

LET US REMEMBER ...

WE ARE IN THE HOLY PRESENCE OF GOD



LET US REMEMBER

A HISTORY OF
CHRISTIAN BROTHERS HIGH SCHOOL
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

BILL ILIFF
CLASS OF 1976

BOOK REFERENCE

Introduction

Chapter 1 - Early Days

Chapter 2 - A Question of Curriculum

Chapter 3 - The Founder

Chapter 4 - From Old to New Again

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FIRST EDITION 2010



*This book was written to honor all of the
dedicated teachers and staff who have so warmly
welcomed the students into their lives
with wisdom and enthusiasm.*

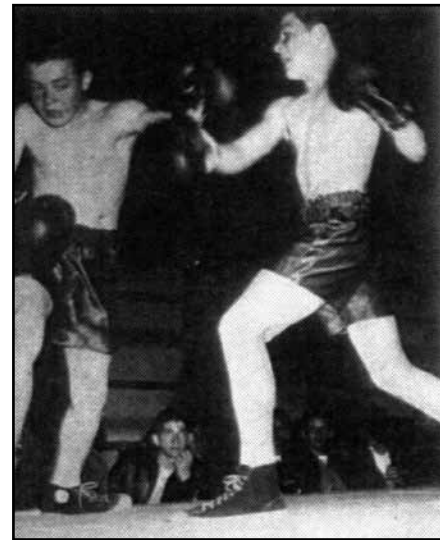
FIGHT TO SURVIVE

1927–1955

What is the most worthy aim of life? It must be something which is within reach of every one. What only the few can attain cannot be life's real end or highest good. The best is not far removed from any one of us, but is alike near to the poor and the rich, to the shepherd and the king; and only the best can give to the soul repose and contentment. What then is the true life ideal? I can find nothing better than this, "Seek you first the kingdom of God and His justice and all things else shall be added unto you." Unless the light of Heaven fall upon your way, thick darkness gathers about you, and in the end, whatever your success may have been, you fail, and are without God and without hope...

*Brother Thomas Ryan, Principal
Christian Brothers School, 1928*

As with so many aspects of American life, the Great Depression following the October 1929 stock market crash had cast a deep shadow locally. While we justifiably lament an unemployment rate of roughly 10% in 2009-2010, the jobless accounted for some 25% of the available workforce in the country throughout the early 1930's. A staggering number of households simply had very little or no means of income. With such gloomy economic conditions, Christian Brothers School spent many years hanging on by the proverbial thread. There was precious little money to be had and rarely was it available for maintenance of the school buildings. On many a morning,



A boxing night with the CBS students was a popular event in the 1930's & 1940's

there was no hot water for the Brothers and the boarders in which to bathe. Needed projects such as painting and construction repairs were a challenged priority due to the meager bank accounts. As always, however, the school found a way to prosper even in the most trying of economic times. In one of his memoirs, Brother Bertram Coleman recalled with great appreciation, the assistance the school received.

“One of the remarkable happenings of the thirties and forties was the manner in which the lay people gave of their services, particularly in the matter of the trades for keeping up maintenance of the plant and providing improved conditions in the buildings and grounds.”



K Street, downtown Sacramento 1920's

Many, many of the families could not afford to pay the full tuition cost, so the CBS student or a family member would work for the school to help defray the financial burden. One alumnus recounted how his father, who was a boilermaker for the Southern Pacific Railroad, was allowed to borrow tools over the weekend so he and some other dads could work on the school's boilers and other machinery. With another family, the mother played the piano for the choir and other school events. Others helped with the grounds. Anything to keep their child in school. Like any enduring community, all pulled together and Christian Brothers School found new ways to not only survive the 1930's but to retain its unique character and educational mission.

Monetary woes besieged not only the local Christian Brothers School, but throughout the Brothers' entire organization. In 1936, the De La Salle Institute, the Western District that governed and controlled the properties owned by the Christian Brothers, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy. While the Sacramento school was locally owned, this nevertheless signaled the gravity of the financial condition facing the De La Salle Christian Brothers on the west coast.

The annual yearbook, *The Sacraformian*, also had met its demise in 1929 in another sign of the times. With the onset of the depression decade, the Sacramento Diocese, also struggling mightily with its own finances, requested that the school cease publication of the yearbook as it was taking away potential donors. With only so many advertising or sponsorship dollars to go around during the era, the Diocese, along with all institutions, felt a significant financial pinch and did not wish to compete with Christian Brothers for its donations.

SO, WHAT EXACTLY IS A GAEL?

A Gael is anyone of Irish-Gaelic ancestry. The "Gael" or Goidels are a Celtic ethno-linguistic group that speak in the Goidelic languages: Irish, Scottish Gaelic, and Manx. Goidelic speech originated in Ireland and spread to Scotland and the Isle of Man. Subsequently, the Goidelic languages have been mostly replaced now by English. However, the term Gael is also used for modern Irish or Scottish Celts regardless of language.

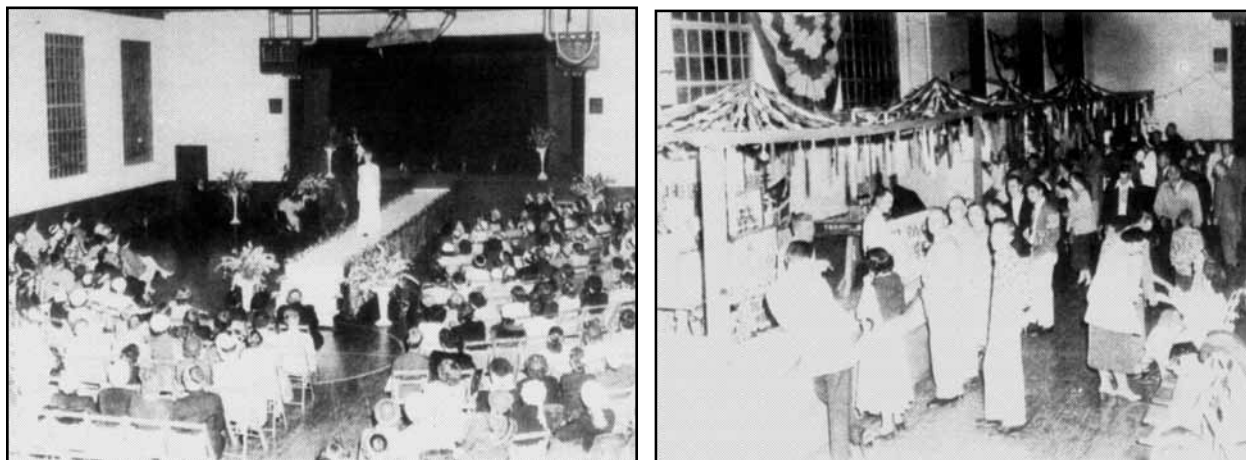


As for the mascot, St. Mary's College was first nicknamed the Gaels in the 1920's by legendary sportswriter Grantland Rice, because, "there were so many Irish guys on the football squad." In athletic terms, the Gael is depicted as spunky and it also personifies strength. Because of the close association with the Lasallian Christian Brothers, the Sacramento Christian Brothers School (CBS) also became known as the Gaels during the same time period. Prior to that, there are references to CBS as the Red Sox back in the 1900-1910's. The present mascot, the Falcon, was begun with the opening of the new school on Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd. in 1957. The Gael proudly endured as the mascot for the old school at 21st and Broadway until its closure in 1964.

Several events were initiated locally by the school community in Sacramento to raise badly needed monies for everyday operations. In 1935, an Annual Field Day and Carnival was started, which included track and field events, a softball game, talent show, and a dinner to cap off the day. A fashion show was also part of the fundraising calendar of events, as well. In 1939, that venerable institution, the La Salle Club, was started with the goal of financially supporting all athletic teams at the school. As with many other funding/sponsorship projects and groups, a large number of the donors had no direct affiliation with the school other than the satisfaction of taking part in a group that was tangibly benefitting so many local students throughout the years. Whatever amount of money raised by the La Salle Club

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was most welcome, especially in such trying times. Throughout much of the 1930's, the athletic teams (football, basketball, and baseball) were outfitted in hand-me-down uniforms from St. Mary's College. The two schools shared the same mascot (the Gaels), so the lettering on the jerseys worked just fine. The only problem, of course, was that sometimes the shirt top or pants were a "trifle too large." Any potential wardrobe malfunction was averted with a good, tightly cinched belt to hold things up during the heated competition.



Fashion Shows and Galas were popular fundraisers, especially in the pre-war years.

With the end of the classical education ban in 1923, the Brothers made a major curriculum shift away from the partially mandated commercial department courses to an entirely core academic, scholastic schedule of classes. The school retained its elementary division, usually with 4th/5th, 6th/7th, and 8th grade classrooms as well as the traditional high school grades. The younger grades were given more fundamental courses, while the older students had a mixture of core and liberal arts classes. As for the high school, three especially noteworthy Brothers set the tone in the pre-war years. *The Sacramento Bee* described this in a laudatory article about the school:

...and there was Brother Damien who taught Latin...He refused to believe Latin was a dead language, but suffered only from non-use today. In addition to teaching language in the classical style, he also taught it as a conversation, the way he believed the ancients had used it. After students had labored through an assignment on the Orations in Cicero, he would query them in Latin and the answers had to come in the same language. It was a game and the interest of the class could be felt to pick up almost like a physical thing.

Continued



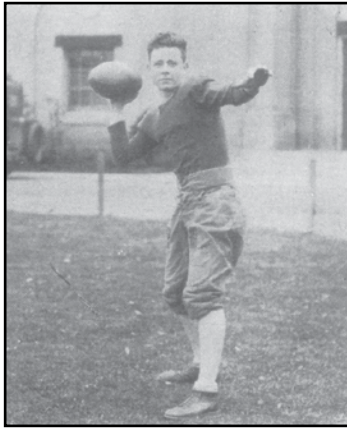
There was Brother Robert who taught Ancient History. By the use of maps and sidelights on textual matter, the historical accounts of the doings of Babylonians, Persians, and Greeks became a living thing. "A mere knowledge of names and dates," he would say, "is meaningless unless it is used as a frame of reference for an understanding of the development of man and his civilizations."

Brother Theodore taught a course in Literature in which the study of Homer was included. "Homer," he once said, "was the first sportswriter in history." This, as it was intended to do, grabbed the class interest. He then pointed to the funeral games, the first Olympic Games, held for Priam, the king of Troy, which Homer recounted. "Read the account of the galley races," he said, "and the boxing match between the old champion and the young upstart out to make a name for himself. If there is a sports story with more drama, I have yet to read it."

In a style and tradition that remains to this day, the students were being asked to think about the discussion at hand and go beyond mere recitation of some memorized material. In so doing, they were stretched intellectually, challenged to grow in their educational experiences and learn to articulate their thoughts. Class participation was, and is important. The students were to become active, enthusiastic learners. It was a skill that would take them far beyond the classroom.



Although always big in spirit, Christian Brothers School was nevertheless small in the number of students compared to its public school counterparts. This created an "us against the world" sort of mentality in athletic competition. While the baseball team more than held its own from the earliest days, including sending many boys on to the professional ranks, the football squad was usually outmanned. The tide started to shift, however, with the hiring of the energetic, young Jim Flynn (captain of the 1929 team) as their coach. The progress of the gridiron program culminated with 1936 and 1937 victories over the Sacramento High School Dragons. Used to having its way with the Gaels, the administration of the public school could not believe that the proverbial David had bested its own Goliath. Aghast, they did the only thing they could to stem the momentum and hired Coach Flynn away from CBS.

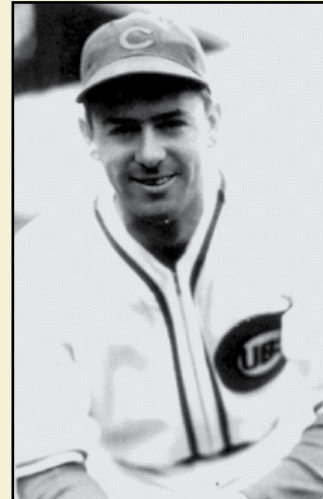


Jim Flynn '29

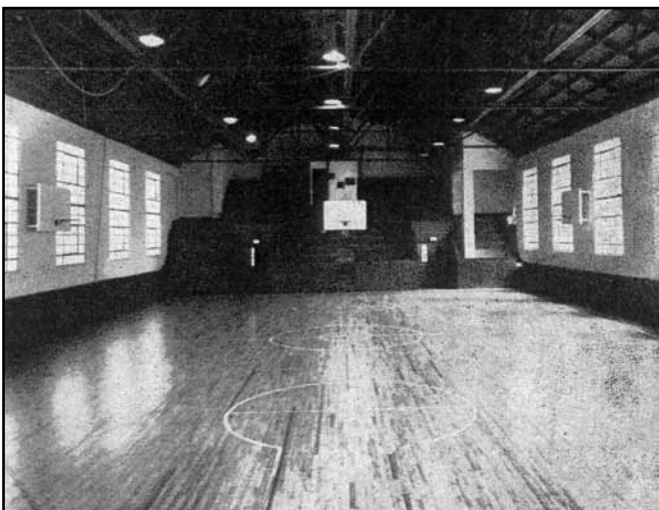
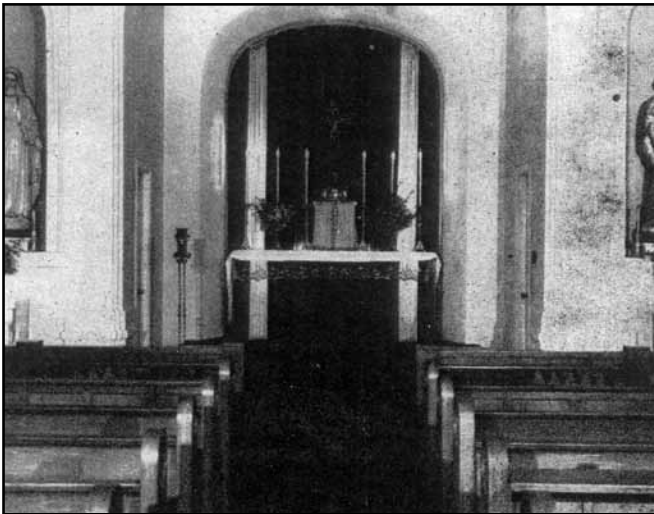
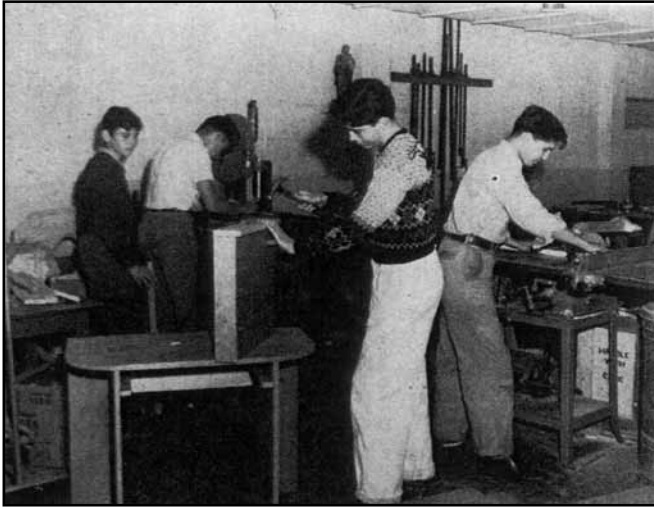
In a sign of the times, the students and faculty also got involved with drives to help the defense effort during World War II. War Bond campaigns were held throughout the period with the school raising enough funds to purchase a Piper Cub airplane and two Jeeps

for the military, one for use on land and another with amphibious capabilities. Most every young man was inducted into military service upon his graduation from CBS. Nine Brothers Boys made the supreme sacrifice for our country, losing their lives during World War II.

Despite the ever present hostilities in the Pacific and European theatres, the students, as kids do, knew how to have fun. One such activity was a newspaper circulated just amongst the students that satirized school faculty and the discipline policies of the day. The alleged ringleader was Sherwood (Shakey) Johnson, who went on to own and operate his famous pizza parlor at 57th and J streets. When the school principal, Brother William Cyril, found out about the clandestine paper and did not take any action, the students were dumbfounded. Expecting a "Doomsday" crackdown with thoughts of detention for the rest of their life, instead Brother William Cyril laughed it off. *"What, stop it and take away all of the fun out of it for those kids?"* Brother reasoned, *"Not on your life."*



Joe Marty, like those of many Italian-Swiss immigrant families, grew up on a dairy farm in the Sacramento Valley. In his later childhood years, Marty's father sold his farm and moved the family into town with Joe attending Christian Brothers School followed by St. Mary's College, where he had earned a football scholarship. Returning home after his freshman year to help his ailing father in the family business, Joe was "discovered" by the San Francisco Seals of the Pacific Coast League where he eventually led the league with a .359 average and was acquired by the Chicago Cubs of the National League. Marty holds the distinction as being the first big leaguer from Sacramento to hit a home run in a World Series game (1938) and his diamond exploits are memorialized with Christian Brothers' varsity baseball field named in his honor. He was also well known to greater Sacramento with his restaurant, Joe Marty's El Chico, on Broadway and 15th, its walls adorned with all sorts of baseball photographs and memorabilia.



The woodshop, chapel and gymnasium at the 21st and Broadway campus.

Along with the rest of the country, as the Sacramento region looked past the Great Depression and World War II in the late 1940's, the future certainly seemed a little brighter as "normalcy," in whatever form that may have been, began to emerge. Students and their families looked to a future of advancement in many ways, free of global conflict and economic woes. Christian Brothers School had survived and wanted now to grow with the times. But, years of insufficient funding had left the school buildings inadequate to accommodate the growing number of applicants for admission. As many as 200 potential students each school year were denied entrance to CBS due to a shortage of needed classrooms. Another crossroads had emerged. Was the school community best served by somehow adding room or was it better to again find a new, larger tract of land to build an entirely new school?

As early as 1949, the Christian Brothers were contemplating a possible move again, faced with the reality that a larger school plant was needed. At that time, there were some 475 students, which included boarders from grades 4th through 8th along with the traditional high school grades. Many applicants were turned away as the school campus was filled to the point of overflowing. At least four new classrooms were needed as well as three more to be renovated at the 21st Street campus. Also, at the time, there was the hope of expanding the "shop" classes, the gymnasium locker rooms, and the science labs. In short, something had to be done.

Different ideas were put forth, including moving grades 10-12 to a separate location (which later was revealed to be where the present school is built), therefore having two campuses. As other Catholic institutions had run recent campaigns, including Mercy Hospital (J Street) and St. Mary's Church (58th Street), the prospects of finding willing donors did not seem favorable. The Brothers would have to wait and make do with the present facilities for a while.



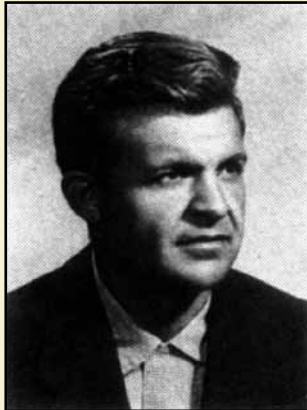
SHERWOOD (SHAKEY) JOHNSON

After a stint in the Navy, Johnson, (class of 1943) went to college in Sacramento and then law school at Hastings in San Francisco. Rather than pursue a legal career, Shakey instead parlayed his love of music, especially Dixieland and Ragtime Jazz, into starting a pizza parlor named, of course, "Shakey's" Pizza Parlor in 1954.

With its distinctive, fun-loving décor, including red checkered tablecloths and off-beat comic posters on the walls, Shakey's quickly became the "go-to" place for generations of high school and college students before or after dances and ballgames.

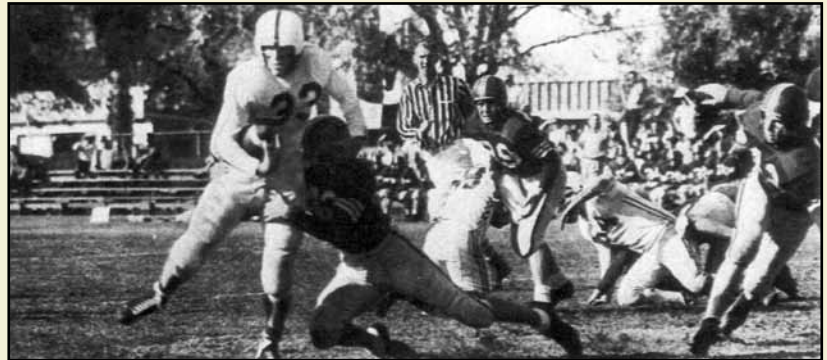


K Street near 10th Street, 1950's.



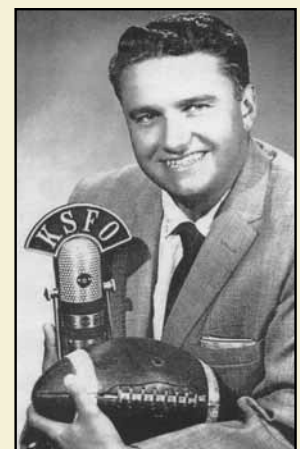
RAY CLEMONS

A year after playing for the Green Bay Packers of the NFL, Ray Clemons, who went on to become a legendary figure at Sacramento State College, received his coaching baptism at CBS from 1948-1954.



THE NFL ON CBS

After his days at Christian Brothers, Bob Fouts (class of 1939) went on to St. Mary's College via a journalism scholarship. While in college, Fouts initiated a student run radio station on campus. The war intervened, of course, and Bob saw duty in the Air Force, after which he was hired to work at station KYA in the Bay Area, who had acquired the rights to broadcast the football games of the fledgling San Francisco 49ers of the All-American Conference, pre-dating their entry into the National Football League. Fouts came to be readily identified with the 49ers and so was hired by CBS Television when the network began televising the weekly NFL games during the dawn of professional football's popularity with the American sports fan.





BOARDERS

From the day they first opened their doors in 1876 to educate children in Sacramento, The Christian Brothers also took in boarders. These were students who lived far enough away from the campus that their enrollment in the school would not have been possible without living on the campus. When we say far away, often times it meant far, far away. The students, as young as fourth graders, came to Christian Brothers not only from cities and towns throughout California, they had also left behind homes in most of the western United States and, in many years, one or more came from a foreign country.

What was a boarder likely to experience while living on campus? It was basically a self-contained little community in itself for the boys. They had sleeping and bathing quarters as well as a kitchen and dining hall. With the “newly” completed school on 21st and Broadway in the 1920’s, a game room which had billiards and a ping-pong table, was available for recreation. The boarders formed their own baseball,

basketball, and football (latter years) teams for CYO competition. Often, there were organized activities and outings. Also, the boarders elected student council members to govern their community. Publications were also produced, including a yearbook, *The Resident Gael*. One or more of the resident Brothers served as prefects.

In the early days, there was a wide range of ages with the boarders. In the latter years, especially with the establishment of parish grammar schools, the boarders were limited to the high school grades. The first school building downtown in 1876 had room for 12 live-in boarders. At the time of the closing of the 21st and Broadway Christian Brothers School campus in 1964, there were 81 in the last year of the program. Many children were taken in, cared for, and left with unique memories in the school’s 88 years of continuing service.

The Provincial of the Western District of the Christian Brothers, Brother Jerome, wrote in the final edition of *The Resident Gael*, “For almost 90 years, the boarding department of Christian Brothers School has been a home for hundreds of boys...Now this historic work is being concluded. For this reason, a certain sadness and nostalgia fills the hearts of the Brothers, students, and alumni. It is almost like the passing of a beloved friend, a foster mother in a remarkably real sense...”

MAX BAER, JR.

Baer, the son of the 1934 World Heavyweight boxing champ Max Baer, grew up in Land Park before matriculating at Christian Brothers School. Max had been involved in acting and stage production since the early days of his youth, appearing in plays and summer stock shows while still in grammar school. After graduating



from Brothers in 1955, Baer eventually followed his dream, signing on with Warner Brothers Studio in 1960, garnering small roles in television shows such as *Maverick* and *77 Sunset Strip* before landing the part of Jethro Bodine for the sitcom *The Beverly Hillbillies* in 1962.

His role in one of the most popular TV series ever was both a blessing and a curse for Baer. While the show gave him everlasting recognition in television history (to this day, it is still a cult favorite in syndication on



media like the cable channel TV Land), Baer became typecast as the lovable lug, Jethro. Instead, Baer then went into writing and production and again found great success. Max produced "Macon County Line" (1974) and "Ode to Billy Joe" (1976), both of which became huge box office winners.

Unlike the doltish Jethro, Baer, with college degrees in both business and philosophy, has exhibited sharp business acumen, acquiring the sublicensing rights to *The Beverly Hillbillies* in 1991, developing numerous spin-off products and entertainment projects.



SAFER BUILDINGS, SAFER CITIES

Ed Wilson (class of 1950) has seen his theories and calculations add up to truly significant contributions to society. Ed, a Professor Emeritus of Structural Engineering at the University of California, Berkeley, has used mathematical and computer analysis to develop safer rocket systems for NASA and to predict how massive office buildings will react to earthquakes.

Professor Wilson developed many of the original three-dimensional (3D) computer analyses, initially in 1969, to determine potential structural reactions in times of earthquakes. Various versions of his pioneering computer programs are used throughout the world to make tall buildings and hydroelectric systems safe from catastrophe. Wilson, one of the true experts on structural stress analysis, has nearly 200 research papers and reports to his credit.

Brother Bertram Coleman



A first generation San Franciscan, Raymond Bertram Coleman was born in 1914 of Irish immigrant parents. Ray attended St. Peter's Parish school in the city and maintained his attendance there despite the family moving rather often from rented flat to flat, as his father, a newspaper typesetter, could find an affordable home for his wife Anna and their four children.

With the beginning of his high school years, Ray felt the call to the Junior Novitiate in Martinez, having been befriended by a number of younger Brothers, whom he played weekend sports with and had then learned more of the Christian Brothers through a summer program at the Russian River. Reflecting on his school days, Brother Bert said, "I was very regular as a kid to say three Hail Mary's before going to bed for purity... I believe the Holy Spirit was guiding me to a destination that was to be my lifetime commitment."

After the completion of the Scholasticate, Br. Bertram was given his first teaching assignment, at Christian Brothers School in 1935, assigned to a combined class of 6th and 7th grades, as well as a high school history class, at the Sacramento campus on 21st and Y Streets. Over the next 50 years, Br. Bert had six different assignments at Christian Brothers School, including duties as the school principal from 1948 through 1952.

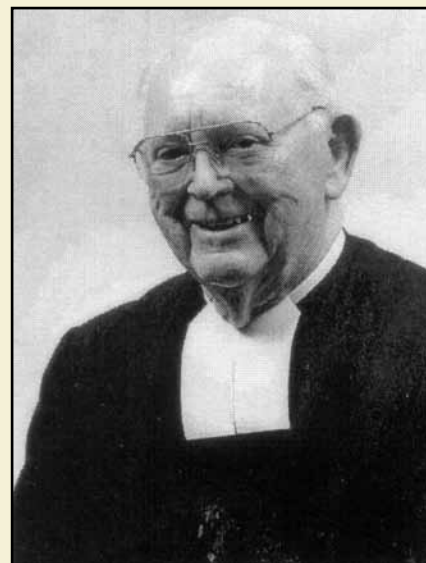
Always vitally interested in the students beyond the classroom, Br. Bertram helped initiate a local parochial school athletic league and coached both football and basketball. During the war years (1943-1944), he also served as the athletic director. Br. Bertram was also involved in the student journalistic pursuits and developed his skills as a guidance counselor, as well. He connected so well with the students. Br. Bertram wrote in a 1982



autobiography of his post-war years at CBS, "It did not take me long to become friends with the senior class (1948), a friendship I cherish to this day. I followed them (as I did with all my students) in all the sports, dances, picnics, Catholic Action meetings, and any social activity of the school. We initiated with Sister Celestine S.M. (St. Joseph's Academy) and Sister Manuela, O.S.F. (St. Francis High School) the Interschool Council whereby the student officers of the three schools met regularly to plan curricular and extracurricular activities."

Br. Bertram was very instrumental in the formation of the co-instructional educational model of the late 1950's, early 1960's at the newly built Bishop Armstrong High School. He returned later to oversee fundraising at the Sacramento campus. Upon his "retirement", Br. Bert was given the duties of bringing the District archives at Mont La Salle in Napa up to date and in a readily accessible format.

Well beyond those very important responsibilities, Br. Bertram was truly an ambassador for Christian Brothers High School and the Christian Brothers themselves, so representative of all the good will and good works performed by the Brothers. Possessed with charm, a quick wit, warmth, and an unflinching memory for people, places, and events, Br. Bert was the type of person whom people felt comfortable with upon the very first handshake. A grateful Christian Brothers High School community named the administrative wing Brother Bertram Hall for the wonderful years of service he gave to the school, students, parents, and alumni. It was a fitting tribute to a much beloved gentleman.



Upon his death in October of 2002, his nephew, Br. Mark Murphy, wrote of his uncle:

"I am most grateful in a special way for the life, the presence, the influence of Brother Bertram.

*He was, from the first time I was young and through all the years of my own vocation,
a major influence. By the way he lived his vocation, he gave me – as he gave many of you
– hope and confidence that God has a plan and a place for each of us.*

*His very human way of loving, of being faithful and consistent- at times, just plain stubborn!
– was a wonderful embodiment of what St. La Salle had envisioned our life to be: faith and zeal."*

