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PLAYTIME



Picasso's "Self-portrait 1907"

A BRUSH WITH FAME

"My mother said ... 'if you become a soldier, you'll be a general; if you become a monk, you'll end up as the pope.' Instead, I became a painter and wound up as Picasso."

Pablo Picasso

FREE FAMILY FUN

Art fun for the family is planned today at the Knoxville Museum of Art's "Family Fun Day," 11 a.m.-3 p.m.

The event at the 1050 World's Fair Park Drive museum is free, with activities related to the museum's current exhibits.

Included will be making puzzles, making prints and creating artistic napkin rings out of cardboard circles. You also can listen to music and see a printmaking demonstration.

BLOOMING GOOD TIME

Friends of the University of Tennessee Gardens in cooperation with the UT Institute of Agriculture is hosting the second annual "Blooms Days Garden Festival & Marketplace."

The event — 10 a.m.-6 p.m. today and 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday, June 27 — is at the gardens off Neyland Drive. There'll be garden tours and workshops, a marketplace filled with garden and nature-themed items, food, music and children's activities.

Admission is \$10 a person or \$25 for a family. Children under 12 are admitted free.



WWW.MICROSCOPYU.COM
SMALLWORLDGALLERY

"Surface of a titanium carbide crystal," an image by Oak Ridge National Laboratory employees Dr. Lynn Bowser and Hu Longmei, is among photomicrographs included in the Nikon Small World Competition.

A LITTLE COMPETITION

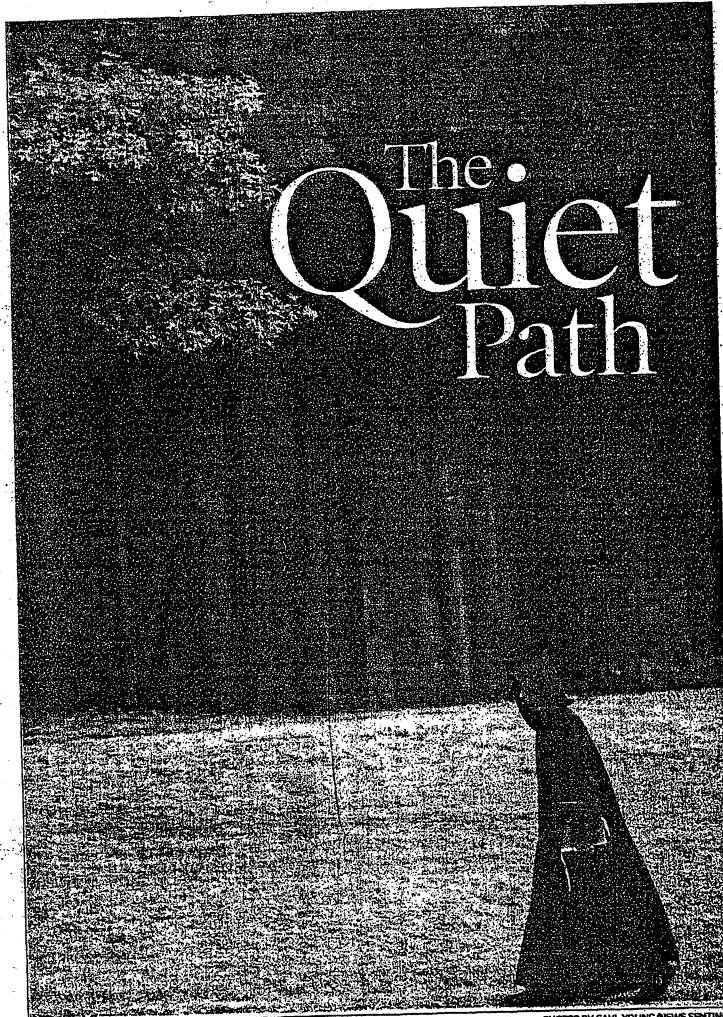
It's a small world at the American Museum of Science and Energy, 300 S. Tulane Ave. in Oak Ridge.

The museum is hosting the 29th annual Nikon Small World Competition starting Tuesday, June 29. The 20 photomicrographs shows how different objects look when viewed really up close.

"Small World" is on exhibit through July 19. The museum is open 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Tuesdays-Sundays and 1-5 p.m. Sundays. Admission is \$3 for adults and \$2 for children ages 6-17 or senior citizens.

Children 5 and younger are admitted free.

Written by News Sentinel staff writer Amy McFary. She may be



Brother David Bryant takes a morning walk on the grounds of the St. Bernard Abbey.

PHOTOS BY SAUL YOUNG/NEWS SENTINEL

The Quiet Path

Knoxville native finds his life's work — in prayer and online — at Alabama monastery

BY JEANNINE F. HORTER
horter@knews.com

CULLMAN, Ala. — Brother David Jason Bryant starts his day well before sunrise with quiet meditation and Scripture-centered prayer.

His routine includes prayer and Mass four times daily at St. Bernard Abbey and tending to his tasks around the 800-acre campus, including computerizing the inventory system for the Ave Maria



Bryant

Grotto gift shop. The Alabama monastery is 250 miles — and light years — from Knoxville, where Bryant grew up, and Mount Zion Baptist Church, where his early roots in Christianity were formed. The 26-year-old is the

ON THE WEB

■ For Saul Young's audio-slide show, go to knews.com.

youngest son of William and Carolyn Bryant of Knoxville. His brother, Chris Bryant, 28, lives in Knoxville and works as a cutter for a company that contracts with men's clothes John H. Daniel Co.

Three months ago, Bryant made his profession of simple (temporary) vows before the monastic community, his family and friends from Tennessee during an ancient ceremonial rite. He made the profession a year after he was received as a novice.

St. Bernard Abbey is Alabama's first and only Benedictine monastery. Throughout the year, 24 men

See **MONK** on E8

ST. BERNARD ABBEY

- **Established:** In 1891 by German-speaking monks from St. Vincent Abbey in Latrobe, Penn.
- **What's there:** Monks operate a retreat and conference center and the Ave Maria Grotto, which features miniature buildings and shrines handicrafted by the late Brother Joseph Zoettl. They also operate St. Bernard Preparatory School, a coed boarding and day college-preparatory program for grades 9-12.
- **Prayer:** Monks gather throughout each day to celebrate the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours. They also maintain time for private prayer called "lectio divina" or meditative holy reading.
- **Information:** Write Vocation Director-St. Bernard Abbey, 1600 St. Bernard Drive SE, Cullman, AL 35055 or visit www.stbernardabbey.com



Brother David receives Communion from Father Abbot Cletus Meagher.

Son's ER visit: old habit, new hemisphere



SHERRON GARDNER HOWELL
Rhymes & Rhythms

The words coming from my younger son's mouth were not, by any stretch, the worst words a parent can hear over the telephone.

But when he's oceans away, they rank in the Top Ten. "Mom, first of all, I'm OK." I pull my hand away from Bruce at UV Nashville, who is applying New York Red to my fingernails, and push the cell phone closer to my ear. Sharp

"Well," says Brett with a little laugh. "Let's just say you can add Leuwarden to the list of cities with emergency rooms I have visited."

My heart is in my stomach, and I have red polish all over my hand. Bruce is motioning me to the sink and looking worried. I nod that I'm OK and lean up against the wall by the sink. "Mom — I said I'm OK," Brett continues. "It's nothing, really. I just cut my hand a little."

flights, calling the American Red Cross and wondering if Brett can find someone to take a picture of his hand and e-mail it to me. He's chuckling.

"Remember how you always looked up the nearest hospital in the phone book whenever we visited somewhere we hadn't been before?" he asks. "Even the beach."

Remember? Well, "duh," to put it in his language. Brett has always been my

son — who is 3 1/2 years older than Brett — had his first visit to the emergency room when he was 6. He went with us to take his brother. Brett was a regular for stitches, broken bones, head traumas and the usual mon-panic things like high fevers and rashes.

And, as Brett is remembering, he didn't confine his visits to lovely East Tennessee. Most soccer trips, beach trips, vacations and visits to relatives found us

SAUL YOUNG FOR E8

Quiet Path

MONK

from El

live there; five others live away from St. Bernard, serving in other Catholic communities in Alabama and at an archabbey/seminary in Manchester, N.H.

It is a community of men whose binding purpose is to seek God's kingdom above all else. They serve with their body, mind and spirit within a monastic life.

And it's the place Bryant's heart longed for: a place where his life and those surrounding him are based on faith.

Bryant was attending Mount Zion when he started visiting other denominations in 1997.

At the time, his career aspirations included working professionally with the Boy Scouts, serving as a Methodist minister or using computer science and technology. The Central High School graduate studied computers and videography at Pellissippi State Technical College. "I wanted to go into the Methodist church, and a girl I knew liked to sing, and she asked me to visit her church. I started to sing in the choir. Music has always been central in my life."

As an active member of Troop 65, one of the city's oldest black Boy Scout troops, he worked as a cook at Camp Buck Toms and befriended fellow cook David Carter, who is Catholic. Carter invited Bryant to his church, St. John Neumann Catholic Church in Farragut. Today Carter is a seminarian at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome. "I planted a seed in me, and it grew," he said. "I noticed when I entered the church until the time we left, it (being there) was a prayer. I thought any place where you can walk in and your eyes are open and it feels like a prayer, that is powerful."

Bryant soon began attending worship services on Sundays at three churches.

But he found himself studying more and more about Catholic worship style, symbolism and the church structure.

"What I heard, what I saw were fulfilling," he said. "I did plenty of reading before I entered the church."

He was a quick study. He found the catechisms appealing, and Mass enticing, with its format laden with Scripture.

"I longed for it every day, and I went to daily Mass, and I wasn't Catholic," he said.

He enrolled in Tennessee



Brother David assembles a computer in the Ave Maria Grotto's gift shop. He is webmaster for St. Bernard Abbey, with responsibility also for technical support.

BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR BECOMING A BENEDICTINE MONK

■ **Calling:** Conviction of being called by Jesus to follow Him in the monastic way

■ **Stamina:** Spiritual, physical and psychological stamina to enter into this commitment

■ **Education:** Candidates are encouraged to have completed college work successfully or to have had steady employment

■ **Faith:** Practicing Catholic for at least three years

■ **Debt:** No financial debts. No obligations toward a wife, children or parents. If ever married, church annulment.

■ **Discernment:** Web site has a link to a free Internet vocation test to help toward discerning a calling to monastic life

■ **Information:** Contact Vocation Director Father Francis at fatherfrancis@stbernardabbey.com.

Wesleyan College and attended Mass at a Catholic Church in Athens.

He began to acknowledge his call to religious vocation. After visiting a Franciscan college with a parish member, he left Tennessee Wesleyan and returned to Knoxville. He discussed with his parents his desire to enter into religious life.

"Jason is one who could always occupy himself quietly," his mother, Carolyn Bryant, said. "He was a sophisticated, quiet child... He was so religious when he was in camp... he would be down in his teepee... praying."

She recalled in high school, he built a prayer corner in his bedroom.

He converted to the Catholic faith in spring 2000. Father Xavier Mankel, pastor of Holy Ghost Church in Knoxville, confirmed Bryant into the faith. That spring, he visited a Franciscan Order in New York.

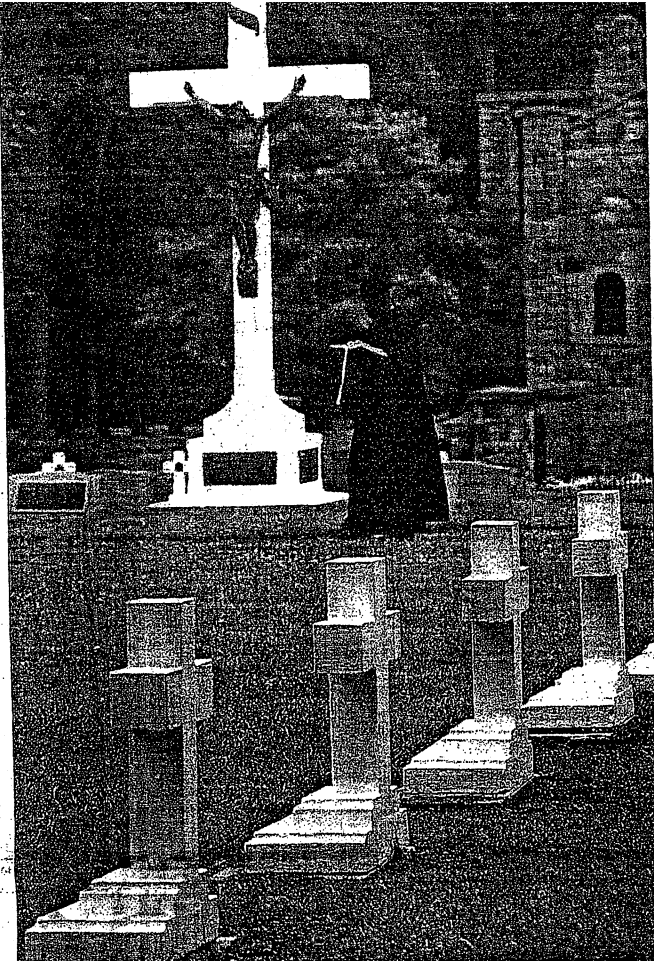
He came to the Benedictines after serving as a Franciscan candidate and postulant in New York and New Jersey.

He believes God led him through the Franciscan Order to familiarize him with monastic life.

Online, he discovered St. Bernard and arranged a visit.

"And from that day I knew where God wanted me to be," he said.

After his third visit, he applied for



Brother David walks among the markers at St. Bernard Abbey cemetery. Periods of prayer and meditation occupy a good part of every day.

PHOTOS BY SAUL YOUNG/NEWS SENTINEL



Ave Maria Grotto

acceptance. He entered Sept 8, 2002, and in March 2003, he entered the novitiate.

St. Bernard Abbey is home to the Ave Maria Grotto, a historic shrine and gardens featuring miniature replicas of biblical and world-famous structures. Among Bryant's duties at the monastery are maintaining a portion of the Grotto.

He is also in charge of rebuilding the monastery Web site. But his primary duty is the sales/retail management system he is developing for the Grotto's gift shop.

"It's going to be like going to Wal-Mart," he said, explaining how installing DSL and new computers, generating bar codes for items, adding data to databases and training employees will make the store's operation more efficient.

"I'm up to 3,000 items today," he said on a Friday in late May. "We're at 3,022, and I'm at half the store."

In addition to his other duties, Bryant says he and the other monks

AVE MARIA GROTTTO

■ **What:** Known worldwide as "Jerusalem in Miniature" and named to the National Register of Historic Places, Ave Maria Grotto is a 4-acre landscaped park featuring 125 miniature reproductions of world-famous historic buildings, churches and bejeweled shrines.

Benedictine monk Brother Joseph Zoettl created the reproductions of biblical and world-famous structures out of stone, concrete and basic items including seashells and marbles. Near the center stands an artificial cave known as the Ave Maria Grotto.

■ **Artist:** Zoettl, who was born in Bavaria, came to St. Bernard Abbey in 1892. While working in the abbey's power plant, he developed his hobby of building miniature shrines. He continued his work for more than

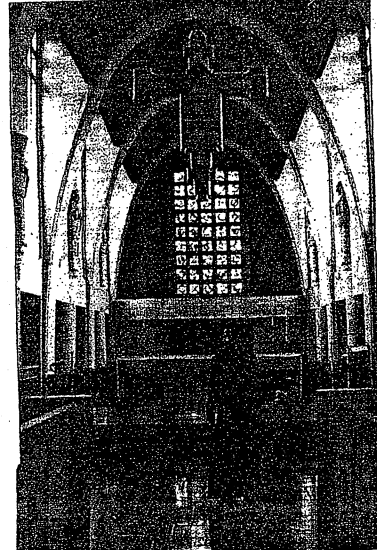
40 years, using materials sent from all over the world. His last model, the Basilica in Lourdes, was created in 1958 when he was 80. He died three years later and was buried in the nearby abbey cemetery.

■ **Hours:** 7 a.m.-7 p.m. every day from April to September and 7 a.m.-5 p.m. October through March. Closed on Christmas Day.

■ **Admission:** \$5 for adults and \$3.50 for children ages 6 to 12. Annually, 45,000 to 55,000 visitors.

■ **Directions:** From Interstate 65, take Exit 308 and head east for more than three miles on Highway 278 to St. Bernard Abbey.

■ **Information:** Call 256-734-4110, email info@ave-mariagrotto.com or visit www.ave-mariagrotto.com. Source: www.ave-mariagrotto.com



Brother David, a Knoxville native, makes his way through the St. Bernard Abbey.

are ministering to people. "We take prayer requests through letters, the Internet. We try to remember them daily and post for others to pray if the person requests the community as a whole to pray for them... Every so often I'll get an e-mail from someone asking about the life of a monk, about the Catholic Church and why somebody would want to enter it... Through our prayer is how we help people outside of the monastery. The monastery is also here for people to get away from the usual routine of life."

His parents say they are proud that their son has committed to pursue a life focused on God. He is well-respected and respected within the quiet community.

The monks observe silence during dinner and breakfast except on Sundays. In his writings, St. Benedict frequently mentions the need for silence to "encourage a sense of the presence of God" and "as a prerequisite for listening to the word of God addressed to us in

Christ." During dinner, the only words uttered come from a monk who reads passages from "Leap of Faith: Memoirs of an Unexpected Life" by Queen Noor of Jordan, wife of former King Hussein of Jordan. Walking away from the dining hall, Bryant explains how being here has helped him. As he speaks, he says a Latin phrase: "Ad quid venisti?" That is to say, "Why have you come?"

Jesus asked Judas this in the garden before the disciple betrayed him. The saying is posted inside a hallway in the junior wing at the monastery. Bryant passes it regularly and reflects seriously upon its words.

"That's important for all of us to consider," he said. "We focus on prayer life and what our individual works are... Being here, I have certainly had the opportunity to be closer to God."

Jasmine F. Hunter may be reached at 865-342-6324.