

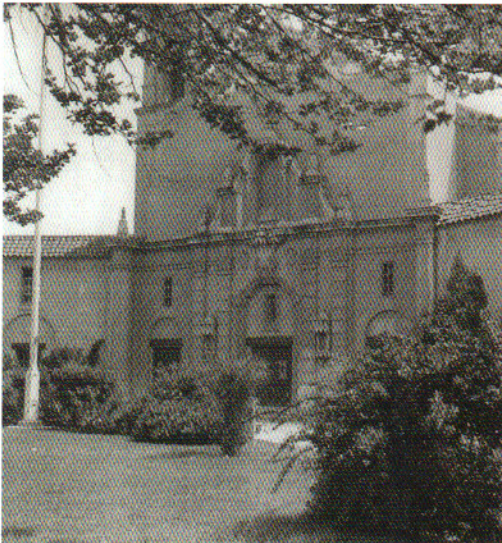
## Alumni Life

# Joseph Lopes '26 Recalls the Early, Early Years

By Kenny Kirrene '78



Joseph Lopes '26 reconnects with Christian Brothers High School



Lopes attended the 21st and Broadway school

THE STORIES OF CHRISTIAN BROTHERS are the stories of Sacramento... Despite the changes in name and location the heritage and mission of the brothers continues in the connections made throughout the past 128 years of its presence here in Sacramento. I drove out to Wilton this past August, to "the house on the hill," where resided Joseph Lopes, a graduate of the Golden Jubilee (1876-1926) of the Christian Brothers in Sacramento. Little has changed in the past eighty years he has farmed and ranched this area. Flooding has caused much devastation, significantly when the Cosumnes has left its banks, yet Mr. Lopes believes it is this flooding that has made his "bottomland" so rich, so fertile, so fecund. Mr. Lopes relationship with the land began in the second grade, when his father moved the family from Placerville, as the only dairyman, to out along the "old" Pocket Road, a collection of farms and farmers, of mostly Japanese and Portuguese decent. Specifically, Joseph's family comes from Pico, an island of the Azores, home to many of our current crew at CB who work hard and smile often. From the farm of Mr. Lopes and his fellow Portuguese have grown neighborhoods and families who have created their own memories of Sacramento. Back in Wilton, Mr. Lopes and I sat out back on the patio from where we had a view of oaks and fields, the levee guiding the Cosumnes about a quarter of a mile away from the rise of his backyard.

Mr. Lopes has a good memory and recalled easily his parent's choice of sending him to Christian Brothers because it was a "Catholic school and had a good reputation." At the time in 1922, I-5 did not exist and so Joseph had to ride his bike in from the "Pocket" to the school located at that time at 12th and K. The ride was often long and uneventful, except on those occasions when he availed himself of the "opportunity" to grab onto the back of one of the haul trucks that came in from the old brickyard, delivering its load of bricks to the many new building sites around town. Much of the clay for these bricks came from what is now called "Greenhaven Lake." Joe's salient memories of the school at 12th and K, that it was hot, in poor shape, and needed much repair, contrasts with the memories of those who knew a different school, regarded in 1876 as "the finest building in the city." Joe passed only one year at this site before he and his classmates moved to a temporary site, the East Sacramento Public School building at 39th and J Streets, near what is now Sacred Heart

## *“We were all born with a conscience, but the Brothers showed us how to use it.”*

Church. This school site was also old and hot, not however that the heat was too much for him as he spent many hours in the blazing Sacramento sun working his family's land. Yet, as a junior in the fall of 1924, he did welcome the new rooms and facilities of the campus on 21st and Broadway, in that they were “modern and closer to his home.” According to Joe, the academic courses, though set and predetermined, were challenging and interesting: English, science, math, Spanish, and religion occupied much of his time. As a result of the rigors of study, and honoring his commitment to his family's farm, he did not have too much time for sports or the beauties who attended St. Joseph's Academy. During Joe's second year at this location, the Christian Brothers and Sacramento communities celebrated Joe's senior year as the Golden Jubilee of the Christian Brothers in Sacramento. Fifty years later, during my sophomore year at the school's current location, Joe would celebrate his own Golden Jubilee as an alum of the school which happened to also be the school's centennial here in Sacramento. Talk about connections! After being graduated in 1926, Mr. Lopes stayed true to his family's ties to the land and returned to farming and ranching, occupations he continued for almost the next eighty years.

Connecting with the heritage of the Christian Brothers here in Sacramento, Joe has his memories of the Brothers and their associations with their students. He remembers their “love” and “concern” for him, the “high academic expectations” they set, and their reputation for taking those kids who found it difficult to follow the rules of their parents or teachers. As with many of us, Joe remembers some of these “students” and particular “methods” the Brothers had for correcting behavior they deemed inappropriate. In particular, he remembers the time when one of the Brothers threw a recalcitrant student “out the window and onto the sidewalk below them.” Eyes sparkling, Joe chuckled, “it was a good thing for both student and Brother that the window through which the student was tossed existed on the first floor of the building and not the second! Otherwise, I think both would have been in trouble!” He also recalls the time when another recalcitrant youngster, chased by an enthusiastic and “warm-blooded” younger brother, dashed out the open classroom door, leaped into his roadster parked nearby, and sped away from the young brother who was in hot pursuit. Joe never saw the student again. As it

should be, methods of instruction and discipline have changed, but as a current teacher at Christian Brothers, I must say part of me envies these Brothers who had the artistic freedom to create their own methods of discipline! However, that which sticks most with Joe are not the long bike rides to school, the different campuses he attended, the antics of students or the Brother's methods in correcting them, but the moral behavior inculcated in him during his four years at CB. As he states, “We were all born with a conscience, but the Brothers showed us how to use it.” I would agree with him on this.

I drove away from Joe and “the house on the hill” feeling connected to Christian Brothers and to Sacramento. True, much has changed since his connection with CB began in 1922. Sacramento has ties to agriculture but is really no longer a farming town. The original school site at 12th and K is now mostly known as “the old Weinstocks building.” The brickyard trucks have ceased to operate and kids don't really ride their bikes to school anymore. The former East Sacramento Public School has moved to 35th and M and now is known as David Lubin Elementary. And, that “modern” school at 21st and Broadway from which Joe graduated, has been gone for almost half a century. Yet, the melancholy of things past or the regret of things changed did not visit me. Rather the satisfaction and comfort of a connection to this past was my feeling; a connection for Mr. Joseph Lopes that reaches back almost eighty years ... A connection for Sacramento that reaches back more than 128 years. ■

