

Tim Dzubay t.dzubay@gmail.com

Alumni tributes to  
Pat McDarby OSB

Fr. Patrick was a good friend to me over the years. I didn't spend much time with him while I was at St. John's (he was my academic advisor), but I did establish a sort of pen pal relationship with him starting a few years after I graduated.

I saved his e-mails and printed them all and have them stored in a kitchen cabinet for some reason.

Every now and then, I'd take out his e-mails to show to whoever I thought would appreciate them.

"This guy is a priest," I'd explain to anyone who would care to read. Inevitably, they'd ask me why he had such a filthy mouth. "I don't know, but he's a great guy."

I've tried to explain to people how important he was to me, but I'm usually at a loss. About the best I can muster is something along the lines of, "He was about the funniest Benedictine monk I've ever met. He was a great writer," but it doesn't do him any justice. Through his words, I learned ... so much about myself and him.

I had mentioned to him a few years ago that I wanted him to officiate my wedding. He said he was too old and blind to do so, but he'd try to make it nonetheless. A few years later, I'm still not married, but still engaged to the same girl.

And he's gone. I would have liked to see him just one more time. I visited St. John's two or three summers ago, sort of out of the blue. I didn't want to bother him, so I just walked around the campus.

At any rate, I'm having a hard time typing this through the tears. I'll miss him a lot.

I guess I needed to say some of that to someone who knew him so that they'd understand.

Thanks. If you have any information regarding my initial inquiry, I'd greatly appreciate it.

Sincerely,

Tim Dzubay '91

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Kevin Seggelke kseggelke@foodbankrockies.org

I took 2 classes from "Darbs", both in my senior year ('77-'78). In one, we were asked to write brief papers on authors' works and then lead the class discussion on that work. I volunteered to write on anything but Plato's Republic—one of the options—and he went around the room assigning the semester's classes until he got to me and assigned me, of course, Plato's Republic. Equal parts furious and curious, I asked him after class why in the world he did that. He took a drag from his ever present cigarette, exhaled and merely said "Mr. Seggelke, life is full of

challenges and I'm certain you'll do just fine". Well, he was right, it is and I did just fine on The Republic.

Kevin

**Kevin D. Seggelke**  
**President & CEO**  
**Food Bank of the Rockies**  
**303-375-5813**

*Fighting hunger. Feeding hope.*

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Shawn Gillen <gillens@beloit.edu>

When I was an undergraduate at St. John's, my mother and father died about a year apart. Pat was my advisor then. He was so kind and supportive of me. We were on friendly terms before my parents' deaths. One Thanksgiving when I was at St. John's alone, he invited me into the monastery for dinner. That gesture still means so much to me. All the while I was at SJU, he and I spent hours in his office talking about literature, St. John's, and life.

During my senior year, I served as a teaching assistant for a J-term trip to London with Eila and Patrick. When the trip ended, Pat and I traveled together to Stonehenge, Wells, Bath, and Salisbury Cathedral. It was one of the most important periods of my life, cementing my decision to become a professor and a writer. I was also broke because of my parent's troubles: Pat provided for me that week. We got on well as travel companions and spent evenings at pubs talking about words, telling jokes, and discussing books.

After I graduated from St. John's, Pat supported my attempts to attend graduate school and write. Later we began visiting--first, in Minneapolis, later in Beloit and Chicago, where I own an apartment. He married my wife and I in 1996.

I was so glad to see him two weeks ago. I told him how important he was to me, how he has inspired my teaching, and helped me as a father. He told me that he would not have been a good father, and I responded that there are many ways to be a good father and that he has been one to me and so many of my peers. I planned on coming to visit him again, and I am sad that I will never see my dear friend and mentor again in this life.

His faith always appeared so strong to me and gentle. I often wonder know if I will be able to face my own death with the grace that he appeared to possess.

It meant so much to me to see how his fellow monks cared for him last weekend, that he was part of a community that knew him, that he left the world with such dignity and love, that his life and gifts were also part of the work of the monastic community.

It was Dan who made the suggestion about Pat's book, and it took me by surprise. Patrick gave me a couple of dictionaries of slang that he kept in his office the year that he retired. I knew how

much words meant to him, and I treasure these gifts. He gave me so much more in my life than any material possession.

There is a beautiful photograph Patrick had on his wall of childhood home, where they are near a fireplace and his family pet's dog, Clyde. He and I would often talk about that photograph. If his sister or descendants or the abbey archives, does not wish to hold onto it, I would take the greatest care of it and hang it in my family's study.

But that is a small thing and truly not what is essential to me about the significance of his life.

Shawn

Shawn Gillen  
Professor of English  
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**From:** vertinrochat@comcast.net [mailto:vertinrochat@comcast.net]

Thursday, March 15, 2012

Thank you for this notice of Father Patrick McDarby's death. I'm sorry to learn of this development.

Father McDarby was my freshman English teacher and I recall him vividly and with appreciation.

As a largely "C" student in high school in Breckenridge, MN, I would only learn years later from my parents and family that they weren't sure "Jocko" would be able to cut it academically at St. John's University, despite the successes there of his Grandpa Joe (oldest living alumnus of SJU at that time), his Father Joe and his older Brothers Michael, Thomas and Stephen.

So anyway, I had English Literature with Father Patrick, back in 1973-74 and we had a paper to write each week. As students, we'd write 2-3-4 page papers and then set an appointment to sit privately alongside Father Patrick, as he'd read and correct them with us. This scene was a new ripple for me...

I recall his heavily stained tobacco fingers, smoky aroma and chain-smoking tendencies. He had a gray beard. He was unique in much about himself and I also recall his intelligence, sharp eye, wit and brutal red pen!

My submitted papers were invariably corrected to such a degree that when done, there was easily more red ink on them than typewriter print! His intensity was high and his

demand great, but across this and my own considerable anxiety and toil, he helped me and taught me many things!

As true testimony to his impact on me, I will report that I have used his writing advice for my entire adult life! When I re-read anything I've written, I do my best impression of Father Patrick and I catch all sorts of grammatical errors, misspellings or poor phrasing. I've thought of him often over these past 38 years and especially so and in a most grateful manner this evening. God Bless you Father Patrick and thanks for caring about me. I'll be sure to pass on your commitment to me, to others, in the love of St. Benedict, in these yet living days of my own...

With Love,

John "Jocko" Vertin (77')

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**From:** gerry hamm [mailto:gerryhamm@hotmail.com]

**Sent:** Thursday, March 15, 2012 1:03 PM

Fr "Mac" was a Great English teacher. I will remember him in my prayers. Gerry

Scoon, Jean [JScoon@CSBSJU.EDU](mailto:JScoon@CSBSJU.EDU)

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I received this note from a friend in Georgia who is acquainted with some Johnnies/Bennies who were involved in The Farm experiment in the 60s. I sent my friend the news of Fr. Pat's death, and she sent it on to her friends. I forward this response in case you're interested.

In honor of Pat's passing I want to share the poem that was hung in his room and that describes him well. It is called the Wolf Credo,

"Respect the Elders  
Teach the Young  
Cooperate with the Pack

Play when you Can  
Hunt when you Must  
Rest in Between

Share your Affections  
Voice your Feelings  
Leave your Mark"

We were all the recipients of his affection and he left his mark.

**Jean Scoon**

Exec Dir, Advcmnt Comm

Editor, *Saint John's Magazine*

Saint John's University

Collegeville, Minnesota

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**From:** Tom and Roseanne Buckley [mailto:trbuckley@msn.com]

I had an English class from Fr. McDarby during my time at SJU: 1974-1977. I remember writing a paper about the book, "Brian's Song", where I quoted a passage that was a little sappy and he looked at me with his sarcastic smile and said, "Isn't that sweet..." Although I did not necessarily appreciate the feedback at the time he challenged me to improve my writing skills.

May he rest in peace.

Sincerely, Tom Buckley (chubby) / 2nd Mary Freshman

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**From:** Rich N [mailto:nowakrich@hotmail.com]

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 14, 2012 4:37 PM

... by far my favorite professor during my time at SJU. I send my prayers.

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**From:** James E Malters [mailto:jmalters@msvlawoffice.com]

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 14, 2012 4:52 PM

I lived across the hall from him for 3 years on 4th Bonnie/4th Pat. He was a friend.

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**From:** david flynn [mailto:dfflynn@yahoo.com]

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 14, 2012 4:55 PM

I remember Fr. Patrick from nearly forty years ago when I was an undergrad and he was in his mid forties; young and vibrant.

Warm regards,

David

David Flynn

917.327.9506

[dfflynn@yahoo.com](mailto:dfflynn@yahoo.com)

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**From:** D. Flicker [mailto:dflicker@earthlink.net]

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 14, 2012 5:00 PM

Fr. Patrick was one of my favorites. I can still see him standing in front of our American Lit class holding up a copy of "The Scarlet Letter." Probably the real reason I remember that so well is that I had not read the assignment and was worried he would call on me.

Even if he did catch someone not doing his homework, Patrick would good naturedly let him off the hook. In my opinion he was one of the best.

God Rest His Soul.

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**From:** therwig77@gmail.com [mailto:therwig77@gmail.com]

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 14, 2012 5:21 PM

What very sad news. I was an English major and was the department student worker for three years. I returned after graduate school and taught part time in the department for three years. I knew Father Pat well.

My deepest sympathies to you and all members of the monastic community for this sad loss.

Yours sincerely,

Tim H.

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**From:** John Chromy [mailto:JChromy@chfinternational.org]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 14, 2012 7:05 PM

Thank you for this notification. Fr. McDarby was my English teacher in my freshman year and he was terrific.

John Chromy

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**From:** Tom Maus [mailto:trmaus@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 14, 2012 8:47 PM

Pat was a true father to the 16 of us from the SJU & CSB Class of '69 who formed the experimental learning community known as the Flyntown Farm. Pat patiently and subtly guided us with his patented frankness, ironic humor, and willingness to laugh at himself as well as at and with us.

Mike Roeder and I had a memorable final visit with Pat last summer and we drank monstrous martinis made from fixings Pat had in his room.

I see that Pat had the foresight to arrange his own funeral Mass and burial for Saint Patrick's Day. Nice planning, Pat, and I will miss you dearly. Thanks for being a second father, uncle, mentor and friend to so many of us.

God bless you,

Tom Maus, '69

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**From:** craig herold [mailto:herold\_5@yahoo.com]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, March 14, 2012 9:07 PM

We are sorry to hear of the passing of Fr. McDarby, SJU will miss him dearly - and he will be in our prayers. It has been a many years since we have spoken and I miss that much.

Craig

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**From:** joyce & larry engel [mailto:JLENGEL3@COMCAST.NET]  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 15, 2012 1:50 AM

He was a good man. I had Fr. Patrick as the floor priest my sophomore year in college, which would have been 61-62 in St. Thomas hall. He always had a good joke to share, usually after I visited my Irish uncle on the weekend in Mpls., & picked up some new jokes. Some of his jokes were pretty colorful. May he rest in peace.

Regards,  
Larry Engel, 1964

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Dear Fr. Don,

Thank you for writing about Fr. Patrick McDarby. We send our condolences to you and all of the monastic community. Fr. Patrick baptized our son, Todd in the brand new Abbey Church over 50 years ago. He felt the water in the font was too cold, so Todd was baptized at the font, but from a bottle or warmed water. A very special day indeed. And now, while saddened with his passing from this earth, we rejoice with Fr. Patrick as he enters his new life in heaven. We regret that we're unable to attend the funeral, as we'll be attending a funeral here in Grand Rapids for a young man who died of multiple myeloma.

Sincerely in Christ,  
Jim and Judy Christenson

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I was just thinking about Fr. McDarby a couple of days back. I took his "American Literature after 1865" class, and I remember McDarby saying that Tom Sawyer's imagination "has nothing to do with reality." When I was playing with my 5 year old daughter a couple of nights ago, I thought to myself, "McDarby would think she has a lot in common with Tom Sawyer."

I'll keep Fr. McDarby's family in my prayers.

-Curt

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