

## Obituaries

# Brother Bertram led city high school

By Ted Bell  
BEE STAFF WRITER

Brother Bertram Coleman, whose imprint is on the lives of thousands of Sacramento's young men and women, died Wednesday at the Christian Brothers' retirement community in Mont La Salle, Napa.

The 87-year-old former principal of Sacramento's Christian Brothers High School and provincial of the De La Salle Christian Brothers on the West Coast had cancer.

Brother Bertram will be buried Saturday, his birthday, following a 10 a.m. service at St. Apollinaris Church in Napa.

Born Raymond Coleman in San Francisco, he attended St. Peter's School, a Christian Brothers school in the city's Mission District. He became a Junior Novitiate at the start of his high school sophomore year.

He took the name Brother Bertram, FSC ("Fratrum Scholarum Christianarum") of the De La Salle Christian Brothers, and in 1933 began studies at St. Mary's College in Moraga.

He first came to Sacramento's Christian Brothers School in 1936 as a 21-year-old teacher of sixth and seventh grades. At the time, it was common for young brothers to interrupt their college education to teach at the schools for a few years.

While here, Brother Bertram joined another brother in organizing a Sacramento parochial school athletic league.

From 1937 to 1939, he taught at the brothers' Juniorate in Napa before returning to Sacramento,

where he became a teacher and prefect, coached football and basketball and served as athletic director.

In 1944 Brother Bertram moved to St. Mary's College as sub-director, then director, of scholastics.

A man of average height and appearance, Brother Bertram nevertheless was an imposing presence, remembered Stan Gilliam, who was a CBHS student of Brother Bertram's and, later, a fellow student at St. Mary's.

"He was very outgoing and friendly. He obviously liked people and people invariably liked him," Gilliam said.

In 1948, Brother Bertram became principal of the 436-student Christian Brothers High School in Sacramento. Today, the school has just over 1,000 students. It became coeducational in 1989.

"I remember him telling me that during his first year as principal he tried - and did - to memorize the name of every single student," said Brother George Van Grieken, Christian Brothers' current Sacramento principal.

In 1952 Brother Bertram became principal of Cathedral High School in Los Angeles, which served a heavily Latino area. In his own words, he "grew to love a people I never really knew before." He added business and college preparatory classes to a curriculum that previously had been better known for vocational arts.

In 1968, on the heels of the Second Vatican Council, he became the first provincial of the San Francisco district, nominated and elected by the brothers of the district. He was subsequently ap-



**Bertram Coleman**

As a new principal at the school, he made himself learn every student's name.

pointed to the position by the order's Superior General in Rome.

In his role as provincial, Brother Bertram oversaw all the activities of the De La Salle Christian Brothers in California, Oregon and Washington.

At the time, the brothers operated St. Mary's College, 10 high schools, two grammar schools, a retreat house and, of course, their world-famous Napa winery.

Managing financial pressures and societal changes was part of the job, forcing hard choices, including closing some schools, cutting expenses and withdrawing brothers from schools with shrinking enrollments.

He returned to Sacramento and Christian Brothers High School in 1979 to take over the school's development office.

In 1986, thinking he would finally have time to read and pray, Brother Bertram returned to Mont La Salle in Napa. The provincial, Brother Norman Cook, thought otherwise and assigned him to be director, administrator and member of the Novitiate staff. On July 1, Brother Bertram officially retired.

He is survived by his sister, Ann Smith of Dixon.

Memorial donations may be made to the Brother Bertram Endowed Scholarship Fund at Christian Brothers High School, 4315 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd., Sacramento, CA 95820-2727.

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The Bee's Ted Bell can be reached at (916)321-1071 or [tbell@sacbee.com](mailto:tbell@sacbee.com).



[BROTHER BERTRAM COLEMAN's (2/29/75)  
recollections of Christian Brothers  
School, Sacramento, 1935 - 1952]

If I were to recall some of the notable developments during my years at Christian Brothers School, Sacramento, I would have to go back to 1935 when I was assigned there as teacher of the 6th and 7th grades, assistant prefect of boarding students and a member of a religious community that was struggling through depression years.

One of the remarkable happenings in the late thirties and early forties was the manner in which the lay people gave of their services, particularly in the matter of trades for keeping up maintenance of the plant and providing improved conditions in buildings and grounds. The annual bazaar was the big money making activity in these years, along with the Mothers' Club hot plate lunch counter at the State Fair.

Names of faithful benefactors that I can recall are men and women like Terry Mulligan, Bill McQuillan, Bill Flaherty, Perry Duhain, Tom and Manogue Gormley, Cy Puliz, Jim Mangam, ~~Bill~~ (Jim) Keating, Tillie Creegan, Bea McQuillan, Mary Johnson, Ida Ryan, Mrs. Belke, Mrs. Dunphy, Mrs. Dupzyk.

Brother Patrick was the Principal and the inspiration for the great effort to keep the school financially and academically afloat during these years of need. Brother Joseph was his right hand man in working with the many generous people who assisted.

With the coming of Brother Cyril as Principal in 1939, the great support that was generated in Brother Patrick's time blossomed into fine organizations as the Patrons' Club and eventually the La Salle Club. The Patron's Club consisted mostly of mothers of students and of alumni. The La Salle Club was a group of men in Sacramento who were interested in supporting the athletic program at the school. It continues to this day to be the chief contributor to the sports department at Christian Brothers High School.

Brother Cyril provided the opportunity for students interested in the performing arts with his annual Minstrel Show. He also introduced a woodcraft course for students interested in the trade skills, and began the Physical Education program with John Giannoni.

I left Sacramento in 1943 and returned in 1948 as Principal. During my administration the Guidance Department, under Brother Gilbert, became more functional as part of the school offerings. Catholic Action was a very effective group, with organized ~~group~~ cells of YCS in all class levels, as well as an interschool group composed of girls from the two Catholic high schools and the boys of CBS. The Interschool Council was organized to coordinate social activities among the three Catholic schools. The Administrators of the three schools also met regularly to coordinate academic, religious as well as social activities. The climax, in my administration at CBB, was in 1952 when we had an interschool cultural festival at the Eagle Theatre, featuring a three act play, choral group and an art and crafts display. There were also several editions of an interschool publication. Mr. Walt DeFaria was the moderator for these activities in 1952.

Additions to the campus included two temporary classrooms to accommodate a growing enrollment and the building of the cafetorium. The locker rooms under the gym were expanded; new offices were provided.

As in most schools operated by the Brothers, the relationship between the boys and the Brothers were friendly and informal. Much counseling took place on the ball fields, after handball games, standing around the dance floor, chatting during noon hour on campus. More than most schools that I am acquainted with, however, the students spent a great deal of their free time at school or with school activities. Students, in large numbers, stayed after school to play, to participate in sports, to help out in activities, or just to talk.

Rapparb was good between the Brothers and the lay people on the faculty. This was evidenced not only in the faculty meetings but in the many socials that were shared.

Curriculum development was not subject to the continual turnover that has been the case in the last twenty years. The academic program was basic and almost absolute, but allowances for a business course for those not preparing for college. However, we did experiment with a Social Living course in view of preparing students for more practical aspects of living in society. There were other attempts at introducing fine arts into the program but, the tight schedule of requirements under the college preparatory curriculum ~~that~~ few students could take advantage of the offerings.