



*"The Hope Of Mankind
Lies In The Hands Of Youth And Action"*

AMERICA'S TEN OUTSTANDING YOUNG MEN OF 1977

ANNUAL AWARDS COMPETITION ENTRY FORM

THE JAYCEE CREED



WE BELIEVE:

That faith in God gives meaning and purpose to human life;
That the brotherhood of man transcends the sovereignty of nations;
That economic justice can best be won by free men through free enterprise;
That government should be of laws rather than of men;
That earth's great treasure lies in human personality;
And that service to humanity is the best work of life.



MARRIOTT

For the 39th time, The U. S. Jaycees will select America's Ten Outstanding Young Men of the year and honor them at an awards congress. Each winner is awarded the silver hands. The awards ceremony dramatizes a winner's career in narrative form and provides a stage for the honoree to challenge and inspire young men.

Young men of all fields of endeavor may be nominated for TOYM awards. One or more nominations may be submitted by an individual, organization, association, institution or Jaycee chapter. Winners will be selected by a group of distinguished citizens.

The winner will be selected on the basis of the nominee's achievement or contribution in any three (3) of the following areas:

1. Personal improvement
2. Financial success and economic innovation
3. Social improvement to major contemporary problems
4. Philanthropic contribution or voluntary service
5. Politics or Governmental service

6. Scientific or technological contributions
7. Legal Reform
8. Cultural achievement (to include contributions in literature, history, education, or the arts)
9. Academic leadership
10. Academic accomplishment
11. Moral and religious leadership
12. Success in the influence of public opinion (news media and other means)
13. Any other important contributions to community, state or nation, at the discretion of the judges.

Also, in determining the recipients of this recognition, the judges shall give particular consideration to each nominee's record of adherence to the principles embodied in the Jaycee Creed printed on this form.

Rules governing nominations are:

1. Age limit, 18-35 years. Not eligible if nominee becomes 36 before January 1, 1977

2. A nominee must be a U.S. (native born or naturalized) citizen, or must have applied for U.S. citizenship by January 1, 1976
3. Nominee must sign nomination form personally. With his signature, he will attest to all facts contained on the form, give permission for publication of the facts and indicate willingness, barring extreme circumstances, to attend the TOYM Awards Congress, in its entirety, if he is under final consideration for the 1977 TOYM Award.
4. All information must be contained on the pages of this form.
5. Nomination forms are to be mailed: TOYM, Box 7, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74102.
6. All entries must be postmarked not later than August 1, 1976
7. Please submit 8" x 10" good quality photo of honoree along with form.

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Citizenship U. S. A.
Birthdate January 4, 1946
Place Upper Darby, Penna.

Nominee's Full Name William E. Atkinson Present Age 30
Address Monsignor Bonner High School City Drexel Hill State Penna. Zip 19026 Home Phone 259-7750
Occupation or Profession Priest and Teacher Position or Title N/A
Business Monsignor Bonner High School Business Phone 259-0280
Business Address Lansdowne Avenue City Drexel Hill State Penna. Zip 19026
Marital Status (wife's name) N/A Children: (Name, Age) N/A
Schools attended (Degrees, Academic Honors, Etc.) Monsignor Bonner High School 1959-1963
Villanova University - A.B. Ordination - Order of St. Augustine 2/2/74
Civic Fraternal, Religious Organizations and Affiliations (e.g., American Red Cross, Director, 1964) Bonner High School - Intramurals
St. Edmond's Home for Crippled Children
Published Work: None as of this date.

DIRECTIONS

Answer each of the following questions using as much or as little space for each one as desired, within the allotted pages. Indicate by number where each answer begins. No attachments of any kind to nomination blank are allowed. Single spaced, typewritten answers are preferred with a double space between paragraphs. Be as factual as possible.

QUESTIONS

1. Outline (describe) the career of the nominee, including some background, and the scope of his work or activity.
2. Describe his exceptional achievement or contribution in his chosen field or fields, organization, community, state or nation.
3. List quotations, statements of authorities, honors and awards received which evaluate his achievement or contribution.
4. Describe how the nominee excels in at least three of the thirteen areas as outlined above.

DEADLINE: Postmarked not later than August 1, 1976

1. Father William Atkinson's career began many years ago as a student at Monsignor Bonner High School, located in the suburban Philadelphia area. He was an excellent student and a considerable athlete, although somewhat overshadowed by his brother Al, professional linebacker for the New York Jets. After graduating from Bonner in 1963 Bill chose to follow the religious life of the Augustinians, his teachers during his high school years. He joined the seminary at Villanova and immediately started graduate work at the Augustinian School in Staten Island. In 1964 he was sent to New Hamburg, New York to start his Novitiate, a period of intense self-reflection, to prepare himself for the decision to take his Simple Vows, the first in a long process before final vows and Ordination. By February 1965, Bill had been through many months of rigorous scholastic and religious training. It was, therefore, quite understandable that on Washington's Birthday he and some fellow seminarians happily took the day off to enjoy a brief respite on a snowy winter's day.

There were four of them on the toboggan and, interestingly, Bill was in the lead position. I say interesting because in talking with Bill's family and friends he was a rather shy and quiet person who one might expect to find in the middle of a group, unnoticed. On this day he was a leader. It was a role he was destined to maintain for life.

Four happy seminarians enjoying a toboggan ride. Four men who chose to follow a religious life suddenly came face to face with another gift of God - a tree. Why He chose this, one of the simplest of His creations, to be the catalyst for a seeming tragedy one can only speculate. The seminarians brushed the snow off and, though stunned, considered the spill part of the fun. Then they noticed Bill. The medical term is "damaged cervical 3 and 4". You and I call it a broken neck.

Hospitalized for 6 weeks in a New York Hospital, unable to move from the neck down, Bill Atkinson had time to reflect. There was no therapy for him then, just stillness and the realization that he might not do "anything" again. His career as a priest had seemingly been snuffed out by an outrageous accident. Several times his heart stopped. Several times the doctors gave up hope. Several times Bill Atkinson, drawing on some unknown strength, proved them wrong. His goal, quite simply, was to study and dedicate his life to Christ. He was going to be a priest.

2. What is an "exceptional achievement"? Twenty years ago it was the four minute mile. Bill Atkinson achieved his goal of becoming a priest. That, in itself is not exceptional according to Bill. There are many priests in the Philadelphia area and Bill is one of them. Perhaps Dr. Frazer Parry of the Magee Memorial Hospital in Philadelphia can help us define "exceptional". "If you are going to break your neck, you will likely just have two resources to fall back on - your brain and your family. Your future will be shaped on what you can make of the former with the physical and moral support of the latter." With the help of his family, he defied the odds and medical science and managed to stay alive. It's one thing to stay alive; quite another to become a priest.

With absolutely no motor functions from the neck down, Bill was faced with the dilemma of trying to attain a goal never achieved by any person in the history of the Catholic Church. The three minute mile seemed like a better bet! With amazing speed he managed to rehabilitate himself to a point where he could sit and maneuver in a motorized wheel chair. Nevermind that the doctors had to transplant a piece of his hipbone into his neck to hold his head up. Forget that breathing is difficult with little help from the atrophied muscles in his chest. A child learns to walk in a year. It took Bill a year and a half to get back to Villanova in a wheelchair. He needed special permission from the Augustinian Order to continue his studies. They agreed that if he could maintain his scholastic average on a par with his classmates, then the Order would consider letting Bill pursue his goal, a goal never before attained by anyone in the Church. They really didn't expect him to make it.

In September of 1966 Bill returned to his studies at Villanova. With the aid of his fellow classmates he became familiar on the campus. "That's Al Atkinson's kid brother. Yeah. He got hurt really bad in a sledding accident or something and he's still trying to become a priest. I can just about get up on Monday morning for my Psyche class! I wonder how he does it?" How he "does it" is with great difficulty, but he does it. He attends the classes. He reads the books. The only exception made for him - he doesn't have to participate in the laboratory experiments in the natural sciences. It's tough to light a Bunsen Burner with no hands. Bill excelled in his studies and in July of 1972 he made his final "Solemn" Profession of Vows. It had been over seven years since the accident.

Now the real challenge was to determine if the Church would allow him to be ordained. Being a graduate is one thing, but a priest is something else again. The Provincial Superior of the Augustinian's (Very Reverend Harry A. Cassel) petitioned Pope Paul VI for special permission to ordain Bill. Bill himself typed a letter to the Pope using special devices developed by the doctors at Magee Memorial Hospital. The apparatus is controlled by using Bill's limited respiratory system which enables him to use his hands somewhat and feed himself.

In July the answer was received. I'll let Father Art Chappell, a classmate of Bill's who was there at the time, describe the scene: "Luckily, Bill was at Villanova for one of his summer classes the day the telegram arrived. Next to the accident, this is one day I will never forget. I rushed over to Bill with the telegram, found him eating lunch, and simply placed the yellow telegram before him. It was short and simple and came from Rome: 'ATKINSON DISPENSATION GRANTED'.

He took a long sip of tea through his large glass straw. He said nothing for a few moments, but the color in his face rose and every facial muscle relaxed slowly. He didn't have to say anything; the sparkle in his eyes told the entire message. I wondered then if he hadn't know all the time. More than likely (though he isn't saying) he was prepared to say "yes" to the Lord once again...just as he said yes over and over again after the accident. More than likely, 27 year-old Willy Atkinson knew that he was more blessed than most men and that whatever the Lord wanted for him was far better than anything he could want for himself."

Plans for his Ordination started immediately after that July day...plans that were to have one more step of Faith required of Bill and his whole family. Bill's mother who had helped keep him alive in the early days after the accident and who had supported the entire family in their various times of need was dying of cancer. On October 6, 1973 Bill was ordained a Deacon and Mary Atkinson, his mother, was there to share in this great moment. At the end of October she lapsed into a coma and it was Bill's turn to maintain the bedside vigil, day and night as she had done so often with him. She died very peacefully, her young Deacon-son preached at her funeral mass. When asked by a local reporter about the loss of his mother and the impact that would have on his ordination, he answered with his characteristic "crooked" smile: "I don't know, you might say that she'll have the best seat in the house."

On February 2, 1974, William E. Atkinson was ordained a Roman Catholic Priest in the Order of Saint Augustine. It was only a chapter in a book filled with incredible successes.

Since his ordination, Bill has continued his life dedicated to others. He teaches high school students at his Alma Mater, Monsignor Bonner High School. In his spare time Bill can be found in one of several places. At Our Mother of Good Council Church, a few miles away from Villanova. You might catch him with the second and third graders on the basketball court--He was the intramural coach of his team while in the seminary and became quite a force to be reckoned with as he zipped up and down the sidelines in his battery powered wheelchair. It is the chair that fascinates the kids because they are children. They see no handicap and Bill, in turn feels no handicap. The kids like his "wheels" and wish they had them. What a beautiful sight to see Bill and his kids. If we left Good Council and headed for St. Edmond's Home for Crippled Children, Bill might not be as noticable in a group of children with various mechanical devices which help them walk and move about. The children react the same as the others and Father Bill is someone special, not

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because of his wheelchair, but because of his constant happiness. Some of the other people that visit them seem to have pity for them and they sense this. From Bill they sense only love and that is one commodity which is limitless within him.

During his studies at Villanova Bill had often visited Valley Forge Army Hospital to encourage and give hope to the many wounded veterans returning home from Viet Nam. Hardships were nothing new to him and he didn't patronize those less fortunate than himself. The hospital is closed now, but there are hundreds of disabled veterans across the United States whose lives are a little bit brighter for having met Father Bill. Now Bill returns to the Magee Hospital in Philadelphia for occasional therapy and also to encourage his fellow patients. He can appreciate the special problems they face not just mentally, but also the little physical things that we never consider. Last summer in the first week in August, temperatures in Philadelphia almost topped 100 degrees. Father Bill was fatigued from the day's work and lay down on his bed for a short nap. He slept for about an hour ("a cardinal sin" Bill calls it) and developed a bed sore. He spent six weeks in Magee recovering and missed the first week of school because of it. You and I take a nap on a hot summer day. A quadriplegic cannot. The doctors at Magee appreciate Bill for two reasons. First of all because of the joy he brings other patients on his visits and perhaps just as important, they see the results of their labors and are still amazed at how rapidly Bill recovered from his near fatal accident. This encourages them to seek new methods and have hope on seemingly hopeless cases. A quadriplegic had never before been ordained a priest. The doctor's had helped change that situation and who knows what barrier will be the next to fall.

Bill's future will, I'm sure, provide many milestones to those of us who know him and care for him. His professed goal is to become a hospital chaplain and continue his work with the sick, which, right now, is primarily an extra-curricular activity. Bill's schedule at Bonner involves most of the week and his weekends become a bit hectic trying to travel from one place to the next. Father Bill says it best when he talks of his plans: "In my short time in the hospital - and I consider my 16 months a short time - I met very lonely people without hope. It is these people I'd like to go back to and reassure that somebody loves them and that there is always hope."

3. The most meaningful quotation in Bill's life may have been the telegram that stated 'ATKINSON DISPENSATION GRANTED', for no human in the history of the Catholic Church had ever attained what he did. Pope Paul VI personally had to approve this exception and it is a mark of Bill's achievements that the exception was made. There have been many nice things said about Bill and I will only mention a few here because the man can speak for himself and what he has to say will be much more beneficial to those that hear it than what anyone could say about him.

John Cardinal Krol, Archbishop of Philadelphia: on the occasion of Bill's Ordination, "We have probably been privileged this morning to participate in a ceremony which is certainly extremely rare, if not unique in the history of the Catholic church. But in this, the Priesthood is not a gift to be offered to an individual out of sympathy but actually a call to service."

Dr. Frazer Parry, Director of Magee Hospital in Philadelphia: "Bill illustrates one of our principles; you can't judge the potential for rehabilitation by the injury - you can only judge it by the patient."

Bob Guessetto, a seminarian who helped Bill through school: "After a while you take the paralysis for granted, but once in a while you'll realize what Bill has been through and it's really an inspiration because he's still Bill. Just Bill."

Perhaps better than receiving an award (and Bill has been recognized by several organizations) is to have an award named after you and Monsignor Bonner High School did just that. Each year the "FATHER BILL ATKINSON AWARD" is given to a student who shows "an extraordinary degree of courage and dedication". Appropriately, Father Bill was the first recipient. He was also inducted into the school's new formed Hall of Fame. He was inducted with his brother Al Atkinson, the New York Jet's middle linebacker and John Cappelletti, winner of the Heisman Trophy. He was also chosen by the President's Commission on the Employment of the Handicapped to give the invocation at their annual meeting, held in the Spring of 1975. Father Bill was the unanimous

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choice of the Main Line Jaycees to be their Outstanding Young Man of the Year (1975-1976) and he was also selected as one of the three Outstanding Young Pennsylvanians and received his award at the Pennsylvania State Jaycee Convention in York, Pennsylvania in February, 1976. To receive this award Father Bill travelled in the back of his specially designed van for over two hours on a rather cold February afternoon. His family joined him for the presentation banquet and he had to return to Philadelphia that evening (around 11:30 p.m.) to prepare himself for his normal Sunday duties. As Father Art Chappell says: "He is a very ordinary young man with some very extraordinary qualities!"

4. Looking at the list of thirteen areas of excellence, I find only one area that is not appropriate. Father Bill has not met with financial success or initiated any economic innovation. He has simply cared more for his fellow man above all other things. He is truly one of "earth's great treasures" and his service to humanity is a living example of our Jaycee Creed. "That Faith in God gives meaning and purpose to human life" is a Creed he has followed for life and continues to follow. His moral and religious leadership is witnessed every day by those he comes in contact with. The fact that he, a quadriplegic, totally paralyzed from the neck down, has been able to do so much in his short thirty years, has been able to fulfill the demands of a demanding profession; has given hope to the hopeless, has comforted the sick and dying; brought joy to the sorrowful; and will do so for the rest of his life - these facts are hollow until you meet the man. Father Bill Atkinson deserves to be selected as one of America's Ten Outstanding Young Men of 1977 - not for his sake but for ours.

FOR NOMINATOR: Summarize within this space the reason why you (the nominator) believe that your nominee should be selected one of the Nation's Ten Outstanding Young Men of 1977.

It is difficult to fully explain why I feel that Father William Atkinson, O.S.A. should be selected as one of America's Ten Outstanding Young Men of 1977. The obvious reasons are there - physically handicapped, overcoming amazing obstacles in pursuit of his goal, dedicating his life to others. These are considered "normal" by Father Bill. To meet Bill Atkinson is to be awe-struck. There is no pity because he is not a pitiful person. There is no remorse because there is no need for it. There is, very simply, more love emanating from this man than any person I have ever met in my life. But, that is his job! His life is love. Love for his fellow man. Somehow Father Bill Atkinson meets none of the requirements for being judged an Outstanding Young American because, by his own admission, he's simply doing his job. But yet, somehow, he also manages to exceed every requirement in such a fashion that we should feel honored to acknowledge his contributions and inspiration he has provided all who have ever met him. The three minute mile may be insignificant by comparison.

Nominator's Name John K. Heuisler Signature _____
Address 6413 Morris Park Road City Phila. State Pa. Zip 19157 Bus. Phone 215 WA3-2525
Occupation, Business or Jaycee Chapter Name: Past President (1975-76) Main Line Jaycees

FOR NOMINEE: I attest to all facts contained on this form and give permission for the facts to be used for publication. With agreement to accept a TOYM award, I understand that barring extreme circumstances, the nominee is required to be present at the TOYM Congress in Las Vegas, Nevada no earlier than January 13, 1977 and no later than 12:00 noon January 14, 1977. In the event circumstances prevent attendance, a nominee must present the conditions to The U.S. Jaycees President for his decision on the continued eligibility of the nominee for an award. Award winner's expenses (travel within the continental limits of the U.S., meals, incidentals, etc.) are paid in full for the awards congress trip. The ten honorees will be notified of their selection no later than November 1, 1976. This information will be kept confidential until the formal announcement prior to the congress. The fact that an individual has been selected must also remain confidential prior to the formal announcement by The U.S. Jaycees.

Note: Father Atkinson is unable to sign his name - he has asked me to do it for him.

Signature of Nominee