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# Capuchin friar's adventures chronicled in book

BY JOYCE SCHUBRING | FOR THE COMPASS

**KAUKAUNA** — As Capuchin Fr. Timon Costello contemplated retiring from the active part of his religious vocation, he felt a need to preserve his unique personal story.

So he wrote a book. He will be having a book signing on Sunday, Oct. 24, at St. Patrick Book Store located in the Northland Mall.

"It all seems unbelievable," Fr. Timon, 77, said of his half century of service to God, "so that's why I thought it should be written down."

"From Farm Boy to Friar" tells of assignments that took him to parishes throughout the United States, including St. Joseph in Appleton, as well as to the Middle East. Tim R. Garvey and William Nomit are co-authors.

Born William Costello in 1932, Fr. Timon was one of 10 children raised on the family dairy farm near Fond du Lac. He said his desire to be a priest was influenced by his third grade teacher, who prepared him for First Communion.

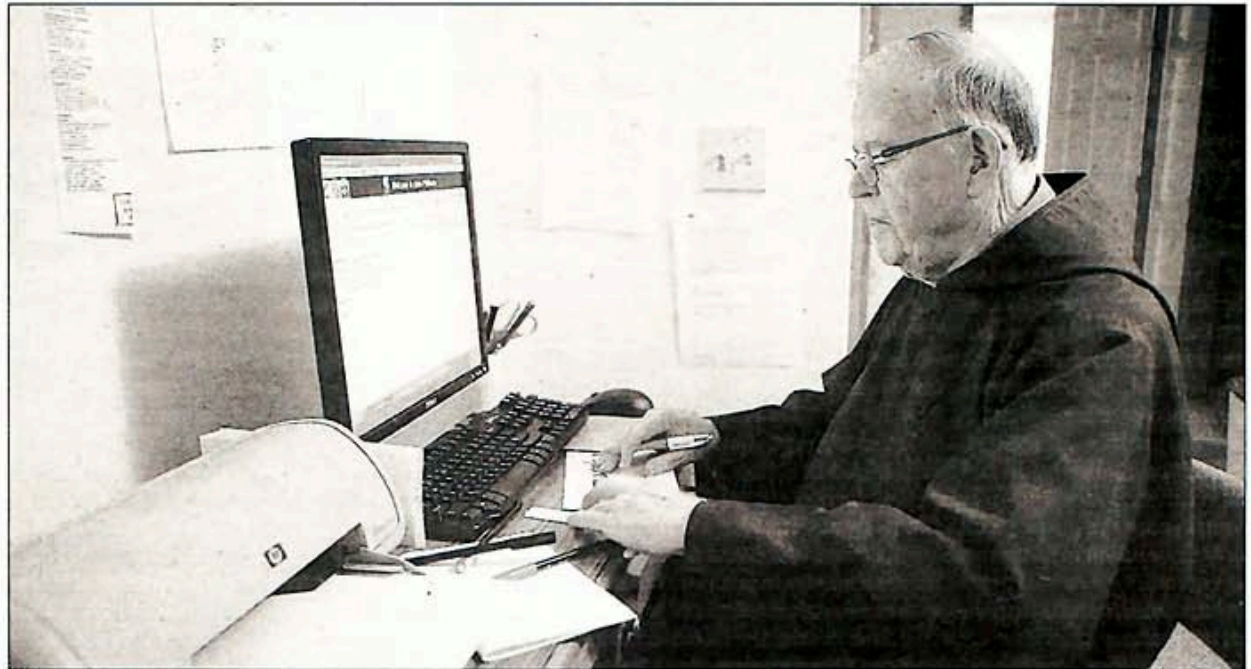
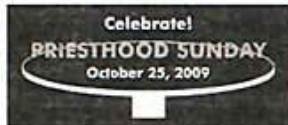
He joined the Capuchin community in 1950 at the age of 18 and was cloistered at a monastery. He wore a heavy wool habit year round and was allowed to speak just one day a week.

"I had a very simple life and that's what I liked. People ask if it was hard to give up things and I said I didn't want them," he said.

After ordination in 1958, Fr. Timon worked with the youth at an inner-city parish in Milwaukee. Four years later, he was transferred to Detroit to fill the order's newly created position of public relations director. His job was to raise funds so the Capuchins could expand their facilities. Although he was good at it, Fr. Timon was uncomfortable in his marketing role and felt his ministry was better suited to working with the poor, homeless, and people addicted to alcohol and other drugs.

The order agreed and sent him to St. Joseph in Appleton, where he revived the parish youth program and turned the basement of the old school into a college-age coffee house called The Cavern. He later opened another coffee house, The Shangri-La, for high school students.

While fulfilling his parish duties, Fr. Timon visited



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Capuchin Fr. Timon Costello works at his desk in his apartment at St. Paul Villa in Kaukauna. He will be present Oct. 24 at St. Patrick Book Store in Appleton to sign copies of his autobiography, "From Farm Boy to Friar."



HAPPY  
*Priesthood*  
SUNDAY  
*Fr. David Ruby*

WE APPRECIATE ALL  
THAT YOU DO FOR US.  
THANK YOU!

*From: Stella Maris Parish,  
Baileys Harbor, Egg Harbor, Fish Creek,  
Jacksonport, Sister Bay, Washington Island*

For all the blessings of your priesthood, we thank you and we thank the Lord. May He continue to abundantly bless you in your service to Him and to His flock, as well as all other areas of life.



Fr. John Becker



Fr. Benjamin Sember



of Our Lord Parish, Green Bay

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# Fr. Timon's ministry included two years in Middle East

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the poor who lived in an impoverished part of Appleton called Koehnke's Woods. He was appalled by their living conditions and, after one of the residents froze to death, Fr. Timon took action.

He asked his order if he could start a halfway house and live with the poor.

"My highest superior, who lived in Detroit, came to see me and said, 'I understand you want to start a halfway house.' 'Yes,' I replied. 'What's a halfway house?' he asked, and I said, 'I don't know.' He said, 'Do it!'"

Fr. Timon turned the upper floor of an old hotel into a halfway house called Villa Hope in January 1970. The facility was a stopping off place for men halfway between institutional treatment and independent living, a bridge to future life.

"I'd always heard people say, 'We have no poor in Appleton,'" Fr. Timon said, "so rather than argue with them, I took the poor and needy in so they saw and understood. If you never saw it (poverty), you didn't know it existed."

As the first live-in director, Fr. Timon was at Villa Hope round the clock. Only once was he assaulted by one of the men, who was drunk when he beat the priest.

"I had him arrested and just went on" with his ministry, he said.

The need for additional housing prompted Fr. Timon to found Villa Phoenix in 1971. "The houses were accepted (by the neighbors) because there was live-in help," he said.

Change came slowly at first, but then built momentum as the local community finally acknowledged that there were poor and homeless people who needed help. With this, Fr. Timon helped found other halfway houses for men and women.

He also realized that the halfway houses needed financial support to succeed, so he started St. Patrick Book Store, a non-profit store, in July 1976. The store now supports various community organizations each year, according to Patricia DeMarco, store manager.

## Fr. Costello to sign books

**Who:** Capuchin Fr. Timon Costello**What:** Open house and signing copies of his autobiography, "From Farm Boy to Friar"**When:** Oct. 24, from 2 to 4 p.m.**Where:** St. Patrick Book Store in the Northland Mall, Appleton

Fr. Timon left Appleton in the late 1970s to join several fellow Capuchins ministering undercover to Catholics in a Middle East country. For two years, "Mr. Timon Costello" carried out his ministry undetected. Then, one day, he was summoned by the police chief and ordered to leave the country.

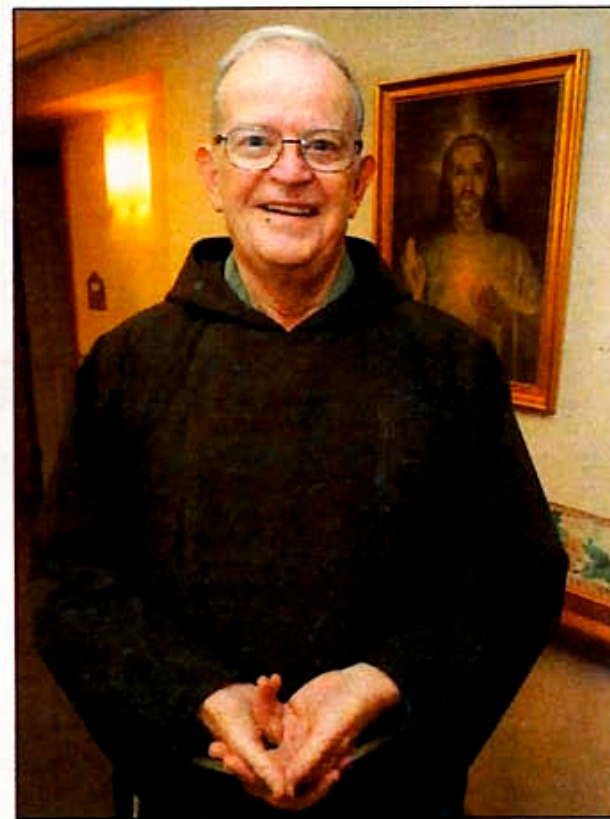
"I was lucky," Fr. Timon said. "I was just thrown out of the county. We had a priest who was caught and put in prison, a dark dungeon, for a month."

Several years later, he learned that he had been expelled because he was suspected of being a CIA agent.

Fr. Timon returned to Appleton in 1988 to serve as a community resource for the halfway house movement and develop new sources of funding. Villa Hope was relocated to a new facility, a multi-use mixed housing complex was founded at Pioneer Village on the campus of the former Institute of Paper Chemistry, and COTS, a low-cost temporary housing facility for men, was founded. Fr. Timon served as the first live-in director at COTS, which was first located in an old fire station.

In 2005, Fr. Timon left Appleton. After several short-term assignments, he went back to parish ministry in New Mexico.

After a series of mini-strokes had prompted him to return to the Capuchin community in Milwaukee, Fr. Timon had a larger stroke in September 2007 that forced him to retire from pastoral ministry. He moved to St. Paul Villa in Kaukauna, where he now resides.



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Capuchin Fr. Timon Costello, who founded Villa Hope halfway house in Appleton, now resides at St. Paul Villa in Kaukauna.

Fr. Timon hopes to be remembered as a social activist. Back in the 1970s, he said, "a priest did not do that. You had to have that spunk to put up with the opposition. I was an originator of things. If you are going to be an activist, you have to be convincing and keep right on going."