

CHRISTIAN BROTHERS CONNECTION

Brotherly Love

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dedication to CB,
Ron Limeberger
calls it a career
— and then some
page 4



After 42 years of dedication to CB, Ron Limeberger calls it a career — and then some

Principal Tom Rutten on Ron Limeberger:
“He’s a huge part of this institution. He’s a classic...When you think in terms of what people remember who’ve graduated from here over the last 40 years, one of the things they’re going to connect to is Ron Limeberger.”



PHOTO CREDIT: THOMAS BASS

Athletic Director Greg Meegan on Ron Limeberger: “To say that (he) has made a significant contribution to CB athletics is like saying that Abe Lincoln was once President of the United States. Ron Limeberger *is* CB athletics. For 42 years, anyone who has been privileged to play in, coach in or just watch a CB athletic contest has been influenced by Ron Limeberger. Perhaps the greatest thing any of us can say about him is that we cannot yet conceive of how we are going to fill the void when he finally retires.”

Now, Ron Limeberger on Ron Limeberger: “I’ve enjoyed my career at Brothers. I wanted to give back what the Brothers gave to me, and I think I’ve done a pretty fair job.”

A pretty fair job indeed. Since the day in 1958 when Brother Pius hired the newly minted graduate of Sacramento State College -- and before that, Christian Brothers at 21st and Broadway - Limeberger has been giving the school his all, in the classroom,

on the athletic field and with the larger CB community.

Limeberger will have completed 42 years with Christian Brothers when he retires at the end of this school year. It’s a career that has included long stints as athletic director, 31 years as a baseball coach, 11 years as a basketball coach, countless hours as a P.E. teacher -- and so many years teaching driver’s education and training that, he says, “Everybody keeps saying I taught half the guys out there” on Sacramento’s roads.

That ought to be enough for any one teacher, even for a guy whom Meegan calls “a throwback to the days when the worth of a person was measured by three things: loyalty, commitment and sacrifice.” But as Meegan points out, we’ve hardly seen the last of Limeberger: “The one thing that makes his retirement tolerable is that he will remain involved with the school through his involvement in the LaSalle Club” and through his informal role as “athletic mentor” to Meegan’s department.

Limeberger is the La Salle Club’s

treasurer and, Meegan says, “its spiritual guide.” Through the club, Rutten says, Limeberger is “a tremendous connection for a lot of people to this institution. ...I can’t imagine he’s going to go away -- and I mean that in a good sense.”

For his part, Limeberger says he plans to keep serving the school he loves by teaching -- “I’ll substitute if I have to” -- and working with the LaSalle Club “as long as the LaSalle Club is going to continue at Brothers.” Beyond that, “I’m just going to relax and take it easy,” and he’s looking forward to traveling with his wife, Joan, and not having to answer to the school bell.

In his final year on the staff, Rutten says, Limeberger is “teaching (P.E. and driver’s ed) and serving as a mentor” to the Athletic Department. “That’s where the connections and the memories he has of so many things pay off. He’s a walking encyclopedia of Christian Brothers athletics -- who you work with, who you talk to, who’s going to be there to

Continued on page 9

Limeberger Article

Continued from page 4

support the school in athletics. He's a very valuable resource."

"Both as a coach and the current athletic director, my job has been made infinitely easier because of Ron's unselfish help," says Meegan. "He is always there for me, as he is for everyone associated with CB athletics."

"I heard someone once say that Ron knows where all the bodies are buried at CB. Well, he not only knows where they are buried, but he taught them all when they were students!"

The first chapter of Encyclopedia Limeberger was written a half-century ago when he attended grammar school run by the Christian Brothers. He switched to Immaculate Conception to finish his elementary years, then returned to CB for high school.

After graduating from Sac State and taking the CB teaching job in September 1958, Limeberger soon became athletic director. When the Bishop Armstrong campus opened in 1962, he moved there and served as athletic director at Bishop Armstrong and CB until 1989. He also coached basketball and baseball during those years.

His baseball coaching career ended on a memorable note in 1989 with a championship-winning team that included Andy Fox, who signed with the New York Yankees and is now a utility outfielder for the Arizona Diamondbacks, and Bo Dodson, who signed with the Milwaukee Brewers and now manages the Solano (formerly Sacramento) Steelheads in Vacaville. Limeberger was named baseball coach of the year on The Sacramento Bee's All-Metro League team.

"I said, that's a good time to go out," says Limeberger. "Thirty-one years coaching baseball -- that's an accomplishment, isn't it? We had a lot of fun. I really enjoyed it."

Recalling the years when CB's baseball team had to use William Land Park because the school lacked ballfields -- "I remember plowing those fields out there (at the current campus) and getting them all ready for diamonds" -- Limeberger points

proudly to the growth of CB athletics.

"People don't realize that we have about 900 kids (in the student body), and I'll bet there are a total of almost 300 playing sports. That's quite an athletic program that people have put together, and I think we do a good job, we do an 'above' job."

He's also proud of the home-front support he received during his long years of coaching from his wife, Joan, daughter Jill, '79 Manogue graduate, and sons, Mike and Mark, both '76 CB graduates. "Joan was always behind me. A coach is gone all the time, and she was always there at the games, as much as she could be with the kids. Pretty soon, the kids were my ball boys. Mike was my scorekeeper for baseball, and Joanie made every game out there -- so you can imagine, there's 700 or 800 baseball games she's been to, and probably just as many basketball. It's very rewarding that my family has always stuck behind me."

From his earliest years in CB athletics, Limeberger has worked tirelessly with the larger school family, including alumni and support groups like the LaSalle Club, and he's legendary for maintaining relationships -- and knowing whom to call when outside help is needed.

"The community is a very important part of the school," he says. "I can still call people who will help me when I'm stuck. My dad told me, 'Always keep some irons in the fire for when you need them.'"

"His connection to the LaSalle Club, his connection to alumni -- he's had such a significant impact on a lot of people," says Rutten. "He's a tremendous connection for a lot of people to this institution."

"For any one institution to be blessed with the loyal service of a man like Ron Limeberger is truly something special," Meegan agrees. "But for that

blessing to continue through three generations of CB Falcons is unheard of. As a teacher, coach, mentor and

friend, Ron Limeberger is unmatched."

For all the games, for all the alumni dinners, the core of Limeberger's career remains his years in the classroom. "A good teacher is a good coach, a good coach is a good teacher," he says, summing up his philosophy.

"Once you learn to teach, it just sort of flows with you. Each kid is individual -- I figured up the other day I had about 16,000 students over the last 42 years. It's not only the ones you've touched but the ones who've touched you. ...

"When a student comes back later in life and says, 'Hey, thanks,' then I've done my job. ... I guess a teacher likes to make friends -- you don't want to make enemies -- but you want to get a certain thing done in a certain way so that you teach the kids what the world out there is going to be like. It's not all peaches and cream, as they say.

"You've got to push some kids a little more than others, and you've got to lead them differently. That's the difference between a good teacher and a mediocre one -- you know how much you can push, then you lay off, then you come on to them again. The next day, you push a little more. ... If a kid doesn't want to do it, he's not going to do it. But if you can show a kid that he can do it, and then he does it, that's great."

That old-fashioned directness is the Limeberger touch. "He never wavers in his support when you are in the right, and he never shrinks from his duty to admonish when you are in the wrong," says Meegan. "What you see is what you get with Ron Limeberger. He only has one face,

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Continued on page 15

Class Notes

Continued from page 9

tees and start getting ready. We need your help and ideas. Please give me or Dee Janey a call at (916) 684-9050 or e-mail djaney@prodigy.net.

1963. Doesn't directing dance and opera productions sound interesting? This is exactly what Victor Melnikoff is doing these days. In 1988 he left his law practice to become the president, producer and director-general of Le Gala des Etoiles (The Gala of Stars), which is the world's largest touring production of international dance stars, founded in 1986 by Victor. They tour the world (much like the Grand Prix and professional tennis tours) and hopefully will be staging several productions in the Bay Area in 2001.

Victor was reading the February issue of the Connection and the 1999 alumni directory and it conjured up some fine memories for him. He got nostalgic about his few years in Sacramento. Victor returned to Montreal, Canada, enrolled at McGill University, received a BA (1967) and law degree in 1970. He specialized in entertainment law, performing arts, festivals, film and television. He met his wife, Nathalie, in 1982 when she came from France to dance as a guest artist with the Montreal Ballet. They have a son, Mikhael, who is now 8. If you are interested in his website the address is www.galadesetoiles.com.

Lawrence Chin started teaching accounting courses for Laney College, a two-year community college in Oakland, in January. He said that the chair of the Business Department is a graduate of Saint Mary's College and Saint Mary's High School in Berkeley. Being a former Christian Brothers' student helped him in the process of being hired, to say nothing of the fact that he is a CPA and has an MBA. Larry has retired from the Marine Corps with over 33 years of service.

1965. It is always important to know that your work is appreciated.



STUDENT COUNCIL

Front row: Coleman, Limeberger, Berry, Felion, Livingstone. Second row: Wilson, Fernandez, Lagomarisno, Estacio. Third row: Cook, Colbert, Higgins, Jesmer, Kirrene, Kirk, Zanze, and Alves.

Limeberger Article

Continued from page 9

and it is always to the front. He is brutally honest, courageous under fire and the most loved teacher and coach I have ever known."

"The kids always think I'm so harsh," Limeberger says. "I'm a piece of cake when you come right down to it. I may bellow off, but I don't bellow off in such a way that I stay off. You can't lose your cool. I know I'm a good teacher because I stay one step ahead of the students all the time -- you have to. ... Kids will tend to respect you as much as you respect them. ... Kids are smarter than you think they are, and they know when you're telling the truth."

Complementing that teaching philosophy has been Limeberger's lifelong pride in Christian Brothers. "There's an old saying, 'Once a Brothers boy, always a Brothers boy.' You can always tell them apart. ... There's nothing wrong with the public schools -- they do an excellent job -- but I think we do just a little better job. There's that special attention that each individual teacher gives each individual kid. We're very sincere, and I think the kids know it.

"It's a good school. I want it to continue to be a good school, and I think I helped make it a good school

as just a little part of the whole mechanism. The Brothers started it, then the laymen came along, and now the laymen have more of it. I remember when there were 26 brothers on the staff and only five or six of us. That's changed, but the school hasn't changed -- that's the big thing. If we all believe in the same thing, then the school won't change."

Limeberger's dedication is the moral of Meegan's favorite story about him, about the time last year when Limeberger had gallbladder surgery. "I called him on the phone after football practice to see how he was doing, and through a heavily medicated fog (he was just out of recovery and in his hospital room), he wanted to know if I needed anything.

"Well, I continued to try to tell him I was just calling to see how he was doing, and he insisted that he could get out of bed and be at school within half an hour to help us. I assured him that all was OK at CB, but he wasn't buying it. It took some strong negotiations with his wife and son to convince him to stay in bed.

"You see, even then he knew what no one of us is willing to admit. It is going to be very difficult to get along without Coach Limeberger." ♦

I received a complimentary note from Paul Groza, who commented on how nice it is to get good news once in a while. I saw a fellow classmate of Paul's, Chris Brown, at the alumni dinner, who was asking about my brother, Frank

Cornacchioli, and I didn't have the opportunity to ask him what he has been doing. So I have an assignment for the both of you: please e-mail me, call, whatever, and give me the latest scoop. ♦