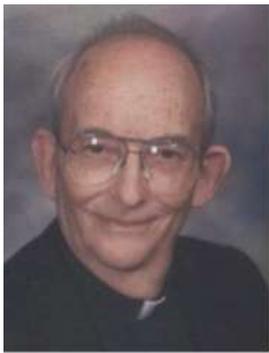


Dreisbach-Dresbach Family Association Newsletter

September 2021 ©

Father Charles Dreisbach (24 November 1925 – 17 June 2020)

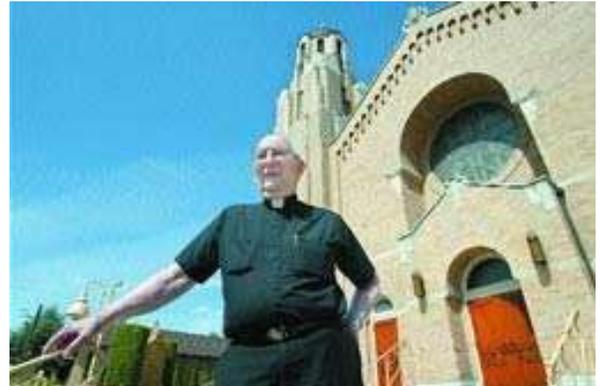
This issue celebrates Father Charles Dreisbach, the person responsible for rejuvenating our Dreisbach-Dresbach Family Association. Without his efforts, the DDFA as we know it, would not exist.



When Father Charles retired in 2004 he was asked to describe his job for the past 45 years. He modestly replied: "You bury people. You marry people. You baptize people. We're on-call 24-7." He omitted all the other important work he did. He counseled, lead Mass, answered the phone at 3 am, and so much more.

Dreisbach came to Klamath Falls after serving various parishes in Eastern Oregon. He was 60, and he figured he'd retire in five years. But he liked his work, and as the years went by, he continued doing what he did best - serving as a role model, father figure and spiritual leader for his Catholic parishioners.

Ken Morton, a deacon at Sacred Heart, said of Father Charles; "He's been an example and an inspiration." Morton described the 18 years of Father Dreisbach as a time of high standards and organization. He was a priest whose favorite time of year was "ordinary time" - a time when Mass is Mass, and the church isn't celebrating a special holiday. "He would do the practical, everyday jobs - put the trash out, change the candles, do "little things", the deacon said. Those little things included fixing the church's 1929 tower after the 1993 Klamath Falls earthquake as well as repainting and replastering damaged interior walls.



As a child, and the youngest of four boys, Father Charles Dreisbach knew he wanted to be a Catholic priest, but life had a few things for the Baker City, Oregon boy to do before he answered the call. There was World War II, where he spent three years as a gunner in the Navy. There were the student years at the University of Portland, where he earned a bachelor's degree in business administration, and then stretched his wings in the business world. But by his mid-20s, Dreisbach was at Mount Angel, a seminary near Silverton, Ore., studying theology. He was ordained May 23, 1959, at a cathedral in Baker City.

At his retirement in 2004, Father Charles said of his years as a parish priest, "In some ways I hate to leave, but like everything else, there comes a time."

The above was adopted from an article by Marcia McGonigle, published 4 June 2004 in the Herald and News of Klamath Falls, OR.

Fr. Charles Dreisbach and how we got to the 1995 reunion

A story of family cooperation (and a few fortunate coincidences)
based on inter-Dreisbach correspondence.

By Ardis Dreisbach Grosjean

STAGE 1 (the 1970's). Connections begin among various seekers for missing Dreisbach ancestors.

- **Fr. Charles Dreisbach**, when he attended St. Francis Academy in Baker City, OR, was often asked by staff members (Sisters of the Order of St. Francis) if he was related to **Sr. Joan Dreisbach**. Sr. Joan, in turn, when she was Administrator of St. Joseph's Hospital in Lancaster, PA (1976- 1984), was made aware of Fr. Charles, then a parish priest in Prineville, Oregon, through a Sister in her Order. This was probably in the 1970's, according to Sr. Joan's letter to Ardis Dreisbach Grosjean of Sept. 13, 2010. Sr. Joan and Fr. Charles began to correspond. Little did they know that they were laying some of the first paving stones that would lead to the Dreisbach reunion.

- **"Aunt Mae" Dreisbach**, who had moved to Lancaster in 1976 upon retirement, met Sr. Joan at St. Joseph's Hospital, probably in 1977/78, and they wondered if they might be related. Mae introduced Sr. Joan to her nephew **Dick Dreisbach**. "Aunt Mae" and Sr. Joan learned that they had a niece and a sister, respectively, who were interested in the family history.

- Sr. Joan 's sister, **Kathryn Dreisbach Smith**, who was working on her line of Dreisbach history and had received Mae's address from Sr. Joan, wrote to "Aunt Mae" on Oct. 27, 1978, promising to send her photocopies of her Dreisbach material, along with a copy of the letter she had received from **Mrs. Anna Cole Solt**, a descendant of Henry Dreisbach (born 1800). [Note: that material, if sent, has not been preserved.]

- A meeting took place, possibly in November 1978, in the Allentown home of Kathryn Smith, where Sr. Joan, "Aunt Mae" and her nieces **Ardis Dreisbach Grosjean** of New York City and **Marcia Dreisbach Falconer** of Red Bank, NJ were present. It became apparent that no one had conclusive information about the early family connections. Ardis was given Anna Cole Solt's address, and wrote to her on Nov. 26, 1968, sending a copy to Kathryn Smith.

As we shall see, it was the copy of Ardis's letter to Mrs. Solt that led, some 7 years later, to Fr. Charles meeting Ardis in Rome!

STAGE 2 (the 1970's and 1980's). Wittgenstein rediscovered! Dreisbachs independently send queries to and even visit Wittgenstein.

- As early as 1928 **the original Dreisbach Family Association** had been in touch with the Wittgenstein archives. Further, in 1969 a descendant of Father Abraham, **John Gustave Dreisbach**, had visited the home of his ancestors in Berghausen in northern Wittgenstein. However, in the 1970's these things were as yet unknown to Fr. Charles and the other fledgling Dreisbach researchers.

- According to information supplied to Ardis Grosjean by Pastor Henrici of the Feudingeng church in 1982, **Jane Jordan** of Whitehall, PA had received extensive genealogical information relative to Simon Dreisbach from the Feudingeng parish in 1977 and 1978, and this was translated into English by **Cara Nordbruch of Tacoma, WA**. As a result of Ardis's correspondence with the Feudingeng parish in the spring of 1982, her cousin **Don Dreisbach and his wife Darlene** of Marquette, MI made a brief visit to Oberndorf in that year to see the village where Simon Dreisbach had lived. This may well have been the first return visit of a Simon Dreisbach descendant to the Wittgenstein homeland.

- **For Fr. Charles, the major step forward occurred in 1984** when he was traveling in Germany and was introduced to **Rudi Jung** in Bonn. At that time Fr. Charles had no idea where Wittgenstein was, but Rudi Jung was well aware of the area, and asked Fr. Charles to send him whatever early family information he had. Jung then obtained from local Wittgenstein historian **Gustav Schneider** detailed extracts from the Wittgenstein church records and sent them to Fr. Charles. In June of 1985 Fr. Charles sent out a general mailing addressed to "*Dear Family and Friends of the Dreisbach clan*", attaching copies of the Feudingeng church records he had received. Fr. Charles's letter provided a solid base for others who were researching the Simon Dreisbach line. Moreover, two years later, Fr. Charles himself would visit Wittgenstein.

STAGE 3 (1985-1990). Fr. Charles in Rome and Wittgenstein. The Dreisbach research circle expands (but no one has as yet had any thought of organizing a reunion).

- **March 25, 1985:** Fr. Charles, who had received Ardis's NYC address from Kathryn Dreisbach Smith, wrote to Ardis, "*I am looking at a copy of a letter that you sent to a Mrs. Solt on November 26, 1978*". However, Fr. Charles's letter was returned, as Ardis was no longer in New York but had been living in Denmark for several years. Providentially, Charles received a letter from "Aunt Mae" exactly when the letter to Ardis was returned to him. Aunt Mae was suggesting, on her own initiative, that he contact Ardis, and she included the Denmark address. It was thus that by May 1985 Ardis had received her first letter from Charles, and in June he received her reply – and none too soon, for Ardis and her husband Lucien were about to be transferred from Copenhagen to Rome.

- **January 1986:** Father Charles and the group of priests he had traveled with to the Holy Land spent two days in Rome before returning to the U.S., and he was able to visit with Ardis and her family. The following year he would be back in Europe again, but this time the destination would be Wittgenstein.

- **September 3, 1987:** On this one memorable day Fr. Charles and Rudi Jung, who had made all the arrangements, drove from Bonn to Feudingeng, visited the church there and were shown the old records, went to Bad Laasphe where they met historian Gustav Schneider and had lunch with him, then they proceeded to the village of Oberndorf and were shown the place where the house of Simon Dreisbach once stood, and finally had coffee with a family in the little village of Steinbach who lived in a house where Simon Dreisbach's ancestors had once lived. When he got home, Charles wrote three pages describing the events of that day and sent them out as a general mailing to "*Dear Family Dreisbach*". The contact Fr. Charles had established with Gustav Schneider would prove invaluable and assure the success of the Dreisbach group trip to Wittgenstein in 1996.

- **And all those many researchers!** When *The Dreisbach Book* was published in 1997, pp. xii and xiii had three columns of names of persons who had supplied material for the genealogical listings, and there were surely regrettable omissions. Even before the 1995 reunion many of them had been sending descendant listings to **Bruce Jack Dreisbach** who had the huge job of compiling and constructing the computerized final product. A number of these persons had more or less independently been compiling family listings for years.

- It is Father Charles that we must credit for helping to make available the remarkable Dreisbach research of **Rose E. Gibson** of Spokane, WA. Of all the Dreisbach researchers, we are perhaps most indebted to Rose for the vast amount of information she had amassed on most of the known Dreisbach lines. In an undated letter to Ardis from the mid-1990's she wrote:

"It seems amazing to me that today there are so many interested in the Dreisbach name, when there were only three or four of us working on it in 1969 and the mid 1970's. We eventually became 12 people working together & over time one by one dropped off."

Few of those attending Dreisbach reunions or reading *The Dreisbach Book* are aware that Rose's work is one of the major foundation stones on which later developments now stand.

- There were also a number of excellent researchers and compilers in the Martin Dreisbach line, particularly in Ohio, in Pickaway and Ross Counties. One such example is **Charlene Woolever**, whose article "Dreisbach – Dresbach – Dresback – Trisbaugh" appeared in the *Pickaway Quarterly* (Fall 1989). Thanks to Charlene and many other hospitable Martin descendants the 1998 Dreisbach reunion was held in Chillicothe, OH. It is to be hoped that the Martin branch of the Dreisbachs will produce its own historiography with information on their own reunions, researchers, publications and so on.

STAGE 4 (1990-1995). The idea of a Dreisbach reunion is born, and bears some very fine fruit.

- Fr. Charles wrote a short text for Ardis on August 12, 2010, called "Background of the 1995 Dreisbach Family Reunion". He writes:

"Sometime between 1982 and 1986 I started my quest to find out more about the Dreisbach family.

"One of my early contacts was Rev. Albert "Kim" Dreisbach, an Episcopal priest living in East Point, GA, near Atlanta (he is now deceased). I went to a business meeting in Atlanta and we arranged to meet. I spent 2-3 days with him and his wife Jane. He introduced me to William "Bill" Dreisbach who lives in Fayetteville, GA. This was probably in the early 1990's. During this trip, I told Kim that the Dreisbachs had reunions in the 1910's in the Allentown area. He said to me: "Why don't you organize a reunion?"

"I let the idea bounce around for awhile, and then thought "why not?" That is how things began to simmer. Bill D. was a great help. He had lots of ideas and had grown up in the Allentown area, so a very rough plan began to come together.

"I began writing letters trying to amass more information about my own family. In the process, I learned about more Dreisbach lines. My first cousin, Marjorie Dreisbach Harrison who lived in Anacortes, WA, was also interested. We arranged to fly to PA and see what we could find. We visited Allentown, Lancaster, Weissport, and Kreidersville. We met Aunt Mae and Rollin (her brother) Dreisbach and others of their family.

"We tried to put together as much information as we could. The Old Stone Church in Northampton County (near Kreidersville) became a bonanza of headstones for the Dreisbachs. The trip was a great start for us on our quest for more information. Later we chose this area for our reunion in 1995."

- And thus it was that the 1995 Dreisbach reunion began to take shape. Fr. Charles wrote to Ardis on February 16, 1994, that he had heard from Marjorie and Richard Dreisbach in Lancaster, PA:

"Incidentally, Marjorie mentioned in her Christmas card that we ought to think about a Dreisbach reunion in PA – perhaps in 1995. We ought to pursue that idea and plan it far enough ahead that we could get people committed before they plan conflicting vacations, etc."

Soon thereafter planning for the reunion began in earnest. Fr. Charles served as the hub, receiving and distributing information, and working on the practical aspects, all of this being done from Klamath Falls, OR. He acquired more information from Rose Gibson. He was at times overwhelmed by the information that came flooding in from Bill Dreisbach in Georgia and from many others.

"The correspondence has started on the family reunion endeavor. I've received several phone calls and quite a number of people have sent what little they have about their family and quite a number have indicated an interest in the reunion. At this time, I would say it is viable. ... So far, everyone is looking at me and I keep looking over my shoulder and no one is back there! Oh well, we'll make it happen somehow." (Letter to Ardis of November 11, 1994.)

In early 1995 Ardis was in Pennsylvania for a short visit and was able to write to Charles on February 13 that he would receive a written offer from the hotel she had spoken with, that Harmony Grange Hall near Zion Stone Church was now reserved for the October 14 meeting, and that the Grange ladies would be cooking all day for the evening banquet. Further, that at the Sunday morning service the church would display the pewter vessels from the first Dreisbach church. So much for the framework. Correspondence regarding the confirmations, decisions on matters large and small, all fell on Fr. Charles, as well as sending out the invitations to attend the reunion. Charles was in close touch with two local historians, **Norman Borger** and **William J. (Bill) Fiedler** on visits to local Dreisbach sites. In addition, Charles wrote a summary history of the Dreisbach family – and all this while having full-time responsibility for a large parish.

- As the reunion approached, there were many who contributed in various ways. Jack Dreisbach produced a huge print-out of his genealogical listings that covered a lot of wall space at Harmony Grange. His cousin Ted Dreisbach acquired flags and other items for the grange hall's stage. Bill Dreisbach produced sets of cemetery hand-outs showing which Dreisbachs were buried in which local cemeteries. Father Kim Dreisbach and his wife Jane came with a large number of white T-shirts with the Dreisbach coat of arms emblazoned in red. The Michigan Dreisbach brothers of the Martin line and their families all turned up in identical dark green sweatshirts. Bill Fiedler set up a table with some valuable Dreisbach mementoes, including an 18th century list of Simon Dreisbach Junior's children, their baptisms etc., written in Simon's own hand. He also, at his own expense, put potted flowers at the tombstones of all the Dreisbach veterans of the Revolutionary War in the Zion Stone Church graveyard.

STAGE 5. All set to move forward.

- The 1995 reunion was indeed a success. The Dreisbach Family Association was formed, or rather revived, as its forerunner had died out in the 1930's. Bill Dreisbach was elected President, and a committee was formed to prepare for the next reunion. Father Charles could look back upon a job well done. Yet, soon after returning to

Oregon from the reunion he wrote:

"I hope I can start putting more time into details to flesh out Jack's skeletons on the genealogies. I know I have more names and dates, but it will take a great deal of time and patience." (Letter to Ardis of October 23, 1995.)

About a week later, on November 1, 1995, Fr. Charles produced another general mailing, addressed to "*Dear Dreisbach family and friends*" and summarizing the reunion events. Clearly, Fr. Charles was ready to shoulder a new responsibility, for this letter begins,

"You probably didn't expect to hear from me again, but I promised those at the reunion that I would send them additional information on the proposed trip to Germany, which I've included."

And a trip there was, in 1996, under the capable leadership of Father Charles. But that is another story.