

LET US REMEMBER ...

WE ARE IN THE HOLY PRESENCE OF GOD



LET US REMEMBER

A HISTORY OF
CHRISTIAN BROTHERS HIGH SCHOOL
SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

BILL ILIFF
CLASS OF 1976

BOOK REFERENCE

Introduction

Chapter 1 - Early Days

Chapter 2 - A Question of Curriculum

Chapter 3 - The Founder

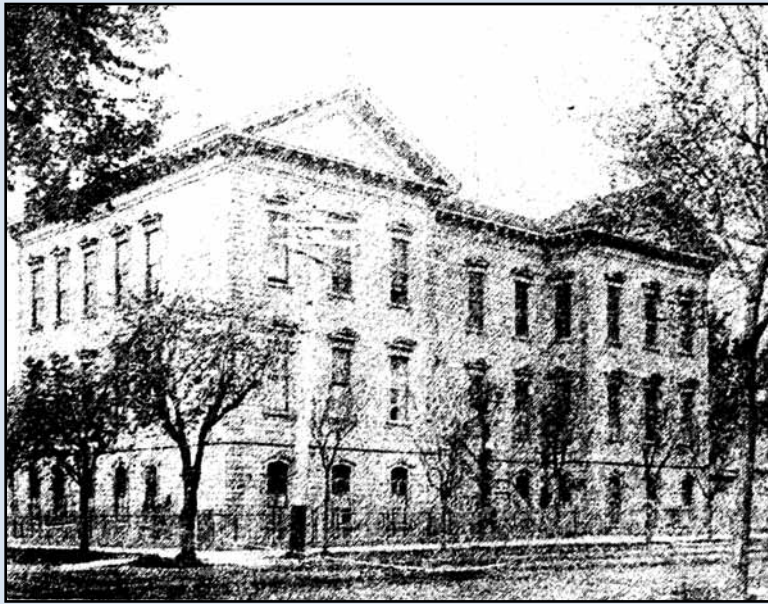
Chapter 4 - From Old to New Again

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FIRST EDITION 2010



*This book was written to honor all of the
dedicated teachers and staff who have so warmly
welcomed the students into their lives
with wisdom and enthusiasm.*

FROM OLD TO NEW AGAIN

1900 – 1927

With the untimely passing of Brother Ambrose while sailing for France in 1898, the very capable Brother Vellesian Mallon assumed the position of Principal-Director and helped shepherd Christian Brothers College into the new century. Always aware of the needs of the physical school as well as its students, Brother Vellesian sought to expand the size of the K Street school building. Despite being called to St. Mary's in 1900 (then in Oakland at the time), he had laid the groundwork for a campaign to fund the proposed project. With the departure of Brother Vellesian, Brother Ulfian John took on the duty of overseeing local canvassing. Many prayers were answered when Mrs. Michael Bethel stepped forward with a donation of \$5,000, which allowed the Christian Brothers to add a wing to the existing structure and renovate the old chapel.

During this time, the school consisted of four departments: primary, grammar, high school, and a commercial college. Remember that a ban existed on teaching Latin and Greek. This did not, however, stop the Brothers from offering a robust, well-rounded education with course offerings in all of the traditional solid core subjects (English, Math, History, Science) as well as the opportunity for students to participate in choral groups, instrumental bands (classical or concert), drama, and ample exposure to journalism.



Junior Choir, Christian Brothers College

Beyond that, not a lot of annual records are to be found from the turn of the century to the period just before the relocation of the school in the 1920's. We do, however, have some excellent first person accounts chronicling the daily life of a student and somewhat more photographs, both school produced and those taken by individuals. From these images, much of the era is elegantly brought to life for future generations.

FOND MEMORIES 1907-1918

By Peter E. Mitchell, Class of 1918

Twelve years with the Christian Brothers in the old, wooden, three-storied Georgian-style schoolhouse at Twelfth and K Streets. Tall elm trees and a high boarded fence framing it in....A boldly affirmative sign out front, "Christian Brothers College," hinting at high quality education...Across K Street, behind the Cathedral, the stately, old house of Bishop Grace and the Cathedral clergy...Opposite that, cater-cornered from the school, the German Lutheran Church, a neighbor we Irish Catholics weren't quite sure of...



Readin', ritin', and 'rithmetic to the tune of an ever evident but seldom used hickory stick... Spelling by rote, circles and spirals of Palmer Method penmanship, rapid calculation ticked off mentally while marking answers on a blackboard, English grammar structured and strict, and somewhere toward high school, a breakthrough to something called rhetoric... Meat and potatoes of the educated young man of grammar school age...

Catechism, preceded by three decades of the rosary, began every school day. Baltimore No. 1 and Benzinger's Bible History, "God made the world." "God made us to know, love, and serve Him so that we might be everlastingly happy with Him." Our education was built on these basic truths as on rock...

Neatness counted, too. Shoes shined, hair combed, and a necktie were required for a young gentleman's appearance...Granted that after a day on the dirt (no lawn or paving, playfield the size of perhaps three city lots) most young gentlemen went home a bit disheveled...

The Christian Brothers College of 1907-1918 did not really consist of the aging, cramped building, however, nor even of the curriculum. It came alive in the dedicated, humble, and holy men who wore the loose black robe and white winged collar, the Christian Brothers of De La Salle. Their forthright, honest goodness etched on my memory. Students of that period certainly owe them a lot of gratitude. There were no formal lessons of "Charity does not consist alone in giving alms," or "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." You met these values alive in real men...

There was Brother Ambrose, black curly hair, teaching us first graders (his first assignment, I learned years later). Looking back, he was probably young enough to have been our older brother. We loved him like one...

Brother Hugh taught us third and fourth graders how to play hardball in the old concrete open court, a great place to wear out pairs of precious "school shoes" long before their time...

Brother Udolric bore a strange name, but he was a kindly, fatherly confidant to be trusted by youngsters with any problem. His particular responsibility concerned the welfare of “the boarders”, kids from out of town who lived in. He was also charged with maintenance of the sagging buildings. The cross of Brother Udolric’s life: constant ill repair of sanitary facilities in the “out house” across the yard near the alley, intended mainly to accommodate the day crowd... Brother Florines, small of stature, a body too small for his great heart, I remember as a man of endless generosity.

Later, when I went on to St. Mary’s College in Oakland after high school, he arranged for me to have an extra blanket for my bed there. Big deal? Yes, for a young fellow away from home amongst strangers for the first time...

I remember Brother Jasper as a thin, ascetic man who was the disciplinarian, but wholly fair, with an evident desire to help “his boys”. He provided me with a guidepost for life: “Once a Brothers’ Boy, always a Brothers’ Boy”. He appealed to our loyalty...

During the high school sophomore year, students had to make a choice in the direction of their education. On the one hand, they might choose to pursue the “commercial course” (bookkeeping, typing, shorthand, business methods, etc.) and thus prepare themselves upon graduation for occupation in the business world. Incidentally, employers got on a waiting list in those days for the opportunity to employ the much sought after Brothers’ boys. On the other hand, those who showed desire and aptitude to go to college followed the “college course” (science, further mathematics, languages and more “academic” subjects)...

Two unsung geniuses presided over these twin avenues to adult responsibility. Brother Albertian, whose wit was dryer than sand and who often paced the outdoor balcony in silent thought, presided over the aspirants to college. His scholarly ways deserved the respect always accorded him. His counterpart in the commercial department was the lovable, genial Brother Euphrasius, painfully nearsighted, somewhat fidgety, who found escape from the routines of journals and ledgers as the drama instructor. He was forever putting on great plays and spectacular productions. Brother Euphrasius held rehearsals in the basement of Cathedral Hall across K Street, but also during regular class periods on any subject while the other fellows not immediately involved in the great drama worked on class assignments. Often, too, the public performance required nothing less than the accommodation of the Clunie Theatre or the Grand, the only two playhouses in town. He followed a particular strategy: have every student available appear on the stage at some time during the performance—lots of extras and mob scenes. That way, all the relatives and friends purchased tickets and a full house was assured to help the slim finances of the school...

The Sanctuary Society of altar boys was synonymous with Brother Edwin. He drilled acolytes to fine perfection and their participation, twenty or thirty at a time, added no small part to the solemnity of Pontifical High Mass on great feasts at the Cathedral. Serving Daily Mass at the six o’clock early riser was the acid test of fidelity. The pinnacle of achievement was to qualify as a Bishop’s Server. Triumph came for all on the day of the Altar Boys Picnic- a trip via inter-urban electric train to the Cosumnes River or the banquet for the kids who had stuck out the summer schedule. Brother Edwin held it all together with that genial spirit which lay behind his attention getting “Hi, there!”

Brother Edmund managed three disconnected areas in our lives. He was the prefect of the play yard, which sometimes meant monitoring a fist fight by transferring the young combatants to what served as a gym and getting them into a thick set of boxing gloves to work out frustrations with a referee. Secondly, he was the unchallenged master of Palmer Method penmanship. Top priority, however, went to the baseball team, the Christian Brothers Red Sox, which achieved local fame and sent a few lads on to the professionals...

(Peter Mitchell, class of 1918, later taught and coached at Christian Brothers. His sister, known to all as Sr. Peter, was a Principal at Bishop Armstrong High School from 1962-1964)

The year 1918 was celebrated as the fiftieth anniversary of the passage of the Brothers to California. The Bishop of Sacramento, Thomas Grace, wrote appreciatively:



I cannot write in terms too lofty of the Christian Brothers and the good they have done and are doing with the young of our country. The good they do by the excellent education they impart is not confined to the youth themselves but leavens the whole community and contributes in the most effective manner to uphold order, patriotism, and virtue. Generations of young men now in responsible positions all over the land, and illustrating in their lives the grandeur of Christian principles, may call their teachers... The Christian Brothers...blessed, for them they owe their success.

+Thomas Grace, Bishop of Sacramento, June 4, 1918



Photograph of the school circa 1910 in an advertisement for potential new students.

The educational environment during the era of 1900-1920 was still not favorable to the great majority of American children. Only eight states, California not being one of them, had at least 90% school attendance for their children between the ages of 6 to 14. Over one-half million children under the age of fifteen worked in factories, shops, or similar businesses. School attendance was not an option for these children. Thankfully, the decade beginning in 1910 saw educational reforms beginning to take hold as Americans started to realize the interrelationship between educational progress (with an emphasis on scholastics) and personal as well as economic development. As such, the training of teachers became more focused and their programs strengthened. In the context of the era, the children who had the opportunity to attend a Christian Brothers school with the breadth of subjects were indeed very fortunate.



K Street, 1910.



Commercial Class, 1918, Christian Brothers College



The dismantling of the original Christian Brothers College, 1923.

With business development moving more centrally into town over time from the previous western hub (the area now known as Old Sacramento) and basically surrounding the school, the land at 12th and K streets where Christian Brothers College sat was increasingly more valuable to potential merchants and other types of commerce.

A confluence of events led to the Christian Brothers deciding to re-locate. Bishop Grace of the Sacramento Diocese had offered to donate a plot of land at the corner of 21st and Y (later called Broadway) Streets. At the same time, Christian Brothers College alumnus John Clecak was able to broker a deal to sell the existing school property to Weinstock, Lubin, Co. for \$210,000 in June 1923. Within two weeks after the transaction was complete, the old school building was torn down so a department store could be constructed on the land (which did occur with an additional cost to the businessmen of \$850,000).

As the decade was coming to a conclusion, the condition of the Christian Brothers College building was becoming increasingly problematic. During his tenure (1919-1922), Principal-Director Brother Vivian had the wood building painted and the foundation reinforced where possible. It did no more than somewhat stem the tide. Three separate fires struck the school building in 1919, although none did overwhelming damage before being extinguished.

With the return of Brother Vellesian as principal in 1922, he had made the decision that it was time to knock down the old school and either re-build at the same location or else move to a new site. After careful consideration, the best solution was to re-locate the campus and build anew.

Brother Vellesian



*Brother Vellesian,
Principal of the
Christian Brothers
College 1899-1900
and 1922-1925*



Looking up J Street, 1900

Just that quickly, the old school was gone. With only a few months before the start of the Fall 1923 school year, a temporary school was needed for the students as well as a place to live for the Brothers and the boarders. As luck would have it, an old Sacramento Public School building was vacant at the corner of 39th and J Streets (the site where Sacred Heart Church was later to be built) and available for use. As for living quarters, the Brothers and boarders were housed in cottages in the vicinity of 20th and T Streets with two buses employed daily to transport the faculty and students to the temporary school site.



Temporary home of Christian Brothers College on 39th and J Streets while Christian Brothers School was being built, 1923.

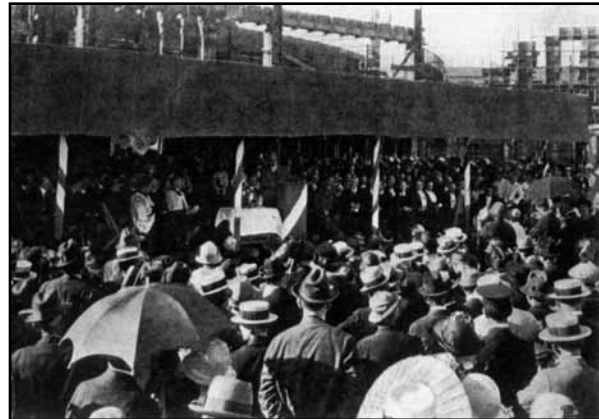


Weinstock Lubin Department Store, built at 12th & K Streets where Christian Brothers College originally stood.

Meanwhile, under the direction of builder and contractor W.C. Keating and his foreman Al Wonderly, plans were being made to construct a new school. Keating also had the building of St. Francis Grammar School and Mercy Hospital in his portfolio of completed projects. Ground was broken February 11, 1924. A cornerstone ceremony was celebrated May 18 with California Supreme Court Associate Justice and 1881 alumnus Thomas Lennon giving the keynote address to the excited and hopeful well-wishers. By September 15, 1924, the classrooms were sufficiently completed to welcome students to their new school. As in 1876, there were no idle hands as construction took only seven months.



*Honorable Judge
Thomas J. Lennon (Class
of 1881) addressing the
crowd at the cornerstone
laying, 1924*



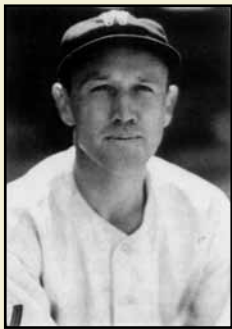
In anticipation of needing to borrow money to complete other construction projects after the school was opened, the Christian Brothers filed Articles of Incorporation with the state. In so doing, the institution was now to be called Christian Brothers School (CBS), a change it was felt more in keeping with the elementary through high school education it offered. In effect, the California Public School system had now “caught up” with the levels of academic course work given at Christian Brothers and had developed a suitable community (or junior) college system so the name change was a reflection of that process. Also, as church parishes had not yet really started their own elementary schools for the most part, Christian Brothers had continued to offer classes for the younger grades. It was not until the 1950’s that the elementary school system was developed sufficiently that the Brothers had focused their efforts entirely on the high school grades.



School dedication 21st & Broadway, May 18, 1924.

THE FIRST TWO MAJOR LEAGUE BALLPLAYERS FROM CHRISTIAN BROTHERS COLLEGE

EARL MCNEELY



George Earl McNeely was one of many boys from Irish immigrant families attending Christian Brothers College in the era before World War I. Just like literally millions of American boys, McNeely had a dream of being a professional baseball player.

McNeely, however, took an unlikely path to big league stardom, serving in the Army during the war in an engineering unit before coming home to Sacramento and finding work as a surveyor with the state highway department and playing Winter League ball for a team sponsored by a clothing merchant. Showing enough promise in the semi-pro circuit, Earl eventually won a roster spot with the Sacramento Senators of the Pacific Coast League off a tryout in 1922.

After a relatively brief time with the Sacramento club (by professional baseball standards), McNeely was sold to the Washington Senators of the American League for the princely sum of \$50,000 late in the 1924 season. Described by *The Sporting News* as, “the always laughing and happy boy from California,” McNeely pinch hit for the Washington ballclub upon his arrival before seeing more action, ending the regular season with a robust .330 batting average for the AL pennant winners.

Earl appeared in all seven games in the 1924 World Series against the vaunted New York Giants. It is his last at-bat that will live forever in baseball history. With the score tied in the bottom of the 12th inning of the deciding 7th game, McNeely bounced a routine groundball to 3rd baseman Freddie Lindstrom. However, fate intervened as the ball hit a rock and bounded high over the outstretched fielder, scoring Muddy Ruel from second base and setting off a wild celebration that sportswriter Shirley Povich wrote, “could be heard all the way to the Washington Monument.” The Senators’ faithful were witnessing the only World Series title in the teams’ history.

McNeely returned to Sacramento after a solid eight year major league career to play for and manage the Sacramento Coast League club in the early 1930’s. While bank records are incomplete, McNeely, a savvy and prudent investor during the Great Depression, was probably also an owner of the franchise, as well. Abe Keys of *The San Francisco Bulletin* wrote of McNeely, “He plays the game for all he is worth. He is out there hustling every minute of the game and is not afraid to take chances”.

After his professional baseball days, McNeely was a farmer and cattle rancher in rural Sacramento County.

DUSTER MAILS

Born just outside of San Quentin Prison in 1895, John Walter Mails attended both Christian Brothers College and St. Mary's College before riding an overpowering fastball to the National League Brooklyn Robins at the young age of twenty in 1915.

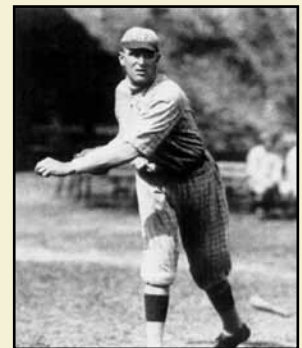
As brash and loquacious as McNeely was congenial, Duster was a natural showman on and off the ballfield. Some would actually call him a show-off. No matter. Mails had mastered the not so subtle art of marketing and self-promotion. "I figure that folks come to the ballpark for enjoyment," he would say. "It was my job to give it to them."

After a "cup of coffee" in Brooklyn, Duster became an established star in the west coast version of the major leagues, The Pacific Coast League (there were no big league teams west of the Mississippi River until 1958). Returning to the real major leagues in 1920, Mails was a big contributor to the Cleveland Indians who won the World Series that year.

After another solid campaign in 1921 for Cleveland, the Duster bounced back and forth between the big leagues and the Coast League until settling on the west coast for a long, productive career as one of the minor leagues' most recognizable stars up to his retirement in 1936.

Asked to explain his nickname, "Duster" was an appellation given early on in his career. Mails offered this: "I didn't deliberately try to dust the batters off. I simply couldn't make the ball go where I wanted it to go. Any batter who faced me did so at his own risk. But I was wild, not from choice, but because I couldn't help myself."

Mails put his speaking talents to good use after his playing days, working in the San Francisco Giants public relations department.



As of 2010, there has been nine Christian Brothers alums who have reached the Major Leagues:

Duster Mails, Earl McNeely, Jimmy O'Connell, Joe Marty, Charley Schanz,

Joe Kirrene, Wally Westlake, John McNamara, and Andy Fox.



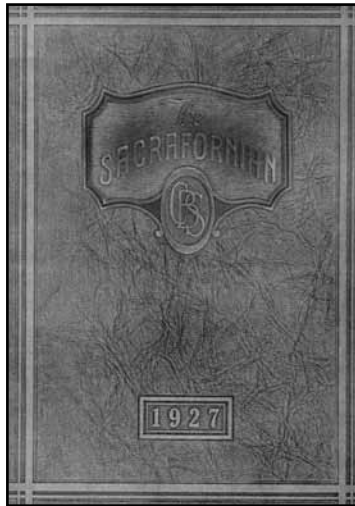
The Christian Brothers School of Sacramento, 1926. The next year a gymnasium was added as a second floor.

The new school building was a beautiful, elongated mission style edifice with the administration department and some classrooms on the first floor and science laboratories occupying most of the second story. A handsome bell tower was in the middle of the structure with the Brothers and boarders' living quarters on the other side of the building. A semi-circular drive in front of the school had access to both 21st and Y Streets. A fueling station sat on the corner at 21st and Y, something the school would have preferred to remove, but the rent paid by the business was a steady source of income for the often precariously financed school.

A surprising source of construction funding came from the local Sacramento business community, unaffiliated to the school. With the ending of hostilities after the Great War (WWI), America was changing and the Roaring Twenties were being ushered in. Economic optimism and productivity was on the decided upswing. It was not only good business to get involved in civic projects, it was the patriotic thing to do, as well. Christian Brothers School benefited from that euphoria in the local community. This, from *The Sacraformian*, the Christian Brothers School yearbook, in 1926:

...when a campaign was projected by the businessmen of the city just a year ago for the purpose of raising funds for the furnishing of the new school, the people of Sacramento clearly demonstrated that they were in hearty sympathy with the Brothers by their ready response in supplying the necessary funds. The most pleasant feature of the campaign was the remarkable kindness and generosity manifested by non-Catholics towards the campaign. Of the total amount collected, at least half of it came from non-Catholic or from firms in no way affiliated with religious organizations. These men realize the great benefit the city will derive from a boarding school of this type.

The following year, 1927, a gymnasium was built on the second floor, midway between the classrooms and living quarters. Again, economic assistance came from the business community. *The Sacraformian* had this commentary in the annual yearbook:



A general campaign to secure the necessary funds was originated and launched under the auspices of the professional and business men of Sacramento, and no sooner had this been heralded to the public than hundreds of willing workers volunteered their services to bring the affair to a successful issue. Their magnanimous co-operation was rewarded by securing pledges to the amount of \$60,000 by the time the campaign closed. Not only the general public, but the student body of the school showed their loyalty, aroused their enthusiasm and contributed the handsome amount of more than five thousand dollars to put the quota over the top.

As soon as convenient after the excitement of the campaign had closed, steps were taken to have plans executed for the proposed structure. These having been completed, and all the necessary negotiations gone through, arrangements were made to begin the building. On the 24th of January, 1927, the Right Reverend Bishop Keane presided at the ceremony of the breaking of ground; this was an auspicious day for the students and all concerned. Mr. James Keating, contractor and builder, had been engaged to erect the much talked of gymnasium. Work was immediately begun, and now after a short period of five months, we have a magnificent edifice, adjoining the other handsome building, which completes the plant in its entirety.

The structure is not only a gymnasium, but also a spacious auditorium equipped with every modern facility for the students to develop in the art of public speaking, the production of plays, interclass, and public debates, and other social functions that go to make up a well rounded education.

With the completion of this gymnasium, the plant of the Christian Brothers School is one of the foremost among the educational establishments of Sacramento. To carry out the full design of the architect and builder, it will require considerable more money than has been pledged in the campaign, and it would not be surprising if another appeal were made to the generous public at some future time to secure funds for an ideal equipment.



The just completed school at 21st Street, 1925

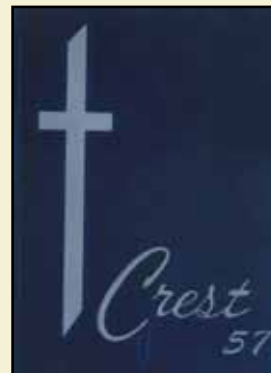
TRADITIONS

In the earliest days of the school on K Street, there were references that Christian Brothers utilized green and white as their primary representative colors. Later, somewhere in the early 1900's, the school colors were blue and white, although the earliest sports team, the baseball "nine", was nicknamed the Red Sox. It was not until the 1950's that the red and blue color scheme was used for uniforms and the like.

Christian Brothers College put out an annual, The College Times, first in 1909, but it was not a yearbook as we now know them. Instead, it was more of a literary journal with the articles covering a wide range of general topics, not just school events. The College Times was published as advertising income permitted, meaning publication followed a more sporadic schedule. The years 1925 through 1929 saw the production of what we would certainly recognize as a traditional yearbook, called The Sacraformian. It was during this era that the school motto was, at the time, "We are now becoming what we hope to be."

The Great Depression set in, of course, shortly thereafter and then the war, which economically prevented the school from publishing a yearbook until the introduction of The Gael in 1947, produced without interruption until the closing of the 21st and Broadway campus in 1964. The Crest was initiated with the opening of Bishop Armstrong in 1957 and continues to this day.

While Christian Brothers students have been asked to look beyond themselves in the service of others literally since the beginnings of the formation of the community in the 17th century, the motto, "Enter to Learn, Leave to Serve" was etched into the newly constructed tower at the front of the school in 2002 and has been a symbolic cornerstone ever since.



EDUCATION PIONEER

With the establishment of a community (two year) college in Sacramento in 1916, many different local lawmakers attempted to initiate the process of funding a four year college in Sacramento as early as the 1920's. All efforts came up short until State Senator Earl Desmond (Christian Brothers College, Class of 1911) was able to cobble together a coalition of senators and assembly members, eventually passing the 1949 Desmond Act which helped establish what was to become Sacramento State College (now California State University, Sacramento), the sixth institution in the California State College system.



Earl Desmond served in the state legislature from 1933 until his untimely passing in 1958. At the time of his death, he was the President Protem of the State Senate.

Beyond his significant contributions to the state's higher educational system, Desmond was well known as the conduit for any necessary political relations between the local Catholic hierarchy and the State Capital.

THE GRIEF OF A PARENT IN 2010?

...Both men and women in any walk of life have to be neat in their general appearance.

An attractive exterior is a nice accomplishment in man or woman and each should be clad as is suitable to his or her position in his respective community, but there is a long step from neatness to foppishness in the matter of personal attire...Some appear to have lost all sense of respect for themselves as well as their parents; this is clearly seen by their present mode of dress, which is far from being decent. And what is far more to be deplored is the painful fact that their mannerisms are much in keeping with the scanty attire they adopt just to be in line with the current cut. Women are naturally beautiful, the very perfection of grace, and they ought to consider that "beauty unadorned, adorns the best"...Being engaged in business or in a profession, it is almost essential that he or she keep themselves exteriorly spick and span...All this can be done without becoming too extravagant beyond control and besides rendering himself foppishly ridiculous. For him as for the fairer sex, character is what counts most in right living...

NO, A CHRISTIAN BROTHERS STUDENT COMMENTARY IN 1927
