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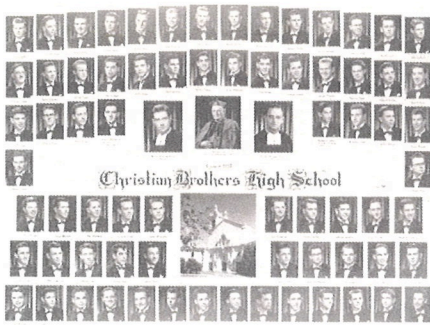
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Looking Back At The Falcon Family

Imagine what it was like to go to Christian Brothers in the '90s. How about the '70s? What about the 1880s? Have you ever wanted to sift through some old CB yearbooks? Well, now you can. The Christian Brothers community has a rich history, and a few CB alumni have dedicated countless hours to making [...]

Written by: [Mariah Hudnut](#) - Talon Staff Writer

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Imagine what it was like to go to Christian Brothers in the '90s. How about the '70s? What about the 1880s? Have you ever wanted to sift through some old CB yearbooks? Well, now you can. The Christian Brothers community has a rich history, and a few CB alumni have dedicated countless hours to making the past of our community accessible to everyone. But where can you find this fascinating memorabilia?

Jerry Kirrene '53 created [cbarchives.com](#) about ten years ago. This website is filled with all things Christian Brothers. From media articles about alumni to photos of Bishop Manogue's drill team and of athletes from the 1920s, the website covers just about everything imaginable in CB's history.

"I just try to pick up anything I can — just an article in the paper of some sort, I clip it out, and then if you look on [cbarchives.com](#) it'll be there," he says. "Right now I'm taking pictures of the new football field, and some people are taking pictures for me as it moves along, so you can see how it has changed on the website."

Always looking for more to add more to his website, Jerry goes wherever he can to find new CB artifacts.

"I've gone up to Napa where they have a big archive. [My wife] Rosemary and I went up twice and spent about four days each copying all the pictures and things they had up there," he recalls. "We really have probably a bigger archive than Napa, which is the headquarters for the San Francisco province."

Preserving centuries of a community's history is no easy task, so what prompted Mr. Kirrene to start [cbarchives.com](#) in the first place?

"I felt that the general public wasn't aware of the great tradition of Christian Brothers in Sacramento," he says. "People should be aware of it so that the students and faculty take a little more pride in the school based upon what its history is."

Christian Brothers High School started in 1876 and has grown alongside Sacramento since its beginning. Our school is entering into its 144th year producing great students.

"We've been here almost as long as the city — you know the transcontinental railroad came in 1869," he says. "Sacramento grew with Christian Brothers and Christian Brothers grew with Sacramento."

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Having developed a love for history early on in his life, the CB archives project gives Mr. Kirrene a way to pursue his passion.

"I've been a docent at a lot of places in Sacramento, and so I developed a liking for history. After that I thought, oh my god, here at CB we have all this history. So I asked the president if I could go ahead and start this, and he said fine, so I've been doing it for ten years."

A week in the life for Jerry may not be what you think, though.

"I have to spend two or three days a week at least doing this thing," he says. "The average person would say 'you're nuts,' but for me it's something I like to do, and I want Christian Brothers to be around."

"I work on it at my house and then I take the files over to the school and file them," the proud alum says. "There's an archive room in Bertram Hall where we file things by year... we have about 2,500 files that either have one document in them or a whole yearbook in them."

Mr. Kirrene is in the ongoing process of finding information and uploading it. Current CB students especially have a lot to offer him.

"I particularly like working on the senior class" he says. "You [seniors] are a part of that tradition, and we want to remember you rather than just giving you a yearbook and having you fly away. I want to capture as many things as I can about you because you're important to the school. You're important to its history."

The CB family mass and annual graduation ceremony give Mr. Kirrene perfect opportunities to gain insight on current seniors.

"I hadn't been to a family mass until recently, and I found out that CB gives out a lot of awards," he says. "I got the script from the presenter so that every student that got something could be recognized on the website. I can be with you all at your graduation too, to see you and get your documents," he added with a chuckle.

So what should you expect when you visit the website?

"I'm kind of all over the place with the things I keep," he admits. "Anything that has to do with Christian Brothers I put in there. If you go on the site you'll see about eight major categories and then there's subcategories to make it easier to find what you want."

Throughout this entire process, the strength of CB's community has stuck out to Mr. Kirrene.

"The world should know that this is a tremendous heritage," he says. "I had a real good experience at Christian Brothers. I think if you had a good experience you really appreciate it more when you get out."

The overarching goal of cbarchives.com is to keep alumni connected with the school and current students connected with alumni.

"Some day when you have little kids running around at your feet you might want to show them what it was like in the 2000s and you can say 'oh yeah I remember...' while you look at the website. I hope someday you'll look back and have fond memories."

Another person who has worked to preserve CB's rich history is **Dr. Bill Iliff ('76)**. In 2010, Dr. Iliff wrote the book *Let Us Remember* about the roots of Christian Brothers High School.

"It was a favor to a friend, an alumnus. We put together a history committee probably 12 or so years ago, and I said, 'Oh gosh I think I'll try to put together a book,' not really thinking about what that meant," he admits. "One thing led to another and then that was that."

Going into the process with an open mind, Dr. Iliff changed his book's central theme a few times while writing.

"I started out just wanting to give a history of the school, but after interviewing, it kind of morphed into... the alumni experience," he says. "You know they're proud of their education and all that but they just remember how welcomed they felt and how much the teachers paid attention to them, took care of them, and loved them. So that kind of became the theme of the book in a different sort of way."

"Another angle that I initially took was the history of the city and the history of the school," he adds. "For example, the school was here like twenty years before electricity, and so they didn't have plumbing, lights, or any sort of thing like that. But the school had already been thriving for twenty years."

One needs a large amount of information on a subject in order to write an entire book. Dr. Iliff realized he needed to look beyond Sacramento to find enough literary material.

"There are archives in Napa about La Salle and then some at St. Mary's College. So there was some information about the school there so that was a big help. I also interviewed a lot of alumni."

Slabbinck Mr. Zanetti Mrs. Brousseau MS.

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After lots of interviewing and sifting through archives, Dr. Iliff narrowed down the topics to what he wanted to cover.

"Really what it revolves around is trying to hit the high points of things that happened. For example, the first three graduating classes had their graduation at the capitol, and there were a lot of different students back then who were involved in government or became judges or state legislators," he says. "There's a lot of things that have happened in Sacramento that Christian Brothers alumni had a big part in."

Because of the high quality education Christian Brothers has always offered its students, CB alumni have been able to make significant impacts in Sacramento for decades.

"It was far far less likely that you'd go to college in the 1800s and even into the 1920s and 30s, so a lot of Christian Brothers students would come out of school and be immediately sought after for jobs because they had a good education and the institution was respected. Students just kind of floated into the community a lot, and so I think that was a big factor in terms of the influence of Christian Brothers on the community"

Dr. Iliff found that CB's dedicated faculty has made our high school stand out ever since 1867.

"Teachers here are trying to pay attention to the needs of the students... so that includes the culture of the times. And this didn't start ten years ago or five years ago — this started a hundred plus years ago."

A main focus in *Let Us Remember* is the impact of the Christian Brothers, who continue to help run CB affairs today.

"The Brothers really paid attention to what was happening either locally or with their students in order to adapt how they taught so they could reach those kids," the dentist and science teacher says. "In the late sixties, [the brothers] went away from liturgies and they started having folk masses as the rock and roll came in in that era. So it wasn't really just the Latin mass, it was more that they would have folk guitars and folk masses and things like that."

The tradition of CB faculty and staff making education relatable and impactful has not ceased since the Brothers left campus.

"Whether you're a young graduate or a sixty, seventy, eighty year-old person, I found that a lot of alumni just have very warm feelings about this school and how much the teachers cared about them. And it's amazing to think that all these years later — you think of someone that's lived their whole life — they still look back at how important their high school education was. That's really a profound thing."

Tagged: Dr. Iliff, Jerry Kirrene

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