

# An Oblate's life of adventure

Book chronicles  
Beauregard's  
'wonderful life'

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**T**O ITEMIZE WHAT the late Oblate Father Maurice Beauregard accomplished as a missionary priest, one has to write a book.

But its summary would be simple: He lived the life of a priest to its deepest meaning.

"He lived such a fantastic life," said Elise Chartrand-Dery who wrote a historical biography of the Oblate called, Maurice Beauregard, OMI: Life is Wonderful... and Worth Living.

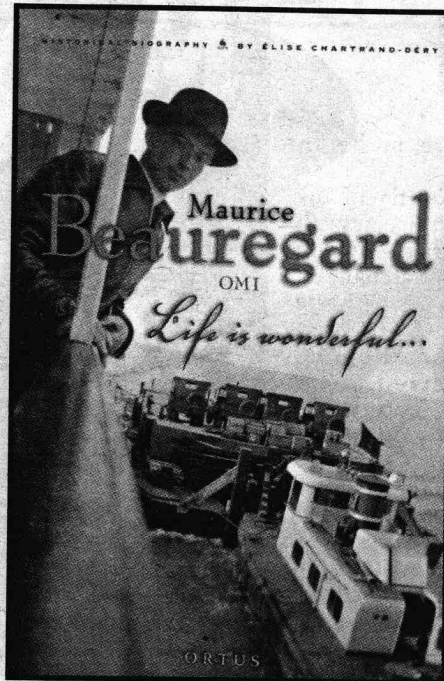
Some 558 pages captured not only the highlights of Beauregard's missionary work but also vignettes and other details embedded in historical events that happened around his time.

In the late 1960s Beauregard risked his life in an effort to rescue a Fort Smith woman, who went missing after a landslide.

When he heard the woman had rolled down the mountain together with her house, he immediately went down by helicopter, hanging out on the end of a rope, to search for her.

Another time in Yellowknife, he was shot at while helping a young drug addict involved in a scuffle with his parents. The young man ended up in jail and Beauregard got him out by pleading for him on the basis that the youngster was not responsible for his actions.

There was a simple yet profound story of him consoling a depressed woman. To



this woman he shared his own story of almost leaving the missionary work because of loneliness and being alone in the cold wilderness of the NWT.

"When I first saw the document (Beauregard wrote a huge amount about his life in the missions), I saw there was a story that begged to be told, and that if not told, it would just be forgotten," Dery told the WCR.

Born in Quebec in 1912, Beauregard did not plan to become a priest. At 23, he was planning to be a doctor and intending to marry Etienne Benoit, who was going into nursing.

Everything seemed to follow a plan until he attended a retreat.

"I didn't want to attend that weekend session. Somehow I dreaded what could

happen. Yet there was an overpowering impulse that brought me to that retreat," said Beauregard in his notes.

In that same year, his plan changed as he entered the Oblate novitiate. From 1936 to 1939 he studied at the Richelieu and the Ottawa scholasticates.

In 1940, he was challenged to volunteer to go to the Alberta-Saskatchewan Oblate province. He was tentatively promised a teaching job at the College St-Jean in Edmonton.

Although he preferred to be posted in a warmer place, he agreed to move West as there was a hidden benefit in so doing. He would be safeguarded from being assigned to the NWT.

He was ordained to the priesthood in Lebreton, Sask., in 1941. Little did he know that what he was avoiding would become his ground for ministry as he was asked to go the Mackenzie Diocese the following year.

He served as a military chaplain of the American Army at Camp Canol in NWT from 1942 to 1947.

For the next 40 years he served as a pastor in the territory, Fort Smith, Fort McMurray and Edmonton. He first served as pastor of St. Joachim's Parish in Edmonton from 1981 to 1986.

When he was in Fort McMurray he belonged to every club.

"He didn't go there to preach. He was there to be a friend. His philosophy was, 'If people don't come to church then the Church must come to them,'" said Dery.

And yet he didn't go there and start saying, "You know you should be going to church."

Although he was extremely proud of being a priest he did not allow his priesthood to be a hindrance from making friends with people from other denominations.

People knew him as someone who would jump the minute he knew he was needed to minister anywhere and at anytime.

Dery deeply admired the priest's attitude.

He always found what's best in life in spite of catastrophic and problematic situations, the writer said.

Of the people he met, he never tried to change anyone but he tried to bring out the best in them.

Even in old age he refused to retire. Oblate Provincial Camille Piche appointed him as Oblate House superior in Foyer Grandin and as vicar of St. Joachim.

"He would have truly deserved to retire but when I

gave him an assignment at Placid Place, our retirement home, he refused. He said that's only for old people. He really wanted to minister," Piche told the WCR when Beauregard died at the age of 85 in 1998.

Dery, who did research on her book for 15 years, said, "The priests have always been receiving bad press. But not all priests are the same."

"What I wanted to do (in writing this book) is to let a different light shine upon the image of those who truly gave their lives for the people."

The book is an easy read with a well-researched historical background, published by Ortus Publications, Inc. Go to [www.ortus.ca](http://www.ortus.ca) for more information.

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