

# “The Great Arrogance of the Present Is to Forget the Intelligence of the Past”

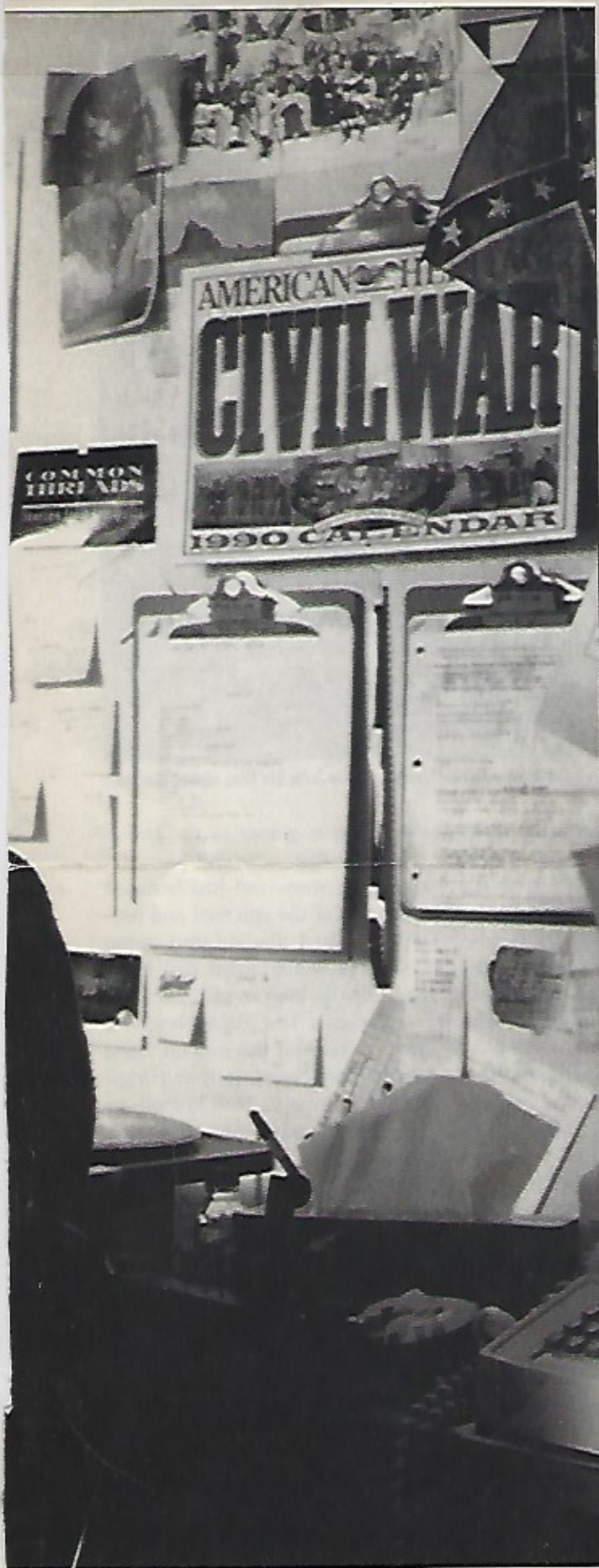
The maker of a fine new documentary on the Civil War tells how the medium of film can evoke the emotional reality of history

An Interview with Ken Burns by Bernard A. Weisberger

**K**en Burns is no stranger to me. We first met in 1983 at a party that the historian David McCullough gave at the Yale Club to wish a happy hundredth birthday to the Brooklyn Bridge. If David had not introduced Ken to me as the maker of an acclaimed film about the bridge, I would have mistaken him for a high school student—perhaps the older brother of the infant he was holding in his arms. It was actually his daughter Sarah, and Burns was then thirty. Seven years later the baby face is a little more seasoned, and there is another daughter, Lilly, and five more prizewinning historical documentaries—on the Shakers, the Statue of Liberty, Huey Long, Congress, and the artist Thomas Hart Benton.

By now Ken and I have become friends, and I have helped write two of the films (along with McCullough, Geoffrey C. Ward, and others). When we met for this interview, I had recently seen the ten-and-a-half-hour film on the Civil War that he had just completed after five years of work. It will be a major nine-part public-television presentation beginning September 23 and is certainly, as a PBS brochure declares, “the most ambitious, comprehensive, and definitive history of the war ever put on film.”

Ken lives in a venerable, calendar-photo frame house in Walpole, New Hampshire, along with Sarah, Lilly, and his



ROBINNE FLEMING



BY MARK WARREN,  
PRESIDENT

I had a major wake-up call this past weekend. I was looking through the yellow pages for a phone number, and I noticed an advertisement that had prominently displayed *Serving Sacramento since 1974*. I thought to myself, "What's the big deal?" Well, since 1974 means that someone has been doing business in our area for 27 years – over a quarter century. This is a big deal, and any business that has been around for 27 years deserves some respect ... and more than a little admiration from a Baby Boomer like me.

The timing on this revelation could not have been better. It was time to write this article for the CONNECTION, and the theme revolves around Christian Brothers High School's year-long celebration of 125 years in service to Sacramento. One-hundred-twenty-five years of educating students, producing leaders, doing the work of the Church, helping young men (and more recently, young women) to mature is a very big deal, indeed.

Way, way back Maggie Cunningham and Father Patrick Scanlan had a dream – to provide a Catholic education to the youth of the Sacramento area. They began raising money and, more importantly, dreaming about the possibilities. The Christian Brothers accepted their invitation to come to Sacramento, and the first Brothers' school in this town was opened at 12th and K Streets in 1876.

I won't go through the history of the Brothers here in Sacramento in this article. We will do that throughout this next year in a variety of publications. We will highlight moments in our history and will provide timelines of major dates and occurrences in the life of the Lasallian mission in our area.

Our vision for the future, our goals and aspirations, and our commitment to the Lasallian mission will lead us into this new millennium. Our past, however, helped define our school community, has created lasting memories for many Sacramentans, and has helped to shape and mold this institution into what it is today ... and what it promises to be tomorrow.

125 years is a remarkable accomplishment, and it is to the memory of all those Brothers, Sisters, and lay men and women who helped shape the Christian Brothers experience in Sacramento that we dedicate ... sincerely hope you enjoy going on this journey into the

God Bless

Warren

**"Preserving Yesterday  
For Tomorrow"**

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