



SHIFTING SANDS



Spiritual note

A Cloud of Witnesses

The recent death of Sir Noble Bill Fuchs triggered memories that brought me back to 1975, the year of his and my formal induction into the Order of Alhambra. The day of “The Run” began with a bus trip to Baltimore, continued with the elaborate –and physically exhausting– initiation, and ended with a celebratory banquet back in Northern Virginia. My memories centered on Bill, of course, and ran through our travels together to regional and national gatherings of the Order, always focusing on Bill’s selfless service. But I couldn’t stop there –you know how a memory trail develops a life of its own and you just follow along wherever it leads. My nostalgia trip broadened out to include the many men and women I had come to know –and many with whom I worked– both in Porto and in Caravans throughout the U.S. and Canada.

What came to mind was the verse from the New Testament’s *Letter to the Hebrews* (12:1): “Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us... persevere in running the race that lies before us.” The “cloud

of witnesses” is for us all those –some still living but most who have “gone to glory”– who were dedicated to the same purposes that motivate Porto and Porto Charities today. They are the people who collected donations at the church doors on many Saturday evenings Sunday mornings, who tended the newspaper collection centers, who arranged and attended the fundraising events, who worked at Special Olympic gatherings, who wrote the newsletters and did all the other organizational tasks, and who “partied hearty” in the process. They are, in short, the ones who prepared the way for what we do today.

Porto has changed and Porto Charities has added heft to our outreach to God’s Special People, but the memory of our organizations’ forebears –Bill Fuchs and every other member we can recall and even those we can’t– should help us “persevere in running the race that lies before us.” Trips down memory lane should both stir our gratitude and energize our efforts.

Fr. Edwin Dill