

IN MEMORY OF BROTHER HUGH ALBRIGHT, F.S.C.

Eulogy delivered at the funeral, Tuesday, March 1, 2011

By Brother Edward Davis

From Psalm 90:

All our days have passed away.
We have spent our years like a sigh.
Seventy is the sum of you years,
Or eighty if we are strong.
They pass quickly, and we pass away.
Teach us to number our days aright
That we may gain wisdom of heart;
Fill us at daybreak with your kindness
That we may shout for joy and gladness all our days.

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None of us, I should think, was brought up in a household as unique as the Albrights. That your father is the world's leading biblical archaeologist is enough, but joined with a mother who has a Ph.D. in Sanskrit makes for a fascinating childhood. I doubt that the dinner table conversation was a script from "Father Knows Best." Of course, to those who met them and knew them, Mr. and Mrs. Albright were simply gentle and conscientious American parents.

Hugh was always fond of his family. Not too long ago he visited his nephew and niece in western Canada. He enjoyed visiting his niece Felicia in Baltimore, and both he and I corresponded regularly with nephews Hugh and James in Raleigh.

He began his contact with the Christian Brothers when he attended the Calvert Hall Country School in Baltimore as a young boy. (It has long been closed down.) Hugh enjoyed his stay there, not least as a contrast to the sisters at Sacred Heart School in Mt. Washington. From there it was on to the Junior Novitiate at Ammendale, Maryland.

My first contact with Hugh, then Brother Alban, was when I arrived at Anselm Hall in Elkins Park, Pennsylvania, as a Scholastic Brother in 1953. High, quite young but already with a doctorate, directed the choir, and did a very good job getting us to produce a passable version of plainchant. Could anyone say he did not have hidden talents?

He was teaching here at La Salle University, and he was a superb teacher. Just ask any one of his former students, many of whom are here at this Mass. He was one of the very first recipients of the Christian and Mary Lindback Award for distinguished teaching, earning him the small brass nameplate on display in the lobby of the Connelly Library.

Hugh had many passions. Number one was certainly mathematics. He was a theoretical mathematician, and it was clear that he found not only science and knowledge but also real beauty in his chosen field.

Everyone is aware of his great love for Jane Austen. Hugh and I are both charter and life members of the Jane Austen Society of North America, having previous to that joined the Jane Austen Society based in Hampshire, England. I cannot forget that we both attended the first meeting of the North American group held at the Gramercy Park Hotel in New York. We were delighted that one of the founders, Joan Austen-Leigh, referred not to Miss Austen, but to Great Great Aunt Jane. Hugh far outdid me: he had read *Pride and Prejudice* more than twenty times in English, two times in French, and once in Spanish. And until his recent illness made it too difficult, he attended all of the meetings.

Another great enjoyment was walking. As often as he could he would take the local train to center city and walk extensively through Philadelphia, going far down as the Italian Market or west beyond 30th Street Station.

He had a love of music and art. Innumerable times he made the effort to visit the Barnes Foundation (and with the strange visiting rules and restrictions it *was* an effort) and of course both the Philadelphia Museum and the Metropolitan Museum in New York. He would sit for hours in the living room with a book listening to CDs of Mitsuko Uchida playing all the Mozart sonatas.

Another of his interests was the ancient board game of GO. I often saw him at his desk totally absorbed in practice games, and he attended the national conventions. He attained a very high national ranking, although never quite breaking into the *Dan* levels.

I cannot close these reminiscences without mentioning his love of Buffy the Vampire Slayer. At least three shelves of books and DVDs are the evidence. Detective novels and fantasy books were his favorites. Just in the last year he read every one of the endlessly long Harry Potter books – twice!

For a long time while he lived in our community, Hugh regularly spent several weeks in the summer with the Clavius Group, a gathering of mathematicians and their families. They would travel to various places that would provide them with rooms and study and meeting space and talk about mathematics: for most of us, I am sure, a mind-boggling concept of summer recreation. Hugh had the privilege of spending time with his fellow Clavius members in Mexico City, Worcester, Massachusetts, Princeton, and Paris, among other places.

This reminds me that on one of his earlier trips to Paris he stayed at the Brother's community at Rue de Sevres. The ordinary accommodation for traveling Brothers was a dormitory style room with three or four beds. Hugh got a private room by the simple expedient of telling the guest master that he always slept in the nude.

I lived in community with Hugh for more than forty years. He was the easiest person to live with that I can remember. Never did he show anger or impatience or criticism. He never lost his temper. He had a wonderful sense of humor and a passionate enjoyment of life.

For the last almost one year, Hugh was not well. It was sad to see his interests and enjoyments slowly slipping away. He was well aware of his declining health and of his increasingly confused think and remembering; but, as always, he accepted all things without complaint. He was able until the end. He was uncomfortable but never suffered pain.

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And Jesus went to Bethany to the home of his friends, and he cried out, "Lazarus, come out." The dead man came out.

And Jesus said, "Untie him, and let him go free."

From Jack Lutts (2/28/11):

Here is a write up of the milestones of Hugh's life (as garnered from the obituary put out by the Christian Brothers and found via Google).

Brother Hugh Albright, RIP
February 25, 2011

Brother Hugh Albright, FSC, of the District of Eastern North America died February 24, 2011 at Chestnut Hill Hospital in Philadelphia, PA.

FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tuesday, March 1, 2011

LaSalle University

1900 West Olney Avenue

Philadelphia, PA 19141-1199

Viewing in De LaSalle Chapel from 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Mass of Christian Burial at 8:00 p.m.

Reception in De LaSalle Community

Wednesday, March 2, 2011

LaSalle Hall

6001 Ammendale Road

Beltsville, MD 20705-1202

Prayer Service in Chapel at 11:00 a.m.

Followed by burial in the Brothers' cemetery

Lunch at LaSalle Hall

MILESTONES:

Born Hugh Norton Albright in Jerusalem, Palestine, on February 27, 1928

Entered the Ammendale Juniorate on August 2, 1942

Entered the Ammendale Novitiate on June 11, 1945

Received the Religious Habit and Name, Brother Edelwald Alban, on September 7, 1945

Pronounced Perpetual Vows in Ocean City, NJ on August 28, 1953

ASSIGNMENTS:

1946-1950	Washington, DC	De LaSalle College: scholasticate
1950-1951	Eddington, PA	St. Francis Vocational School: teacher
1951-1956	Elkins Park, PA	Scholasticate: staff
1956-1957	Rome, Italy	Second Novitiate
1957-1961	Elkins Park, PA	Scholasticate: staff (his time at U of P)
1961-1969	Philadelphia, PA	LaSalle University: professor
1969-1994	Philadelphia, PA	LaSalle University: professor; St. Mary's Hall: residence
1994-2011	Philadelphia, PA	St. Mary's Hall: retired

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From Patrick Carney (2/28/11):

It is correct that his dad was a Methodist (son of missionaries and born in Chile). I was over visiting Hugh before he died and he filled me in more on the early days. He was indeed born in Jerusalem while his dad was on a dig. Later he returned here, but went back to Jerusalem while still a very young man. During that period, at time he was "home schooled" but he said that his parents paid some of his dad's grad students to tutor him also. When they again returned to Baltimore (I believe his dad was then at Johns Hopkins), he was enrolled at the Catholic School very near his home. Hugh refused to do homework and so the sister kept him after school each day. His mother could hear the convent bell calling the sisters to dinner and so then she would know he would soon be home. (As an aside, he never did believe in homework. I had him for 5 math courses at LaSalle and he NEVER assigned homework but expected us to well on tests. It was only when visiting him in the spring that I learned this connection. By the way, he delighted in telling me that after he was an established academic he met the sister who used to be on him for homework and seems delighted to show her he DID amount to something 😊).

I believe in 6th grade he was enrolled in the now defunct Calvert hall Country Day School (Calvert Hall still exists but is now a high school). There he met the Brothers and got along much better. Later he joined us.

As for what got him in LaSalle, well his first assignment out of Catholic University (where I believe he graduated Summa Cum Laude, but I would have to confirm that) was to our orphanage then at Eddington PA. He was there a semester when a venerated professor at LaSalle (Bro. Emilian) who taught math and philosophy died. So Hugh was sent to replace him and never left. Since he was in Philadelphia, he would live in the community and thus picked a local university for grad school – his choice was Penn. You must have known Willhelm Stoll at Notre Dame – Stoll taught him (under his religious name Bro. Alban) at Penn. When Hugh went to Rome, he stopped in and visited Stoll's family.

Among the other stories coming in was this one referring to when his dad came to speak at the scholasticate at Elkins park where Hugh was stationed.

“And his dad's visit to Elkins Park in my time – a brilliant, world-renowned scholar lecturing to us callow boys in our common room! Someone asked him, ingenuously, why so profound a scholar of religion wasn't a Catholic. And the man smiled gently. He said, “I believe that you're taught that belief is a grace given, are you not?””

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From Lawrence Conlon (2/25/11):

I rarely “reply all” to Clavius messages, but I want to express my sense of loss to all. I'm sure Jackie will join me in this when she learns the news. Hugh was practically a founding member of the group and his withdrawal in recent years has been very painful. Many of our best stories are centered on Hugh – his warm but laid-back personality became part of who we are. (Incidentally, because of him I was the only person in my scripture course in the seminary to correctly answer a trick question on a test: What was Professor William Albright's middle name?!) Ad multos annos!

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From Ron Knill (2/25/11)

Thank you for keeping us posted about Hugh's passing. This is sad news, indeed. Hugh was always willing to share his deep erudition without a hint of hubris. But some of my fondest memories were of Hugh's charm, especially with the children of Clavius. Once, while at Bures, Hugh took Mary – age 14 – into the Musee d'Orsay. She came back completely enthralled by his conversation on the way in and back on the metro and by the kind way he had of explaining the art of the Impressionist Period while going through that great museum. It is good to reflect on what a great influence he must have been on the lucky students of LaSalle College that had him for a professor.

Hugh had suffered a severe attack of hepatitis while in Mexico City for a Clavius summer, not many years before that summer in Paris, seriously curtailing one of his favorite pastimes: enjoying good food and good wine. Forgetting that he had contracted hepatitis, I took him into Paris that same summer of 1978, for dinner, which, as you probably recall, was always from about 1 PM to 3 PM in the afternoon. He was having such a good time, I got us a bottle, which he seemed to greatly enjoy. Thinking back, it was thoughtless of me, because he may later have suffered from that bit of wine even then, but if he had, he never let it be known.

That was Hugh. What a lovely guy!

P.S. Hugh's father was a famous archeologist, mentioned in a fictional book by James Michener: *The Source*.

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From Jack Lutts (2/25/11):

I recall the fond memory of getting Hugh and Andy together at the University of Pennsylvania during a national AMS/MAA meeting while I was a graduate student at UPenn.

I also recall his wonderful expositions of mathematics over the years and his gracious hosting to our family at Holy Cross.

May he rest in peace.

From Joanne Snow, in response to Jack Lutts (2/25/11):

It is good to hear the memories of Hugh. I remember his gentle instruction, his advice on teaching, his kindness to my children, and walking with him before sessions. (It seemed he always mapped out a walking route for early mornings.)

From Barbara Knill, in response to Joanne Snow (2/25/11):

Am so grateful that you heard of Hugh's death so that we could all add our prayers. What a wonderfully kind man with a dry sense of humor and tremendous knowledge of so many things. He was so good to our children particularly Mary. He once took her for most of the day to a Paris museum – just the two of them. She felt so special and marveled at his brilliance. He will be missed by all of us.

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From Jim Stasheff (2/25/11):

Years back I would see Hugh occasionally at colloquia at Penn. When we were in Raleigh, we ran into his cousin? There was something unique about Hugh. He will be missed.

Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him.

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From Jim Stasheff (2/25/11):

Hugh knew Philly 'like the palm of his hand' from his many many walks.

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From Kim Stasheff(2/25/11):

I am very sad to hear this. Sad, too, I have not gotten to Clavius more often in adult years. Hugh was always special to me and it is good to see Clavians again. Will miss him! S'bohom (sp.?)

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From Pedro A. Suarez SJ (2/25/11):

I want to add my words of sadness at Hugh's death.

At the same time, let us recall the words that we say in the liturgy of the Mass for the dead: for those who believe life does not end, but is changed. I trust that the lord has changed Hugh into a vibrant and energetic blessed soul that enjoys his new resurrected life with great gusto and enthusiasm, just as he loved life on this earth.

Besides having a clear, insightful and brilliant mathematical mind, Hugh introduced me to many memorable things, including great jokes, the delicacies of Szechuan food, the joys of walking through Mexico City, and many others.

Hugh was a true gentleman, a man full of joy and deep faith, a good and loyal friend. He was missed at Clavius for several summers due to his declining health, but he will be remembered fondly in prayer forever.

May Hugh enjoy peace in the Lord's kingdom.

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From Patrick and Ellen Ryan (2/27/11):

What a privilege it has been to have known Hugh. May he enjoy eternal happiness and peace.

Our most vivid early memories of Hugh are from the first summer at Bures-sur-Yvette:

- Taking long walks before we were awake in the morning, including walking to La Hacquinere to buy baguettes for us during the month when the local bakery was closed;
- Serving drinks and crackers to the children after Mass;
- Hugh coming back from a weekend trip to Brussels with Joe – talking in detail about the museums where they had seen familiar paintings and the history they'd been reminded of;
- Our surprise that a Brother would be a Go and Jane Austen fanatic.

From Tom Cecil, in response to Patrick and Ellen Ryan (2/28/11):

Pat and Ellen's story reminds me of the day at the IHES when Hugh and Joe Mac took the high speed train to Brussels so that they could have "Mussels in Brussels!" They did and they came back the same day, too (at least that's what I remember!).

From Joseph Billotti, in response to Tom Cecil (2/28/11):

This is the first I heard of Hugh's passing. What a marvelous person and religious! He drove up from LaSalle to Staten Island just to be at the funeral mass of my second brother-in-law, Rocky, who had committed suicide. Then he drove right back.

My Hugh story, burned into my memory, is getting ready for our trip to France (I think in 1970). We were all gathered at my sister's house in Brooklyn preparing to go to JFK airport. We all thought Andy was not coming (a complicated misunderstanding which I cannot fully recall). Andy, after much frustration, finally traced a number to call. I ran upstairs to answer the business number of my brother-in-law. Andy told me he was at JFK. Hugh was in charge of the tickets and so I shouted down to him that Andy was on the phone. Hugh ran up the stairs, took the phone. Andy asked where his ticket was. Hugh, thinking of all the things he had to do and ready to run, said "Holy s..." and hung up on Andy. We had no way of contacting Andy and so raced out to the Airport. It took hours to get Andy on our plane – and to end it all the plane was several hours late in taking off. We all reconciled an hour into the flight!

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From Jim Stasheff:

On 2/27/11 12:00 PM, Jerry Porter wrote:

Brother Hugh was a Penn PhD. He was a student of Morikuni Goto in 1959. His thesis was "Compact complex homogeneous manifolds". He taught for many years at LaSalle.

BRO. HUGH N. ALBRIGHT F.S.C.

ALBRIGHT, F.S.C. Bro. HUGH N., on Feb. 24, 2011 age 82. Son of the late William and Ruth (nee Norton). Beloved brother of David, Stephen and the late Paul. Reverend clergy, religious, relatives, and friends are invited to his Viewing Tuesday 6:00 – 7:50 P.M. at the De LaSalle Chapel of LaSalle University, 1900 W. Olney Ave. Funeral Mass 8 P.M. Prayer Service and interment Wednesday 11 A.M. Christian Brothers Cemetery in Ammendale, MD. In lieu of flowers, contributions can be made to the Christian Brothers Retirement Fund, c/o The St. LaSalle Auxiliary, P.O. Box 1710, Beltsville, MD 20704-1710. Arr.*KING FUNERAL HOME*

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From Barbara Reynolds (2/27/11):

I, too, feel deeply sad at the news that Br. Hugh Albright has passed from this life. I have many fond memories of Hugh. He took me on some long walks, particularly in Princeton and in Paris, where he showed me sides of these cities that one would not come upon without a special guide. In the days when we were studying Riemann Surfaces, Hugh gave me private seminars in the afternoons on complex variables so that I could see the beauty of the complex plane and better understand Riemann Surfaces. Hugh and I visited several art museums together at Notre Dame, in Princeton and Paris...and he taught me to see more deeply into paintings than I had seen before.

One summer when we were at Notre Dame, Hugh and I were both frustrated with the plastic-ware that tended to snap while one was eating meat, sending plastic pieces across the table. One afternoon we went out together and purchased three sets of cutlery with white, green, and black handles that we have been using for our summer meeting ever since. He taught me how to cook for Clavians. In particular, he showed me that there was false economy in scrimping to save a few cents. Rather, get the better cut of meat or the fresher vegetables, and cook something that we would all enjoy. Otherwise, he explained, we would all start going out to restaurants and spend more.

Hugh enlarged my reading choices. He introduced me to a wider variety of novels – both classic fiction and contemporary mysteries – sharing some of his favorite

authors and books with me over the years. I could go on...Hugh was interested in many things. He was a good listener, and a very good friend.

He lived in Philadelphia, about an hour from my parents' home in Delaware. In recent years when he not able to join us wherever the Clavius Group was meeting, I sometimes stopped in to visit him on my way to or from my parents' home. We had delightful visits – sometimes he would give me a private lesson on some new aspect of mathematics that he was reading about. One summer he tutored me for about two hours on representation theory. In recent years we usually discussed the latest novels that he was reading. Last July as I was driving from Hockessin, Delaware to Plainsboro, New Jersey, and I stopped in Philadelphia to visit Hugh. I got hopelessly lost somewhere within five miles of his house, and called him on my cell phone. He put one of the other brothers on the phone to talk me through the labyrinthine streets of Germantown. When I finally arrived, we had a delightful visit. Little did I think that it would be our last visit.

From Jim Stasheff, in response to Barbara Reynolds (2/27/11):

I bet he demurred to give you directions since he knew it on foot.
Reminds me of Ann's father who also walked Philly. When driving, he occasionally gave directions, unaware that for a car, one way streets were a problem.

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From Tom Cecil (2/28/11):

I have many fond memories of Hugh. I remember how kind he was to Patsy and me during our first summer with the group at Northwestern in 1974. He was very encouraging to me that summer when I gave some talks on Lie groups, which I'm sure he knew a lot more about than I did.

He always took such interesting walks and could tell you exactly how to find the best places to visit. I'll always remember our first summer at the IHES in 1978. I saw Hugh right as we got there, and he had just returned from an all-day excursion into Paris. I asked what I should go see, and he said "I have just three words for you, 'Jeu de paume'" (the great impressionist art museum). He was right! It was an unbelievable treasure of a museum, better than the Musee d'Orsay in my opinion.

Hugh always wrote such nice newsletters, too, which he often mailed us on a postcard back in the good old days. He was a unique and wonderful man, and we have missed him a lot of the past several summers when he could not come to the meeting. May God bless him, and grant him eternal peace.

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From Lawrence Conlon (2/27/11):

As best I remember from Hugh's accounts, he was raised Catholic. His mother was a convert. She was converted by a Dominican in Jerusalem where William (Foxwell) Albright was on a dig. Hugh's father would not be a Catholic – bad memories from the days when his father was a protestant missionary in a Catholic country. However, William Foxwell directed the dissertations of a number of Jesuit scripture scholars.

From Julio Vidaurrazaga, in response to Lawrence Conlon (2/28/11) :

In fact, William F Albright was born in COQUIMBO CHILE. He told me that and also – in Chile – Fr. Juan Ochagavia sj. Hugh told me that his mother made a point in sending money to the Chilean Church “as a penance” for the protestant missionary activity and that she was a Dominican Third order and was buried in the habit.

From Pedro A Suarez, in response to Julia Vidaurrazaga (2/28/11):

William Foxwell Albright may have been born in Coquimbo, Chile (see Wikipedia), but OUR Hugh was born in Jerusalem. His father and mother spent time there. Hugh said so himself.

I remember that back in 1971 Hugh returned to Philly from Mexico City and did not have his US passport (all you needed in those days was “proof” of US citizenship like a voter's registration when entering the US, but not necessarily a US passport.) When he arrived in Philadelphia, he only had his driver's license, which was not enough “proof”. Asked where he was born, he replied “in Jerusalem”. Obviously that did not satisfy the custom agent. Thanks to someone from LaSalle (I don't remember if it was a student or a faculty member from LaSalle College) who happened to be near him, knew him and could vouch for his US citizenship, was he allowed to enter the US.

This story was one that he relished to tell and I heard him tell it.

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From John McCleary, to Jim Stasheff:

I had just heard this afternoon from a fellow grad from LaSalle. Hugh was my mentor as an undergraduate, and almost as big an influence on me as you. He was, as you know, a member of the Clavius group. I had been in touch with him off and on over the years. He was a wonderful teacher and a brilliant man.

From Jim Stasheff (3/2/2011)

Hugh's viewing and funeral took place in the lower chapel at LaSalle. It is beautifully simple and resonated profoundly when the congregation sang. They were almost all the brothers, so imagine a male chorus of almost 50 voices who knew the hymns well and knew how to sing - partly due to training by Hugh; they did him proud. The presider was Mgr Devlin? who had been the house chaplain for St. Mary's Hall where Hugh lived.

Two of Hugh's nieces and one grand nephew represented the family. Ann and I represented Clavius. Bro. Patrick had printed out our remembrances and gave copies to the family. He was sort of the master of ceremonies and asked me to read the prayers of the faithful. Bro. David (Hugh's housemate) gave the eulogy. Clavius played a prominent role.