

Crossland Family Generations Connected to CB

By Kenny Kirrene '78



Mary Johnson



Kevin Crossland '69, his father Archie '39 and son Ryan '05



Colleen Crossland Quinn '71, senior class picture



Kevin Crossland '69, senior class picture

A PHOTOGRAPH, A SMILE, an inscription...For more than a decade a woman's face has caught my attention. In front of the main office, she looks out from among one of the several plaques acknowledging the various scholarships here at Christian Brothers High School, on Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Her name was Mary Johnson and the message printed on her particular plaque reads: "A life-long friend and benefactress whose devotion and labors made possible many of the cultural, academic, and athletic programs at a time when Christian Brothers High School truly needed a friend. Never Let It Be Forgotten."

These words are powerful, and I have thus always wondered about Miss Mary's connection to the Christian Brothers community here in Sacramento. For these past thirteen years she and her connection have remained a mystery to me.

In early November of this school year a casual encounter with **Ryan Crossland '05**, a senior whom I have known since his freshman year, solved this mystery. Mary Johnson was Ryan's great-grandmother. She was the mother of **Archie Crossland '39** and grandmother of **Kevin Crossland '69** and Bishop Manogue graduate, **Colleen Crossland Quinn '71**. She gave to the Brothers' community a son, grandson, and a great-grandson: three generations of Crosslands. Yet it was not this giving of Crossland boys that would have inspired the powerful words printed on her plaque, nor her profound connection to Christian Brothers.

Miss Mary established a direct connection to this community during The Depression when most Americans, and therefore the Brothers themselves, faced a critical period of need and support. During those years, money was short,

financial security limited, and assistance never a guarantee. As she had no family at CB, her only connection to the school at 21st and Broadway was that it lay within the parish of Immaculate Conception, the church Mary attended. Through the "parish grapevine" apparently she must have heard about the needs of the school and the Brothers themselves. She took it upon herself to gather the community to bake goods, have raffles, and sell items at a thrift shop in order to raise money to provide for the Brothers.

Obviously, Mary's family had their own concerns, and yet she felt the need to be of service to the Brothers. Throughout the following decades, her support of the school continued, especially in terms of financial assistance. The Brothers considered this support so profound that they established a scholarship in her honor more than half a century later. Mary's son Archie, who passed away February 2004, continued this legacy of giving to the Brothers with his involvement in "The Brotherhood."

Founded in 1936, these Alums have been giving substantive monetary assistance to Christian Brothers in small and large ways, mostly wanting to go without recognition. Archie also worked his part on larger donors for the Science, Math, and Technology Wing (SMAT).

Mary's grandson Kevin has institutionalized the Crossland legacy of serving Christian Brothers with his work on the Christian Brothers Alumni Association Board of Directors. This Board exists as a working board: No perks; No privileges; No recognition. Just a group of men and women who commit significant time and much energy to give back to something they believe gave much to them. He has also been particularly concerned about those kids at CB who may be struggling, and has expressed interest in establishing a program to offer guidance and assistance to these young men and women.

Finally, Kevin's son Ryan will graduate this May, Class of 2005. He shares his Dad's smile and his eyes have always been welcoming. From what I have gathered of his character these past years, I am confident the Crossland connection with CB will continue. He too, will find his way back.

As with other family legacies that have blessed Christian Brothers these past 128 years, the Crossland family has been quietly sharing the mission of the Brothers. They have been the living example of the motto found at the front of the school, "Enter to learn, leave to serve." ...A photograph, a smile, an inscription. She was Mary Johnson. They are the Crosslands. Never let it be forgotten. ■