

Oblate Jerome Heard

November 2nd is the anniversary of the death of Oblate Jerome Heard. John Francis Heard, Jr. was born November 10, 1940, in Austin, Texas, the eldest child in a family of three girls and two boys. The family later moved to Houston, Texas, where John attended St. Anne Elementary and St. Thomas High School, graduating with the class of 1958.

During his secondary studies in Houston, John considered the possibility of pursuing a religious vocation. He had a deep respect for the Basilian Fathers who taught him. John's father had graduated from Corpus Christi Academy in Corpus Christi, Texas, which was founded by the Benedictine monks of Subiaco Abbey, and he had a great admiration for his Benedictine mentors. Through the years he had shared stories with his son about the Benedictines serving in Texas and Arkansas.

Shortly before graduating from St. Thomas High in Houston, John Jr. wrote for information and literature on the monastic life at Subiaco Abbey and made a formal request to come to the Abbey, arriving on August 31, 1958, as a candidate for the Benedictine brotherhood; six months later he was admitted to the novitiate.

For reasons of health he chose to make his monastic promises as a claustral oblate of the abbey rather than to take monastic vows. Thus, on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, March 19, 1960, John Heard Jr., made his claustral oblation, receiving the name Jerome.

Through the years Brother Jerome was a dedicated member of the community, patiently and quietly fulfilling his assignments in the kitchen, laundry, refectory, mail office, porter's office and as assistant to the procurator. In his later years he also cared for the Mass intentions received at the Abbey.

It was especially in the field of finance that Brother Jerome advocated good stewardship, spending countless hours, decade after decade, as an assistant in the business office.

In 1985 Brother Jerome observed his 25th anniversary as a member of Subiaco Abbey. On this occasion he publicly renewed his claustral oblation in the presence of confreres, family, friends, and the Academy student body.

As the Subiaco Academy complex continued to expand, Brother Jerome kept an active interest in each department. He was good at public relations, enjoying the company of the community, guests, employees, visitors, friends, alumni and benefactors of the Abbey and Academy. Endowed with a gentle and reserved personality, he was able to empathize with those in need. Following open heart surgery in 2003, Brother Jerome drew even closer to the elderly monks living in the Health Center. He became one of the most dedicated "wheelchair chauffeurs" for those needing assistance.

He was an avid reader in many fields, especially in Texas history lore, and a fan of the Texas Longhorns. He kept abreast of world news and daily financial trends via T.V., newspapers, and magazines. As an oblate he was able to maintain his own finances, and was a generous benefactor to many charities. This kindness to the outside was a reflection of his kindness and encouraging attitude toward his brothers inside the community.

At the time of his death, Brother Jerome was 71 years old. He had been a claustral oblate for 52 years. He is buried in our cemetery.

