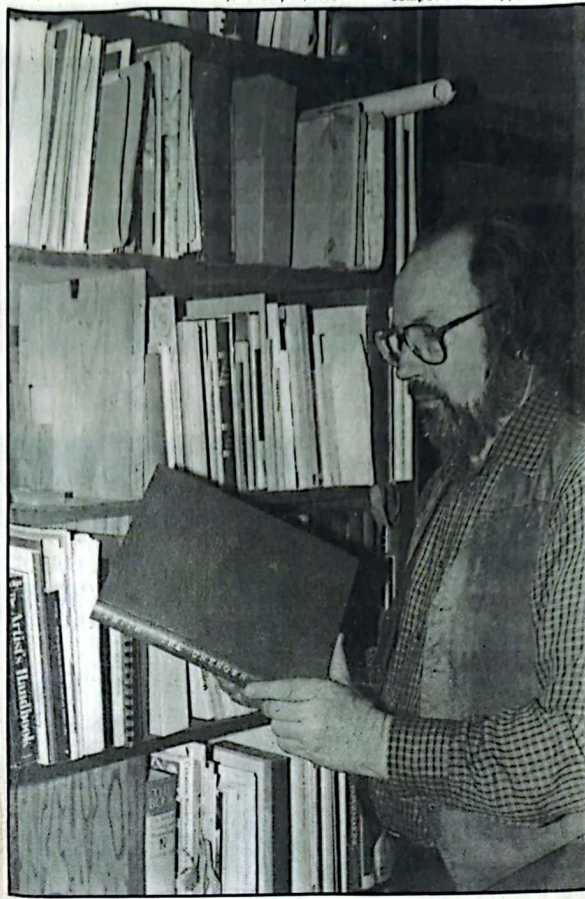


FATHER CHARLES Brandt selects a dyed skin for binding



RECENT BINDING receives inspection from Brandt

Quentin Dodd photos

The ancient art of book-binding

By QUENTIN DODD

A FORMER Anglican priest is practicing an ancient art on the banks of the Oyster River to earn a living as an ordained hermit in the Catholic Church.

Father Charles Brandt is a paper conservator and book binder with his own laboratory in his secluded home.

The work is merely a compatible means of continuing the contemplative life to which he has been attracted for many years.

He spent varying periods in abbeys and monasteries, and he was a member of a group of hermits who lived on the Tsolum River in the 1960s.

Brandt, 62, was elected into the solum group in 1965 after being ordained a subdeacon in the Catholic church in 1964. He said last week, however, that eventually so many persons were moving into the area at the hermits began to go different ways.

He obtained permission from Victoria's Bishop Remi de Roo to establish his own place, so he moved a wooden hermitage he had built on the Tsolum to a heavily-treed acre site on the Oyster River in '69. He later added the laboratory in other rooms.

Already having some training in book binding and literary conservation through monasteries and abbeys with which the skills have been associated for centuries, Brandt used his arts to earn a living while was among the hermits.

Later he joined the Canadian Conservation Institute, studying in rope and working first in New Brunswick. When the laboratory there closed because of fiscal restrictions, he moved to the CCI's station in Ottawa.

He afterwards set up a conservatory laboratory for the Manitoba government in Winnipeg. He still does a considerable amount of work at the university in Winnipeg and galleries.

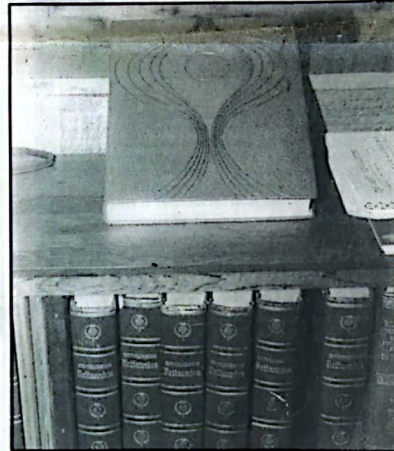
"I've just done 400 rare books for the University of Manitoba," he said.

For Brandt, book binding is mainly a hobby compared with his work paper conservation and repair, which he regards both only as a means of continuing his mandate as a hermit priest.

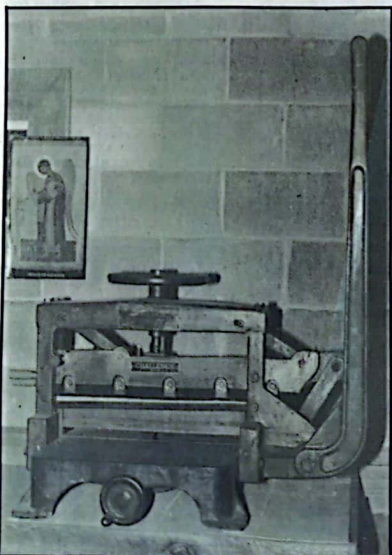
"It's not my vocation," he said, "I'm interested in conservation on several levels. First and most important, the restoration of the spirit, my own and everyone else's. Then there are the works of the mind, which come from the human spirit. Then there is the world around us." He is interested in the latter is



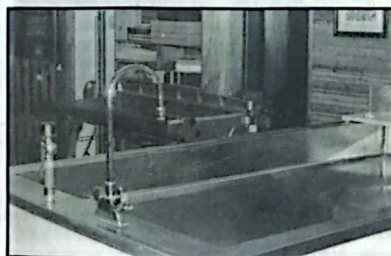
A BAMBOO spatula is used to remove a picture from its acidic backing



BOOK'S COVER won an honor in 1978



OLD GUILLOTINE is valued tool



LARGE TRAY is used for neutralizing acid in paper

reflected in his activities on behalf of several nature conservation groups, including the Oyster River Enhancement Society.

Brandt, who was born and raised in Kansas City, traces his beginnings in book binding and paper conservation to the time when he obtained a merit badge in the Boy Scouts.

Later, after obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree majoring in biology and minoring in ornithology at Cornell University, in a monastery in Oklahoma he worked in the library and was taught book binding.

Still later, when he became a Trappist monk and was studying for the Catholic priesthood, he was put

in charge of the bindery at the Iowa abbey where he spent seven years.

Brandt, who was ordained into the Anglican priesthood in England in 1951 after obtaining a Bachelor of Divinity degree in 1949, said that it was when he joined a foundation run by Anglican Benedictine monks in Three Rivers, Mich., that his questions about the Anglican Church began to crystallize.

He later went to a Catholic monastery in Louisiana. After a year at a monastery in Oklahoma he was received into the Catholic Church.

When he was finally ordained a Catholic priest by Bishop de Roo in 1966 it was as a hermit priest. It was the first time a hermit had been or-

dalined into the Catholic priesthood in about 200 years, although monks trace their origins to hermits in the Egyptian desert.

Some of the equipment Brandt uses for his exacting and time-consuming work, including one for paring leather, is also fairly old, estimated at between 30 and 50 years. Some, including a guillotine used for cutting materials, was sent him by the monks.

He obtains leather skins dyed in different colors and finished in various textures for his book-binding. In 1978 he won an honorable mention in a San Francisco competition for his binding of *A History of Book Binding*, a work covering from 520 to 1950. It was displayed in San Francisco, New York and Kansas City.

Brandt said that major problems for paper conservators began in about 1830, when a shortage of rags and cotton and a blossoming of demand for books led manufacturers to begin the trend towards using pulped wood, which breaks down the fibres and, because of the acidity of the materials, leads to the gradual deterioration of the paper.

Millions of works in famous libraries cannot be handled because the acidity has made the paper too brittle, he said. Bleaching can also lead to problems.

Where possible, said Brandt, he separates works from their acidic-paper backgrounds.