



Western Province

Archives and its Archivist

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Deep in the recesses of the Western Province's Provincial offices and residence lie the archives spanning several rooms. The entire operation is organized, overseen, and run most efficiently by Brother Larry King, SDB, a one-man show at the spry age of eighty-seven. I was introduced to Bro. Larry by Fr. John Itzaina, SDB last year and was encouraged to visit the archives some time.

In preparation of the centennial of the Salesian Boys' and Girls' Club of Sts. Peter and Paul Church in San Francisco, I was motivated to look at of our founding and history. Brother Larry has been an extremely hospitable guide. So far, I have visited the offices three times, going about once a month for a few hours at a clip. Brother introduced me to his elaborate and well-organized filing system, which is modeled after the guidelines set forth by the Society of American Archivists. What impressed me first was the amount of documents and original sources that have been collected. For instance, he showed to me some of the material on which he was



working during one of my visits: letters from students of St. Francis School in Watsonville in the early part of the twentieth century before it even became a Salesian work. To read the writings home from some twelve-year old boarders was funny, insightful, age-appropriately well written, (or not, at times!) and of course, historically relevant. I read with fascination articles and letters, either authored by, or about, some of the Salesian giants of my youth- especially Fr. Larry Byrne, Fr. Joseph Costanzo, and Fr. Louis Masereo, as well as material on Fr. Piperni and the first Salesians who were sent from Italy. There was the story of Fr. Sassio, SJ, a Piedmontese Jesuit, who had applied to Don

Bosco directly to become a Salesian and was told "no," two times. The second time, though, Don Bosco prophetically advised him that although he was not destined to join the Pious Society, he would indeed prove to be very helpful to the Salesians one day. Of course, later as Vice Provincial of the Piedmont Jesuits, he helped convince Don Rua to send badly needed help to San Francisco in the form of the first group of Salesians. Thank you, Father Sassio!

There are countless stories that make one smile and laugh, recall with gratitude, see the hand of Providence in so many instances of our history, and most especially, praise God and thank

the many, many brave, self-sacrificing early, and not-so-early Salesians that have given their lives to the young here in the West. If I were a vocations director or novice master, interested Cooperator or lay person, discouraged SDB, or simply the curious type, I'd stop by the Archives Office, get some recommended reading from Brother Larry, have a cup of coffee, and watch a few hours go by before you know it. The offices are a real treasure. I'd also like to make a plug for sending in information from our various works- newsletters, bulletins, meeting minutes—not that Brother Larry hasn't enough to do! Thanks, Brother Larry.

