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MEPKIN

Brother Stephen Petronek, O.C.S.O., 97, died on Sept. 10, 2022. He was a monk at Mepkin Abbey for almost 70 years. Born in Bellaire, Ohio, into a large family, he served as a yeoman in the U.S. Navy before entering Mepkin Abbey in June 1953. He professed his solemn vows in April 1959, committing himself to the contemplative monastic life. Brother Stephen fulfilled many roles at Mepkin, including serving as the abbot's secretary and helping develop the monastery's poultry industry. He used his gardening skills in the gardens around the Abbey Store and Reception Center, the church and the senior wing. He was guest master for 35 years, and, true to the words from the *Rule of Saint Benedict*, he welcomed each visitor as the presence of Christ. With a genuine warmth and smile, he saw to the needs of those making a retreat, preparing their rooms and helping them acclimate to the monastic quiet. For a good number of years, he served the community as prior and was a member of the monastic council. He faced the challenges of aging with a prayerful spirit, saying, "I am never alone. God is always with me."

