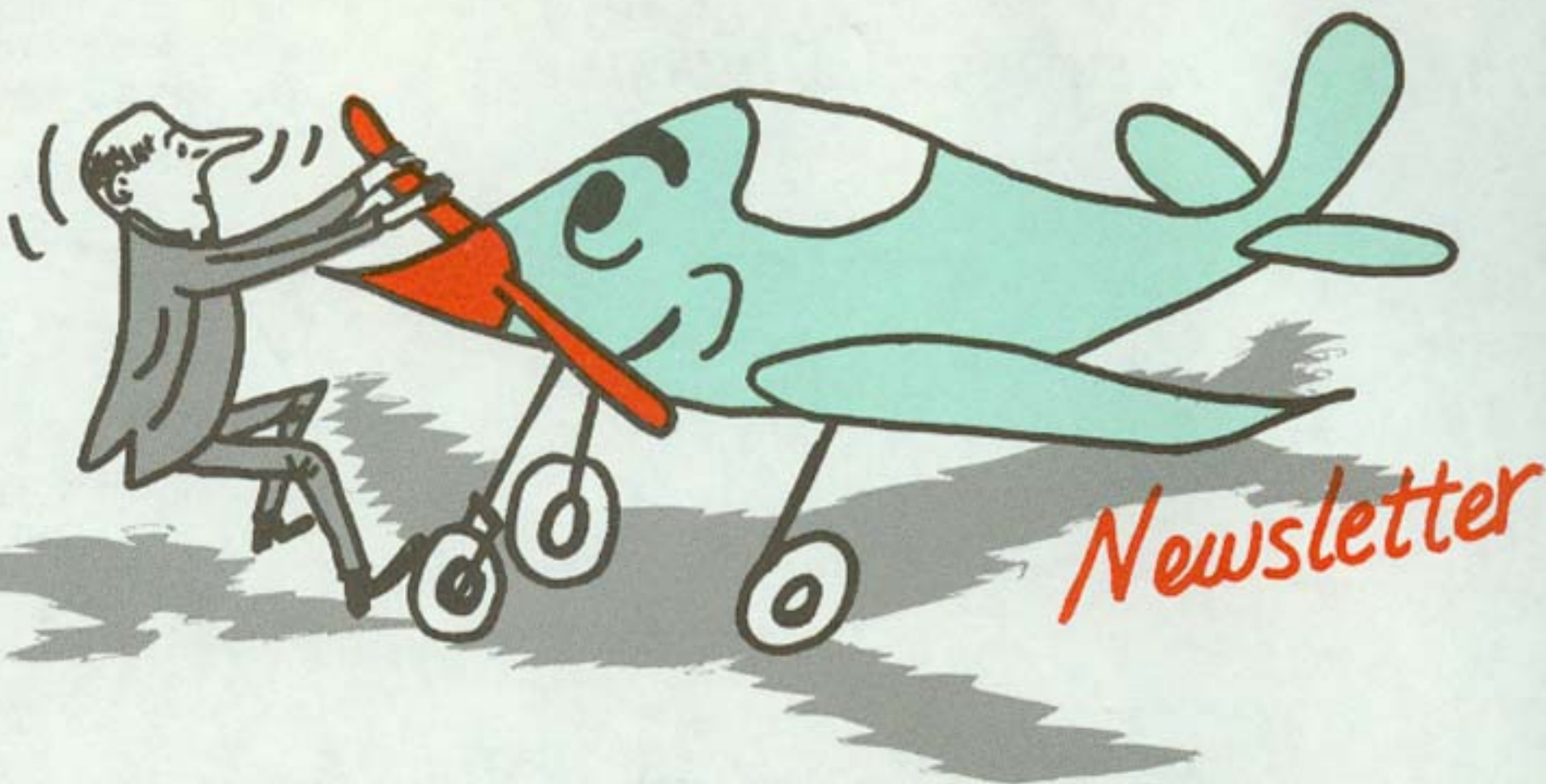


N.A.P.P.



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NO. 2

Your President Says This:

----- ABOUT "FLYING" AND MISSIONARY WORK

- (1) Archbishop Frank Hurley has informed me that three of his priests in Anchorage are now using the Piper Tomahawk, which Mr. & Mrs. Cy Moore donated last Spring, to obtain their private license.
- (2) The October 1980 issue of the AOPA Magazine has a picture on page 22 of interest to our membership. "Wings of Hope" has established the Don Flowers Memorial Aircraft Fund to help purchase a Cessna 185 floatplane for mercy service in Alaska. Don Flowers was a very prominent insurance agent and owned the Don Flowers Agency until he was killed in an instrument approach several months ago. The Don Flowers Agency specialized in aircraft insurance. Our charitable donation this year is going to the support of "Wings of Hope" in St. Louis. Not necessarily for the Memorial listed but to aid in getting airplanes in the Mission Fields.
- (3) Those flying to the October 27, 1980, "midwest" regional meeting will land at Oragne City, Iowa. On a patch of unused ground just off the north-south runway rests the final remains of the Evangel Aircraft Co. A short-lived idea to give South American missionaries a short field takeoff & landing (STOL) plane to meet their grueling demands, the project failed before the 9th airplane was delivered. Almost completed, Evangel #9 and half-completed #10, lay partly hidden by weeds in their "graveyard" outside the old hangar-factory at Orange City. Carl Mortenson of Orange City has been with the Evangel project since the beginning in the early 1960's. His home is minutes away from the old factory and it is in his basement that a new Evangel is being built. The new airplane is called "PROJECT 44". It has two pusher-prop engines and will seat eight person or carry three quarters of a ton of cargo. It is hoped that the airplane will test fly off the Orange City airport in early 1981 and that the FAA will certify the "Project 44" in the next two years. Its sales will be restricted to missionaries.

Fr. John

Impact

Father Bob:

His Parish Runs On 'Tough Love'

By Toby Smith

If it's true that you can tell a lot about a person by the car he drives, then there are no secrets concerning Bob Kirsch.

Parked around his Albuquerque home are the following vehicles: a crippled Volkswagen showing 200,000 miles on the odometer, a Harley Davidson motorcycle - built in 1948; a dented Chevrolet pickup that appears to have made the trip west with Horace Greeley.

"They're all mine," admits Kirsch, an indefatigable (and unpretentious) Roman Catholic priest who heads the newest and perhaps liveliest parish in Albuquerque, Santuario de San Martin de Porres.

Named for a 16th century Peruvian saint, San Martin (pronounced "Marteen"), is bordered on the south by Rio Bravo Road, on the north by Central Avenue, on the east by South Coors Boulevard, on the west by the Rio Puerico.

It is a polyglot kind of place: the middle class from Westgate live here, as do welfare recipients from the public



housing on Gonzales Street; civil servants and blue collar workers, low-riders and young toughs. Hispanics, blacks, Indians, Anglos, Orientals and mixtures of each comprise San Martin.

This is a special parish: there is no church, at least not yet. The 1,200 families are building their own edifice, with their own hands and money. The Archdiocese of Santa Fe is not footing this one.

It takes a singular sort of person to bring together a congregation as varied as a delicatessen menu and get them to worship in a junior high gymnasium. The Archdiocese has found one in a savvy ex-New Yorker who baptizes out of the back of a '53 pickup and speaks like a guy off the block.



"Buying your own drinks today?" inquires Kirsch, who knows a good opening line when he hears one. "Why am I here?" Kirsch asks, turning serious. "The bishop (Archbishop Robert Sanchez) wanted me to come to Albuquerque to do for the people here what I did in the mountains. What did I do in the mountains? You got a few hours, lad?"

For 11 years Kirsch was priest at St. Thomas Church in Abiquiu. He has served other villages in the Southwest. Now he counsels urban low-riders in the way he's done no matter where he's lived. He calls it a labor of "tough love."

It's a difficult job, this new one, the hardest challenge Kirsch has had in 25 years in the priesthood. Before he came to San Martin a year ago, people in the area went to a number of different churches - Holy Family, Holy Rosary, others. There was no feeling of community. "There was no informality, either," says Kirsch in his tommy-gun style of talking. "And the Catholic Church needs informality to survive."

The first thing Kirsch did was move into the neighborhood. Not into a Westgate tract home but into the barrio - Carlos Rey Housing Project on Gonzales SW. He lives in a small room behind the parish office.

"I had to establish that I was among these people, that I was one of them. You can't be an effective priest if you live far away in a plush parsonage."

Crime on Gonzales, crime anywhere in this area, was high before Kirsch arrived. Automobile parts were ripped off regularly. Street gangs roamed. Family fights were common.

"It wasn't the kind of place a policeman liked to go," admits Dave Heshley, an Albuquerque police officer. "I really think 'Father Bob' has calmed things down there."

To achieve peace, "Father Bob," as Kirsch is called by nearly everyone, combined his tough love with basic psychology: he leads as little as possible, preferring to let others feel they are in command.

"He brings the church to the people and not the other way around," says one resident. "I've never seen a priest do what Father Bob does."

Take the low-riders. The Latin Pride Car Club is based in the parish. Before Kirsch moved in, the club, like most low-rider groups in Albuquerque, was faced with an image problem: to many observers they were a bunch of good-for-nothings in crawling paint jobs who fouled up traffic. Somebody do something wrong? Blame it on a low-rider.

"Father Bob's given us respect," says Alfonso Perales, Latin Pride's president. "He's got us involved in charity work, we've been fixing up the Community Center. Man, we feel part of this neighborhood now."

The low-riders and the priest met one afternoon when the club spotted Kirsch welding his old VW. A welding torch, so necessary for dropping an automobile's rear end, brought the two parties together.

"The low-riders have never been trouble," says Kirsch. "They just needed a helping hand, someone to run interference for them with the cops. What the low-riders are looking for is an identity. I think they've got one now."

When San Martin was consecrated last fall, the Latin Pride Club showed off its new image by caravaning Kirsch and Archbishop Sanchez to the site of the new church.

The low-riders now help patrol many of the streets in San Martin parish. "If a police cruiser comes into the area, I only ask that he see me first," says Kirsch. "Initially, we'd like to take care of our own. Used to be when a cop came in here the whole place went bananas."

Cholos, known to many as punks, are no longer a problem either, thanks to Kirsch. When the priest first came to the parish he couldn't reach the teen-aged *cholos*. Then Kirsch decided to use his Harley Davidson as bait to lure the young men to the Gonzales Community Center. Anyone who has seen Kirsch rattle around on his ancient cycle feels an urge to follow.

These days, when a *cholo* steals a battery or vandalizes a home, and is caught, he is brought to Kirsch. Rather than turn the kid over to the police, the priest puts him to work: the psychology again.

"It's this way," Kirsch explains. "The *cholos* idolize the low-riders. So I get them to help a low-rider work on his car. It never fails."

Other problems within San Martin are not as noticeable as those on the street. One wall of Kirsch's parish office is lined with what he calls "crisis" sheets, or messages from parishioners. Other such slips of paper litter his desk - cries of help from old people wanting food stamps, annulment requests, pleas from a wife whose husband is an alcoholic.

"I'm like a combat doctor," says Kirsch. "If I've got 10 wounded troops, I give morphine to four and let them alone, and concentrate on the other six."

He handles many crises by telephone. The other day a mother called begging Kirsch to perform the marriage of her 15-year-old daughter, her 15-year-old pregnant daughter.

"No," said Kirsch into the receiver, his voice filled with rough love. "It would be a big mistake. Let's do this instead. Let's let her have her baby. We'll have a nice baptism, follow it with a big fiesta. Then, after all that's done, the girl and her boyfriend can come down here and we'll sit down and talk about a marriage."

Surprised, the mother agreed with Kirsch.

If there is a bond between the people of this parish, it is San Martin de Porres. Born illegitimately to a Spanish nobleman and a freed black slave, San Martin was an outcast from birth. To work against his handicap, he did selfless deeds: fed stray dogs and cats, even mice. He aided the sick. He devoted his life to caring for others.

The downtrodden have always loved San Martin. Because many in Kirsch's parish are of mixed ancestry, they relate to the saint. Homes invariably feature San Martin's picture. He decorates the exterior of low-riders cars. There was never any question about what to name the parish.

The church building will be located at 83rd SW, a mile and one-half south of Central. On the day the land was cleared and graded, Kirsch used his old pickup to haul several cases of beer to the spot. Construction should start soon. It is hoped the church will be completed by Nov. 5, in time for the Fiesta de San Martin, an occasion celebrated by many Catholics.

"The bishop asked me if it would be ready by then," says Kirsch. "I told him, yes, but that he may have to bring an umbrella."

The church will be more than a church, Kirsch points out. It will be a shrine, like Chimayo. People from all over will come to worship there.

Presently, parishoners meet at the Truman Middle School gym in Westgate. Two Masses are held on Sunday, one in English, the other in Spanish. A Saturday evening mass is delivered in "Spanglish."

A Kirsch-led Mass has his personal stamp: the people are in charge as much as the priest. Stepping back from the pulpit, Kirsch lets the congregation play guitars, maracas, even add to the homily. When he does speak it is nearly always in a I'm-one-of-you manner: "Juanita," he announces to a mother whose child is shrieking in the folding chair pews, "Why not let the little one walk around."

"Ruben," he chides a youth in the audience. "Don't sit home all day and watch television while your mother does housework. Pitch in."

He'll even tell jokes.

"Did you hear about the boy who asked the priest what the war memorial plaques were doing on the church wall?"

The priest said, 'To honor those killed in service.'

'The 9 o'clock or 11 o'clock?' the boy asked."

More often than not Kirsch's message focuses on the sacrifices of San Martin. "There are two words in Spanish for 'love,'" Kirsch says. "*Amar* and *querer*. San Martin didn't know the meaning of *amar*."

A parish baptism is dealt with similarly. Informality prevails. When Kirsch served in the mountains he often baptized out of his truck; he used the pickup's bed as an altar. He still uses the truck - now mostly for transportation to homes, homes like that of Steve and Pat Gutierrez. On a recent Saturday Kirsch christened the Gutierrez' five-month-old daughter, Felicia Marie, in the family's living room.

"You go to other churches and the priest would never do anything like what Father Bob does," says Steve Gutierrez. "Up at St. Bernadette, in the Heights, baptisms are assembly lines - 30 babies on a Sunday."

At the Gutierrezes', Kirsch makes sure everyone takes part in the baptism - from the *padrinos* (godparents) to the neighbors down the street. Each person blesses Felicia Marie. Kirsch instructs: "I put up the signs" (candles and holy water) "and you build the highway."

Again there is singing. The maracas are brought out. And jokes pour forth from Father Bob: "Hear about the cannibal who ate the elephant? He was fed up with people."

An Hispanic priest in the Archdiocese of Santa Fe says of Bob Kirsch, admiringly, "he is *acculturado*. The people like that. They appreciate it."

One look at Bob Kirsch's map-of-Ireland mug and it is hard to imagine how his man could get so close to another culture.

Robert Kirsch was born in Manhattan 56 years ago to a German father and Irish mother. Though he has been in New Mexico 26 years, Kirsch's accent is still of the subways of Queen's, N.Y., where he grew up.

Kirsch's father, Frederick, was well-off. He owned a couple of automobile agencies.



Had lumber interests and real estate holdings. "Sure I remember the Depression," says the priest. "Our family drove Packards. We must have been in good shape."

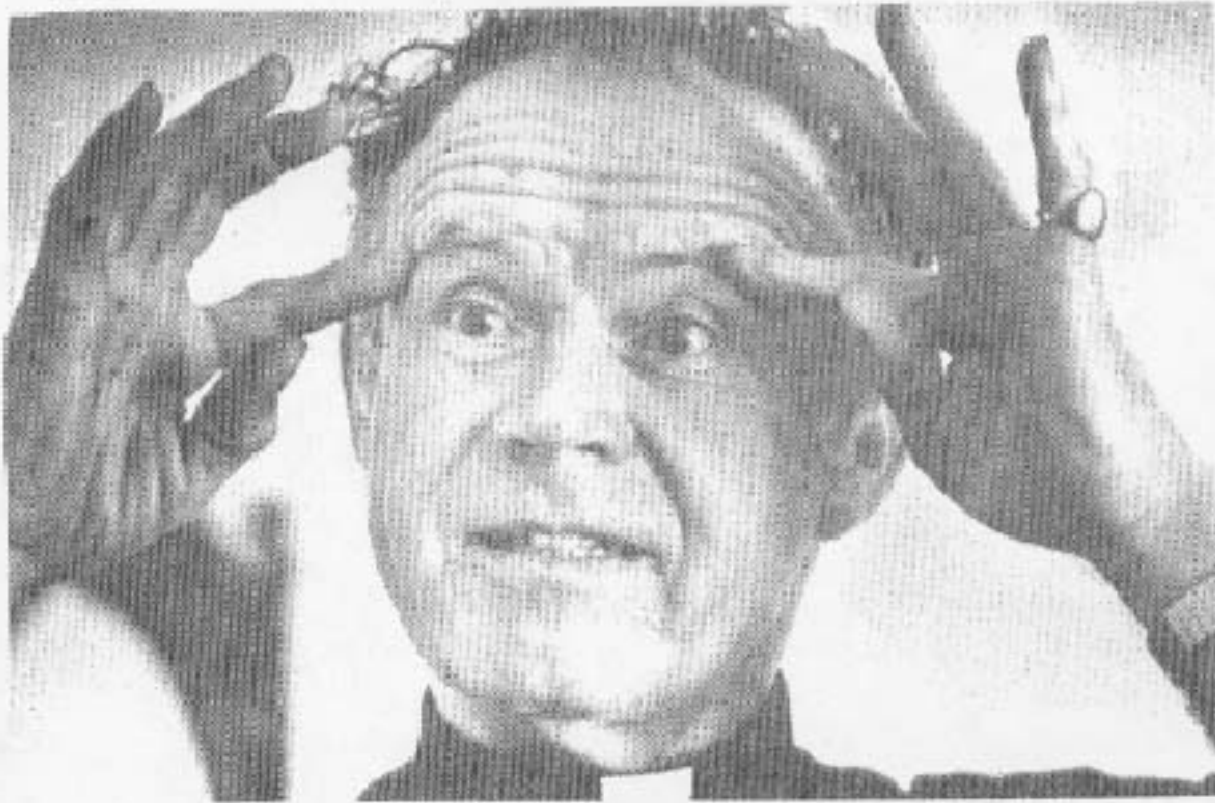
Despite this background, or maybe because of it, Kirsch says he always wanted to serve the disadvantaged. He came to the priesthood late: he was nearly 30. Prior to that he helped his father run the family businesses and served as an officer in the Army Air Co.

At 28, Kirsch entered Woodstock College, a Jesuit school in Maryland. He belongs to no order now - only the Archdiocese.

Throughout seminary he heard about two indigent places: Baker City, Ore., and New Mexico. After graduation he flipped a coin and came here.

Landing in Gallup, he worked on the Zuni Reservation for a couple of years. Following that he went to Seligman, Ariz., Aragon, Ariz., Abiquiu, N.M., the Hondo Valley, and Winslow, Ariz.

By the time he reached Winslow, in the late 1950's, Kirsch could speak Spanish fluently. Today, many parishioners who don't know the priest except over the telephone, are convinced he is Hispanic.



Kirsch says he never wanted to be simply a priest; he wanted to be an innovative priest. At Winslow, where juvenile delinquency was rampant, he formed an all teen-age jury which actually tried a felony case. Crime went down.

He was sent to Abiquiu two days after Reyes Lopez Tijerina's infamous courthouse raid in nearby Tierra Amarrila. Kirsch's predecessor at St. Thomas Church had witnessed buckshot coming through the sanctuary window. It called for an innovative priest.

When Tijerina decided to forcibly take over Ghost Ranch, the Presbyterian Church's conference center in Abiquiu, Kirsch rounded up 300 people, filled his old pickup with coffee and cookies, and went to "join" the man. There was a lot of tough love dispensed that day, mostly in the form of Kirsch kidding Tijerina mercilessly.

"If you're a land baron, Reyes," taunted the priest, "then doesn't that make you a ground hog?"

The takeover eventually soured. Tijerina went home.

There's the Flying Nun and then there's the Flying Priest. Although Bob Kirsch is not to be confused with Sally Field, he is, after all, an airborne Catholic.

The flying has little to do with the San Martin parish, he says, and that confuses many people. The flying helps him with his work, however. It gets him closer still to other people around the country - and their *acculturado*.

Kirsch started flying 40 years ago. "My father owned lumber mills in Pennsylvania that needed looking after. Going by plane was the fastest way."

He has 5,000 civilian flying hours, 2,000 military. For 30 years Kirsch served as a chaplain in the Air Force reserves.

Almost all his flying these days has to do with Christian leadership missions: he is a nationally recognized coordinator of training workshops for youth. On Jan. 11 he was returning from leading such a program in California when his plane crashed and he nearly died. Ironically, Kirsch went down just a couple miles from where Santuario de San Martin de Porres will be built.

"Snow was blowing like mad that night," Kirsch recalls. "Visibility was zilch. I

had circled the airport and come back to land when my altimeter froze. Damned if I knew how high I was."

The next thing Kirsch did know was that the wing of his Centurion 210 had struck the ground. The plane skidded and a wing snapped loose, but miraculously the cabin stayed in one piece. Kirsch suffered smashed bones in his left leg, a broken nose and four broken ribs.

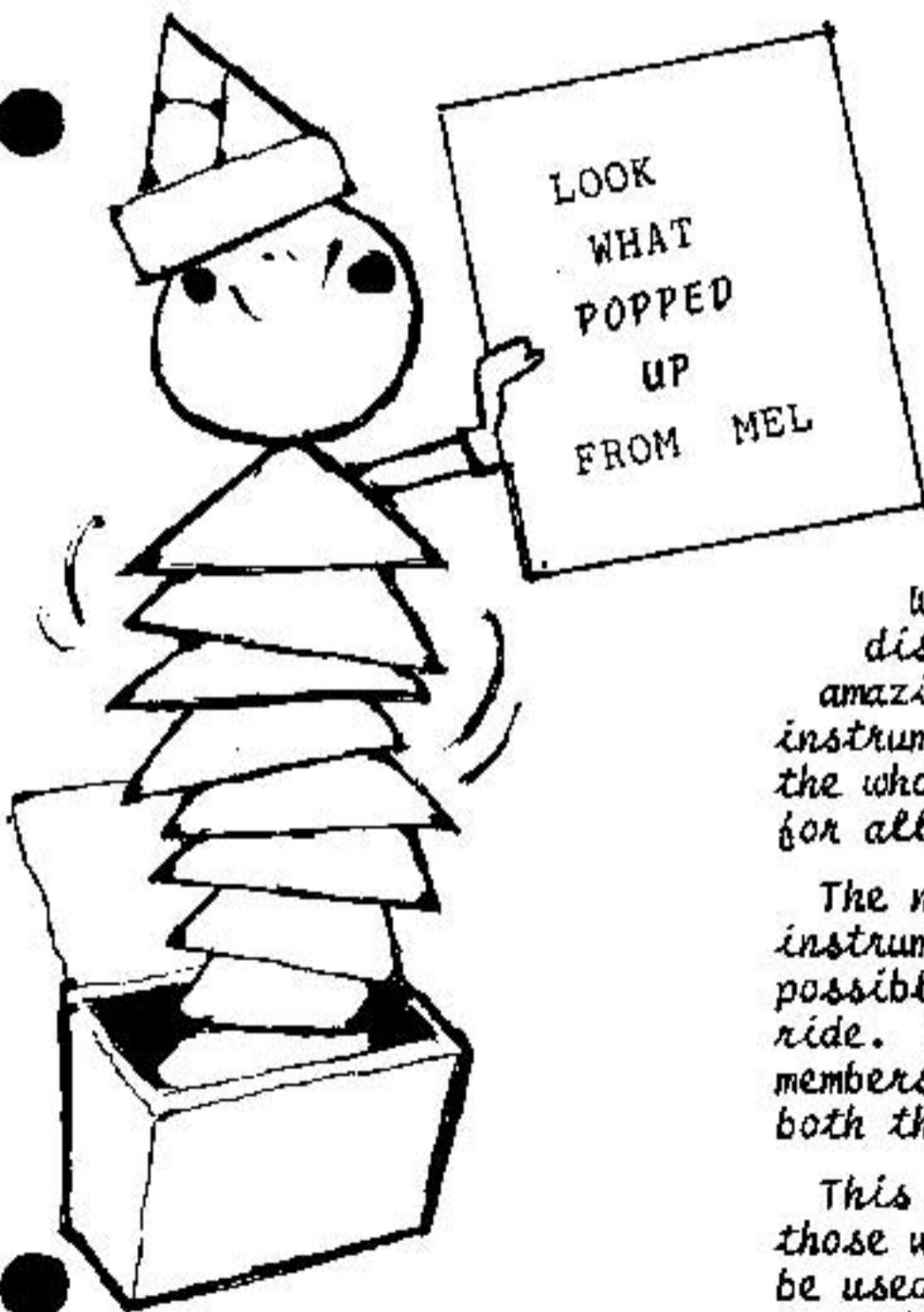
Like just about everything he comes in contact with, Kirsch is able to find something light in the crash: "When I came to and wasn't an angel, I didn't know what to think."

Father Bob will continue to fly. Friends around the country raised \$40,000 to buy him a share of a new aircraft. Some in the Archdiocese (not the bishop) don't care much for his piloting.

Kirsch ignores the criticism. "Flying's therapy for me. You need to get off this planet once in a while and get some perspective. Besides, I only do it on my days off."

It turns out that this high-flying padre to the low-riders, this man who works 20 hours a day, has but one lament in life.

"You know what bother me most?" Kirsch asks. "That there's just not enough time in the day to do all I want."



At the annual meeting in August the NAPP membership commissioned me to check out our Private and IFR visual aid materials. The purpose was to determine what needed to be done in the way of making them current.

The two courses were purchased 12 years ago. Obviously, a lot has transpired in those years in the whole area of flying.

In talking with the people at Sanderson we determined what film strips and tapes in the private course should be replaced. At \$39.00 a piece the bill for this will come to roughly \$354.00.

When we came to discussing the IFR course we discovered we really were in bad shape. It's amazing how much has happened in 12 years with instrument flying. The final out-come was to pitch the whole works as all of it is so out of date that for all practical purposes it is now worthless.

The new set will be the combined commercial - instrument course. For several years now it has been possible to take the commercial-IFR check ride in one ride. We now have the vis/aids that will allow our members to take both the tests in preparation for both the tickets if they so wish.

This series will also serve as a good review for those who already have the IFR ticket. Also, it can be used to prepare for the commercial if you want to upgrade your license or ratings.

Almost forgot to mention. Cost of the commercial-IFR set is \$679.75.

Changes of Address

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(Due to inactivity and inability to fly any longer, Rev. Albin Gietzen, S.S. 606 N. Ohio Avenue Gaylord, MI. 49735 has asked that he be removed from our roster).

The last issue of the newsletter had one envelope returned. It was the letter addressed to Rev. John P. Kulund of Patchogue, NY. Written across the envelope was deceased. At this point I have no details about his death. Requiescat in Pace!

At the time of writing this letter we have not completed our communications with Archbishop Frank Hurley of Anchorage, our 1981 Convention host, regarding dates and details. It is relatively certain that the official time is the second full week in July and the days are Wednesday and Thursday, 15 & 16.

Start planning ahead for that one as it should be special.

The next issue of the newsletter will contain the long awaited informational brochure that you can pass on to prospective members.

I'm leaving on a Holy Land - Egypt tour Noember 3 through 17th.

LATE BREAKING NEWSFLASH!!! The NAPP Central Region will meet on Monday, October 27 at 4:00 PM at Fr. Dave Hogan's Rectory in Alton, Iowa. For details, contact Dave or John Herzog, Box 69, Iowa Falls, IA 50126