

HERMIT BOOKBINDER'S RETREAT

The World of Father Brandt

By

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Around Campbell River and on the surrounding islands live many artists, craftsmen and poets who have sought the seclusion of forests and rugged country in which to develop their skills.

Perhaps one of the most unique craftsmen in the entire area is Father Charles Brandt, a hermit priest who lives in an isolated cabin beside Wolf Creek, 25 miles south of here. He's a hand book-binder, who first began to study this ancient craft at a Benedictine monastery in Okalahoma. Later, when he became a trappist monk in New Melleray Abbey, Iowa, he continued with this study in the monastery's bindery.

THREE YEARS AGO

It's almost three years since Father Charles left the abbey to join 10 other hermits of the Order of St. John the Baptist who live in their separate hermitages scattered through the silent woods near the Tsolum River.

In order to establish himself when he first arrived here it was necessary to make the rounds of libraries, doctors and lawyers offices, printers and universities in order to publicize his craft. But this isn't necessary any longer. There are many examples of his superb workmanship on the long polished work-bench in

his hermitage and more and more British Columbians are seeking out his services.

He recently completed the binding of 500 copies of John F. T. Saywell's book *Kaatza*. There are fine old bibles which

he has restored, the logs of navigators and pilots which have been sent up from the nearby airbase at Comox to be bound.

There is a copy of Helen

Mitchell's history of Campbell River, *Diamond In The Rough*, for which he made covers on 1,000 volumes as well as the covers for 300 copies of the Courtenay senior school annual.



BOOK BINDER — Father Charles Brandt at his work-bench in his hermitage near Wolf Creek. He is shown in the initial stage of sewing Vatican Council documents prior to binding them. In the foreground is an altar missal he bound.

Some of his restoration work includes books from the library of MacMillan and Bloedel president, H. R. MacMillan, as well as volumes from the collection of Vancouver millionaire, Walter Koerner.

Books requiring repair find their way to his workbench from the libraries of the provinces three major universities as well as the University of Washington.

He has restored hymnals for the United Church in Cumberland as well as the binding of Vatican Council documents for Bishop Remi de Roo, in Victoria.

His most recent project was the restoration of two volumes on the Thompson Indians owned by Ed Meade, former curator of the local museum. The books are part of a 12 volume edition published through Smithsonian Institute sponsorship in a limited edition in 1892. They are beautifully finished in cream-colored Morocco leather and hand-marbled paper.

ALTAR MISSAL

There is one book in his tiny chapel, an altar missal, which is magnificently bound using the rare technique of boards and leather. The spine of the book, in deep red leather, is affixed to finely shaped and polished teakwood covers.

This book, perhaps more than all the others, is a testimonial to Father Charles' mastery of this ancient craft.