto: "To reach the heights, aim high."

Finances plagued my brother, Father Julian, throughout his years at Fenwick. During those years, the pastors of the parishes from which the students came who attended Fenwick paid the tuition directly to the school. It happened often times that from some parishes quite some time elapsed before the tuition reached Father's desk. It seemed that the cash flow was always in jeopardy, and this was a matter of deep concern to Father Julian.

Though Father Julian's early years at Fenwick were tremendously active and happy, his living conditions at Holy Trinity rectory were not pleasant. Apparently, Monsignor McNary and Father Julian were not too compatible. Father Julian began to spend less and less time at the rectory and more time with the Fenwick parents. This was good and bad. It was unfortunate that Father Julian and Monsignor weren't compatible, and that Monsignor didn't seem to understand all that the principalship of a high school entailed. But Father Julian did build up some great friendships among the loyal Fenwick people who knew the situation and were able to give him support and encouragement, as well as a good meal now and then. Father Julian also used the time to help many a family over various crises, as well as to straighten out a few marriages that were on the rocks.

The news of Father Julian's unhappiness at Holy Trinity eventually reached the Chancery in Cincinnati, and a solution was shortly arrived at. Father Paul Golembieski, the founder and rector of St. Peter Claver Mission at that time, as the Oratory was then called, was about to launch some rather large parish projects, which would have been in conflict with the neighboring parishes, especially regarding "parish boundaries." To solve two problems, Father Paul was rewarded with a newer and greater responsibility of a parish north of Dayton, Ohio, and Father Julian was appointed rector of St. Peter Claver. This gave him more independence and more freedom in doing his work at Fenwick, which was only three blocks away. Also assigned to St. Peter Claver was Father Robert Monnin, who arrived shortly after his May 1955 ordination. This was a stroke of genius (as well as the work of the Holy Spirit) since Father Monnin was able to take over the reins when Father Julian entered the hospital on Christmas Eve, 1955. (But this is a little ahead of the time sequence in Father Julian's life story.)

Names of families that come to mind that my brother cherished so much...Zuehlkes, McLaughlins, Homans, Potters, Knoxes, Harmounts, Achbergers, Heggis, and so on. Bob Zuehlke and Mike McLaughlin were frequent visitors to us back in Cincinnati, as Father Julian traveled back and forth on errands and social visits. Freddy Homan was another one. Father had the knack of building loyal friendships. Some of these people would move a mountain if Father asked them to.

In thinking over the "beginning of my brother's tragic end," I recall our last vacation together the summer of '55. We traveled out West to Yellowstone National Park, and turned south to the Grand Tetons and Jackson Hole. While sleeping in the "Kamper" at night, I recall my brother's moans and groans as he complained of pains in his stomach. We urged him over and over again to get to the doctor and as soon as we returned home he promised he would. However, he always told us he didn't have time. He used to repeat many times that, "he wasn't long for this world," but none of us took him seriously.

Christmas Eve, I was hearing confessions at the old "Our Lady of the Sacred Heart Church" in Reading. Just before supper, Father Metz, then pastor, came over to church and told me to call my sister because there was some trouble with Julian at the

Middletown Hospital. Julian had told us the day before that he had to go to the hospital for appendicitis, and not to worry. So around 3:00 pm, I felt confident that was all it was and that he was probably resting from surgery by that time.

But when Father Metz met me at the rectory, he said it didn't sound good. When I called my sister back she mentioned that Julian had been five hours on the operating table. We were asked to come to the Middletown Hospital as soon as possible.

We were met at the hospital by Doctor Fening who told us, my brothers and sisters, that they had discovered a malignancy in the liver and that it was impossible to operate successfully. His illness was terminal, and that he had approximately eight weeks to live. This news hit us like a "ton of brick." There was nothing we could do but try to keep up his courage and make him as comfortable as we could.

The word of Father Julian's condition spread like wild fire throughout Middletown. There were many words of hope and of consolation. The family noticed how deeply people felt about him and realized that they, too, were visibly affected.

During his last illness, I traveled up and down the old 747 highway so often that I could have driven it blind-folded. I cried on the way up and all the way back. I tried to put on a brave front while I was with Julian, but he was well aware of what was going on - there was no fooling him. But what courage! He laughed and joked with us, and though he was in pain, he never indicated it publicly to us.

It was heartbreaking to see him suffer - to see him going down, day by day, visit by visit. When he was released from the hospital to go to my brother Henry's home for convalescence, he was only a shadow of his former self. He perked up when Armco Steel Company, notified him that they would fly him to Florida for warmth and comfort for a few weeks. But as the time drew nearer for the flight he began to weaken noticeably. On the day before he was to fly we had to notify Armco, and we admitted Julian into Good Samaritan Hospital, Cincinnati, Ohio.

My sister-in-law, Jean, was faithfully at his side, day by day, and the rest of the family came to see him in between our jobs and assignments. When the end was imminent, the family thought it would be a good idea if I were to go up to Middletown to see if I could help Stella McKelly and Father Monnin in some of Julian's school affairs and correspondence. The doctor, too, thought this good. He felt Father would hold his own for another day or so. On the 22nd of February, 1956 I was standing in the "Old South" office with Father Monnin when the call came...

Father John Oberlander, pastor of St. John's in Middletown, was a great help in making the funeral arrangements. He suggested that two funeral Masses be held for Father Julian, one in Middletown at St. John's Church for the Middletown people, and one at St. Lawrence Parish, Cincinnati, where Father Julian had been ordained as a son of that parish and had offered his First Mass on that altar.

There at St. Lawrence, Father Julian had been stationed when he was teaching at Elder High School. The mass at St. Lawrence would also make it possible for the Elder boys and members of the parish to attend.

Though it was, no doubt, a very difficult time for the family, the deep emotion of the Middletown people, as well as the great sadness of the Fenwick faculty and students, really comforted us immensely. There was no doubt that Father Julian was deeply loved and that if he had had any weaknesses, they were forgiven him. The number of letters of condolence, the Masses offered for the repose of his soul, the quiet words of sympathy, simply overwhelmed the family. The loss that we felt, as a family, was softened by the fact that many others were feeling the same loss and sharing it with us.

One of the highlights of the many memorials made to Father Julian was that which took place at the Manchester Hotel, to which our family was invited. Of the many tributes honoring the memory of Father Julian, the highlight of them all was the one held at the Manchester Hotel in Middletown. It was a "memorial to their beloved principal" by the class of 1956. They were the class that had begun their freshman year in 1952 when Father, too, was beginning his first year as Principal of Fenwick. They were the first class who had looked forward to completing their four years under the firm, but kindly guidance of their Principal. And yet, he would not be with them at Commencement - only in spirit.

Theirs was a sad but inspiring and heart-warming tribute to his memory and we, his family, went away comforted and consoled, knowing that in the years to come Father Julian would always remain in the hearts of the Class of 1956, and in the memory of the students and faculty of Fenwick High School.

- Memories of Father Lawrence Krusling -
Compiled in 1981 by Sister Charles Regina, S.C.,
pioneer faculty member, Latin teacher, 1952

-Father Monnin was appointed interim principal until June. He was succeeded by Father Larry Krusling, who served from 1956 to 1967, and who oversaw the building of the Manchester Road campus of Fenwick, which opened in 1962.

-Addendum by Ann Marie Heggi Barger (Class of 1956):
It was during the memorial at the Manchester Hotel that the songs, "I Believe" and "One God" were tearfully sung by the chorus. Father Monnin arranged for an oil painting of Father Julian Krusling by the artist Mr. Rudolf Budapin of Cincinnati. It was the class's gift to Fenwick High School.