

OBITUARIES

Teaching & helping others his purpose

Peter Negus

Christian Brothers educator

Born: Merredin, 1937

Died: Perth, aged 84

Peter Negus and his twin brother, Laurie, were born on May 3, 1937, in Merredin. They were the sixth and seventh children of Norman and Kathleen (Rita) Negus, who had eight children including two sets of identical twins. Sadly, twin girls were born prematurely and did not survive.

Peter spent the early years of his life on the family farm in Westonia. Tragically, their father died suddenly when Peter was only seven, leaving mother Rita with six children and little else. She made the difficult decision to sell the farm and the family moved to Perth, settling in Victoria Park.

Peter and Laurie, and their brother, Greg, were educated by the Christian Brothers at CBC Perth and St Patrick's technical college, Perth. The Christian Brothers were aware of their family's circumstances and generously they were only charged six pence a week.

Peter joked though that they were indirectly repaid years later when Peter and then Laurie joined them!

When he was just 16, Peter entered the Brothers' Juniorate in Sydney in January, 1954. He made his novitiate in Lower Plenty, Melbourne, in 1956, started teacher training at Box Hill in 1957 and was finally professed in 1962.

After Peter's graduation as a teacher, he was placed on the staff of St Leo's Box Hill in 1958 as a teacher-demonstrator. To become qualified to teach technical drawing in a registered teacher training centre, Peter had to do three units of engineering. Young Christian Brothers were not permitted to drive in those days so, for two nights after taking sport until 5pm, Peter had to run down to Box Hill railway station in full regalia, hat included, catch the train to Melbourne, tram to the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, do three hours of engineering and repeat the exercise going home.

He had nine wonderful years there, describing the days and nights as extremely full. Peter later said he did not join the brothers to be a teacher, but he came to love teaching and could not imagine having not been one. After nine years at St Leo's, Peter returned to Perth in 1967, and worked at CBC Highgate for three years and St Mark's in Bedford for four years. At the same time, he completed a bachelor of arts degree at the University of Western Australia.

At the conclusion of his degree in 1973, Peter was posted to Aquinas. He was very proud



to be the rowing master when Aquinas won two Head of the River titles in two years.

In 1975, Peter was appointed superior-headmaster of St Mark's in Bedford, working with Brother Olly Pickett, as his deputy. He describes this period as six great years. Three years followed as superior principal of Christian Brothers Agricultural School in Tardun.

After a year of full-time study (with some part-time teaching at Trinity College), in 1985, Peter was appointed as headmaster at Nulungu College in Broome, taking over from his twin brother, Laurie.

This six-year period was a significant learning curve for him. He stated that he learnt far more than he taught, and established some great lifelong relationships with the Aboriginal people in the Kimberley.

In 1991, Peter and Laurie were able to undertake a six-month Tertianship in Rome. It was the first time they had been overseas. They were privileged to receive almost a month of lectures from a great scripture scholar.

Peter returned to Australia and became the community leader of the Rostrevor community in Adelaide and was also on staff at the college. He spent six years at Rostrevor before being asked to join the leadership team of the province of WA & SA. Peter remained on the leadership team until 2007.

During this period, in 2005, Peter was able to spend time with the Karibu program, in Kenya, with his brother, Laurie, working with underprivileged children. In 2008, Peter was

asked (a number of times) by Julie Williams, the creator of The Shopfront, if he would take on the role of director. The Shopfront was designed as a special place for those who are homeless, disadvantaged, hungry and in need of a peaceful place to share with friends. Peter found this one of his most fulfilling roles and treasured the relationships with volunteers and clients.

On a personal note, the Negi, as Peter and Laurie were affectionately known, had another great love — golf. In Broome, it was sometimes claimed they were in the car to the golf course as the final bell for classes rang. Peter was the main organiser of the golf games in Albany, where the Brothers spent their holidays. They were seldom beaten.

While golf was number one, Peter and Laurie loved most sports and were fanatical supporters of West Coast. They loved attending matches and were always keen to chat about the Eagles' progress. They also loved their family and friends. Card games were legendary when the Negi clan and friends gathered. Raucous noise and lots of fun and hilarity was had by all.

Peter has been remembered by his fellow Christian Brothers and family as one of the most joyful, warm and engaging men in WA, blessed to have been touched by the goodness of his life.

Peter died at Villa Pelletier, on December 29, 2021, and is survived by his sisters, Patricia and Eileen, and brother, Gregory.

Stephanie Boyle

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