

# TO SERVE THEM ALL OF MY DAYS



Michael S. Leach

## The Fire Within

Greek philosopher Plutarch wrote, “The mind is not a vessel that needs filling, but wood that needs igniting . . . and then it motivates one towards originality and instills the desire for truth.”

Michael Leach ignited that fire for thousands of Holy Cross students over his almost four decade tenure at the Lower 9th ward high school.

What is interesting is that he attended high school at Jesuit and one ponders what led a Blue Jay to set up shop in Tiger territory.

“My career at Jesuit was not stellar. My junior and senior years did not go well at all and I lost favor with the place. Clearly it appeared as though I wasn’t a good fit at Carrollton and Banks. Regardless of my lack of success there, I still retain a modicum of respect for the school and for its mission.”

Occasionally he would field a question from his students as to which school was his favorite.

Leach explains, "When the students discovered that I was a Blue Jay and asked which school I liked better, I'd tell them: 'I'm approaching my 40th year at Holy Cross; I spent four years at Jesuit. Where do you think my loyalty lies?' I fell in love with Holy Cross and found a home there."

So what's his perspective on the difference between Holy Cross and Jesuit?

He paraphrased a Dr. Ken Tedesco recollection of a Br. Steven Walsh comment saying, "Schools like Jesuit are about entrance; schools such as Holy Cross are about exit. Clearly they have different missions."

"Jesuit has a tough filtering system. You have to have high grades and strong recommendations," he continues. "By contrast, at Holy Cross we teach those who come to us. We don't go sniffing around for perfumed pedigrees so that we'd project a so-called preferred fragrance. At Holy Cross we teachers understand that education of the whole man – mind, heart, body, and soul – is a process involving layers and levels of self-discovery as captured by Br. Fisher Iwasko in the Holy Cross Man."

### *The Path to Dauphine Street*



After graduating from Jesuit, Leach attended Southeastern Louisiana College (later renamed to SLU). He wasn't sure what career path he would follow. He filled his class schedule with English electives receiving a well-rounded liberal arts education. The English department at Southeastern had a rigorous curriculum and Leach felt that if he could get through that he certainly could be an English teacher. And he wanted that job to be at a Catholic high school.

He sent letters to all the schools that he was interested in – except Jesuit. He said he didn't send his resume to them because he had no real impulse to return there as a teacher. Holy Cross was the first to respond. On a Friday, he met with Br Stephen Titzer and Br. Lawrence Fitch.

"I was asked to come back on the following Monday to interview with Br. Robert Hampton, who was out of town at the time. They seemed to have approved my candidacy and must have thought I was worthy to have a second and third interview," he adds. "My conversation with Br Robert

*As a young English teacher*

went extremely well. Somehow he and I just seemed to click. At its conclusion he hired me offering me a contract.”

At the time, Leach was not certified in education so he taught under a temporary teaching certificate. Attending Loyola University at night and, during the summer, he obtained a teaching certificate from the state of Louisiana. He later pursued and achieved a Master’s degree at Tulane University.

“Br Robert was the epitome of a headmaster for the dozen years I had the pleasure of working under his leadership. I was so lucky to seek out Holy Cross; it was a good fit for me,” Leach remarks. “I may have showed up that first day of class without having a degree in education, but I had the confidence that I could be a good English teacher.”

“It’s a scary thing when you step in front of the classroom and you’ve got 60 eyeballs staring, or sometimes glaring, at you. Each class would have a different personality. I had to shift gears when moving from one period to the next, four or five times a day, every day. It was an incredible challenge and I loved it.”

He compares a teaching career to that of an acting career. He cites Sir Laurence Olivier’s comment on what it takes to be an actor: “The humility to prepare and the self-confidence to bring it off.”

“To me that defines the role of the teacher. To some extent you can stretch that out to most professions. A lot of teachers failed because they didn’t prepare, thinking they were smart enough to wing it. Teaching is like acting: you’re on stage, you have a script, you have an audience.”

### *Jack of All Trades*

During the course of his career he had many assignments other than teaching. Chief among them was the Chair of the English department from the early 70s to 2006.

“There was a note from Br Robert in my mailbox that said, ‘See me. RH’. It gave no indication of what he wanted to talk about. During the course of the conversation, he asked me if I was interested in being the Chair of the English department. It totally surprised me”

The position gave him control over the textbooks that were used. An initial change he made was replacing the then-used textbooks – Transformational Grammar and Structural Linguistics -



*Discussing Beowulf?*



with 'old-school' traditional textbooks that were used until his retirement in 2006. He taught English the way he learned it.

And the old-school approach seemed to work.

Former student Jacques Couret '91 states, "He made me a good grammarian – a skill I use every day as a professional writer and editor. A day doesn't go by that I don't think of him, Br. James McDonnell, Sue Ellen Lyons and others. Holy Cross was foundational in my life."

Staffing the English department also fell under his purview. He would interview candidates and make recommendations to the headmaster.

"When we interviewed prospective teachers, we gave them a breakdown of where we were with language arts and our philosophy. We wanted educators who bought into the Holy Cross philosophy. I tried to set the tone for the department regarding grammar foundation - usage and composition grew out of that. Once you get the bones of language, you could then add the rest of the body."



*At a golf tournament with Mike Heller and Ken Tedesco*

mentorship with Mike."

"He let me have his time when I needed it most. Mainly, he gave me confidence to make my own way. At the same time, I knew he'd always have my back, which is valuable to a new teacher. What an outstanding chairman of the English department. He was such an inspiration to me as a fledgling English teacher."

"We held departmental meetings to make sure that our priorities for each grade level were met. Such unity made us successful. We had some wonderful English teachers that stayed on with us for years."

One of those hires was Cheryl Rogers who says, "When I was interviewed for teaching English, Mike asked if I could introduce a poetry unit to his classes as a sort of observation in addition to my application. I said, 'That will be fine.' When I hung up the phone I told my husband. 'Simple, right? Introducing poetry to freshmen boys—no sweat.'"

"I was part of the second 'wave' of women teachers, just learning how to drive, and I lived in Metairie. I was a wreck. I remember praying to St Jude and taking a tranquilizer. Mike asked if I'd mind lecturing to the rest of his classes. I was invited to join the faculty at the end of the day. And thus began the very best years of my career and my friendship and



Heading the English department was not his only responsibility. Over the years he performed other duties at the school. One of which was being a member of the Governing Board.

“At one time the governing board was composed of just the brothers. Then they added some lay members like Ken Hechler and Richard Crosby and me. We did what we could to help the advancement of the school. We also served on the search committee when a new principal was needed and interviewed various candidates.”

Leach also served on the disciplinary board assisting the disciplinarian offering guidance on some of the most serious offenses. He was also a part time guidance counselor in the late 80s through the early 90s. His role was primarily as an academic counselor helping students devise a study schedule and reviewing with them which universities would be a good fit.

## *Summer School*

Holy Cross had a summer school - summer camp combination that he was involved in for a number of years. It was an enrichment program that conducted outdoor activities during the morning and academics in the afternoon. He also taught for some years in the traditional summer school setting.

“It was always difficult because obviously the students didn’t want to be there. Certainly many students did not have a favorable view of summer school,” he notes. “I tried to make it feel as though it was not so much a punishment, but an opportunity. I felt that I provided a service trying to redirect the students’ attitude so they wouldn’t find themselves in the same situation the following summer.”

On the lighter side, he was faculty advisor of the bowling team for a couple of years. The team won the city championship in its 2nd year under his moderation. He added, with a sly grin, that the team did it without much help from him.

Outside of school hours, he broadened his horizon by moonlighting as a teacher at Delgado. The program he worked with was Veterans Upward Bound. It was aimed at veterans who wanted to knock the academic rust off before taking the ACT test and enroll in college. He also taught English for a program for The American Institute of Bankers, which focused primarily on a curriculum of finance and accounting.



*The Tiger King*

## *The Yellow Brick Road*

Over the course of his career, he had many fond memories, and he acknowledged that it would be difficult for him to narrow the highlights down to a handful.

One of the biggest surprises in his career was when he was asked to give the commencement address to the Class of '83. Up until that time, the speech was usually given by a politician, a public figure, or a donor. He felt a lot of pressure but wasn't afraid, because he knew he could do it.



*Wizard of Oz figures in his study*

"I believe I was the first Holy Cross layman to give a commencement address. The student council moderator Steve Ferran said that the students requested me as their speaker.

"When he asked I replied 'Are you serious? I don't remember any teacher doing this.'"

Leach picked *The Wizard of Oz* as the basis for his speech. He envisioned Dorothy in the role of a teacher who helps the Tin Man, Lion, and Scarecrow dig deep within themselves to realize that they alone held the power to fulfill their dreams.

The concluding statement from that speech - with the band softly playing *Somewhere Over the Rainbow* – was: *“But what about Dorothy? Dorothy was a kind of teacher. She helped the Scarecrow, the Lion, and the Tin Woodman to come to terms with themselves. She taught them that the solutions to their problems were not outside, but within themselves.*

*Ironically, she learned the same lesson.... Yes, Dorothy flew over the rainbow only to realize that there was no place like her home in Kansas. Gentlemen, your journey over the rainbow begins tonight. Always remember that you have a Kansas too – and your Kansas is HOLY CROSS.....”*

Ferran asked him how he decided to use *The Wizard of Oz* as a theme. “I told him that there wasn’t any thought process involved. One second after he asked, I knew the focus of my address: the greatness of *The Wizard of Oz*. Then he wanted to know how long it took for me to write it. I answered: ‘My whole life.’”

Leach continues, “That was quite a night for me. *The Wizard of Oz* has all the ingredients: intelligence, charity, courage. Those are great values and great qualities that are set forth in that work that sets the standards for which we should strive.”

*The Wizard of Oz* was the first of four commencement speeches. There would be other such nights as he was asked to give three more commencement addresses: *Dimensions of a Man: An Unauthorized Taxonomy*; *From Here to There*; and *Four Years: A Tribute to the Old Soldier*.

Some say that his 1994 commencement address – *From Here to There* - was his most powerful one. It concluded by observing:

*“As you advance from the relative “comfort zone” of the here and now to the ominous “twilight zone” of the there and thereafter, discover those portals which good English opens, understand and embrace the real meaning of HOPE, rely on and react from the viscera, anticipate your rendezvous with the “thing,” and recognize and acknowledge that the really important things never change.*

*And as you “get on with it,” you must ultimately decide to which species you belong: you’re either a Holy Cross graduate or a Holy Cross Man. And there IS a hell of a difference.”*

Receiving his diploma at that ceremony, Kristian Gerrets '94 remembers that speech saying, “I was lucky enough to be physically present for this masterpiece of a commencement address. The delivery equaled the power and eloquence of the words. The man who delivered it is one of my favorite humans on the planet. Mike Leach is an amazing educator and public speaker, making him timeless, legendary, and immortal. Thank you, Mr. Leach, for everything! “



## *A Tribute to the Old Soldier*

"I figured that most of the students had a grandparent or an older relative that served in WWII. I tried to create a picture of a soldier who did his best to serve his country and all that he went through. Towards the poem's conclusion former student and band director Christopher Smith softly played Glenn Miller's popular 1940s song *Moonlight Serenade*. The message of the speech was to go hug your grandpa because what he did was a total and complete sacrifice for you."

*Today, as you navigate  
From this hour and place,  
The Old Soldier you must emulate;  
For he has amazing grace.*

*As you envision tomorrow  
And challenges yet unknown,  
His lessons you must borrow;  
And you'll never walk alone.*

*As you commence from here to eternity,  
Stand tall and straight and true,  
Then drop in reverence to your knees  
Because he did it all for you.*



*Yearbook photo of one of his homerooms*

"I was awfully proud of those occasions when I was asked by the seniors to deliver the commencement speeches. All of the speeches had a unifying theme: hope," he commented. "It is encouraging that our school's motto, "CRUX SPES UNICA," champions the virtue of HOPE. It means, of course: 'OUR HOPE IS IN THE CROSS.'"

It would be a Herculean task to catalog almost forty years of teaching memories. Some, however, stand out – a collection of pathos and humor. The linguistic art is not limited to the written word, but also includes those which are spoken. To round out the students' exposure to grammar Leach added a speech element to the senior class syllabus.

"At the time there was no public speaking elective at Holy Cross so I implemented the senior-speech project as an integral part of the curriculum for the seniors. The students had to give a speech at the end of the school year based on their Holy Cross experience. They had to make it true to themselves."

"The assignment was made on the first day of class and due at the beginning of the 4th quarter. We'd ask them to wear a coat and tie to deliver the speech. It would be the capstone of their Holy Cross career, expressing their feelings about their experience here."

"Most of the speeches were wonderful but sometimes the school's imperfections were brought up. That was OK too, although they had to articulate what they thought the negative aspects were without trashing anyone. The speeches were, for the most part, noble. In the main, they lived up to the standards of the Holy Cross Man."

### *Faculty Lounge Philosopher*

There was also one particularly bittersweet memory: delivery of a eulogy at the funeral of a colleague – Coach John Kalbacher.

"The first time I established a bond with John Kalbacher was when we realized we both played tennis. We were talking in the faculty lounge and JK invited me to meet him for a tennis match at City Park. The next week we had our first match. We'd continued to play tennis – both singles and doubles on the handball court at Holy Cross."

"When he died, John's son Mark called and asked if I would give a eulogy. I tried to show the other side of the man. He was more than a rough and tumble guy – he had a heart, but he did not advertise its presence. You'd think JK would be talking nothing but football in the faculty lounge, but there was a cultural part of the guy that nobody really knew – he was well-versed in history, literature, and poetry. I learned from some of his fellow coaches that he didn't like to cut guys who wanted to play for him; therefore, he delegated this duty to his assistant coaches."

"Ironically, my first teacher at Jesuit was head football coach and algebra teacher Mr. Ken Tarzetti. He was John Kalbacher's brother-in-law."

## *Shake Down the Thunder*

Leach's literary skills and ability to weave a tapestry with words landed him a role in the creation of *Shake Down the Thunder*, a collaboration with Band Director Christopher Smith.

"Chris arranged a medley of many of the traditional songs that the band played at football games and pep rallies. Chris played a cassette of his arrangement for me and said, 'Mike, I think we need to put some words in here and I want you to do it.'"



*Mike Leach with Thunder*

"He gave me the tape, I took it home, and played it many times to get inspired. I tried to find spots where the music got low and there were no cymbals clashing or trumpets blaring. There were four or five areas where the music was soft and I wrote words for those junctions trying to capture the spirit of the medley. It was a narrative about the Holy Cross experience. When I presented it to Chris, he said 'We got it, Mike.'"

"Headmaster Steven Walsh used *Shake Down the Thunder* as one of the centerpieces of the graduation ceremony. It enriched the ceremony. Dr. Earl Fox, and other musically inclined faculty members, narrated as the band performed.

An excerpt from that narration is as follows:

*The Holy Cross Experience.  
A communion of place and purpose. . .  
A state of mind. . .  
A way of life . . .  
The whole man . . .  
The man you are . . .  
The Holy Cross Man, inspired by yesterday  
And pledged to tomorrow. . .*



## *Christmas Cigar*

Then there was the time that he was called to the principal's office – and it wasn't to receive a commendation. Quite the contrary: his Christmas spirit crossed a cultural line that up until that point did not exist.

"In the early days of my career the students would give the teachers wonderful Christmas presents such as liquor or gift certificates. In fact, one teacher received a pirogue filled with fishing gear. I wanted to give my students a Christmas present before going on Christmas break, something symbolic that made them feel they were on the way to becoming a man. I gave each of them a cigar."

"I didn't give them expensive cigars because I had 150 students. I asked my wife Anne if she'd be gracious enough to put old gold and navy blue ribbons around the cigars. I decided to deliver the presents while they were taking their final exams for the semester. I'd walk down each row and placed the cigar on each student's desk, not saying a word. I delighted in the astonished look on each student's face as he glanced up at me. It was my way of saying, 'You're on the way to becoming a Holy Cross Man Merry Christmas, son.'"

"At the end of the exam I asked them not to ruin this for them or for me. I told them that I enjoyed doing this and for them not to mess it up by lighting up on campus. To my knowledge, none of them ever did."

And then the cigar-giving ended.

"In the 1980s, smoking became a cultural no-no and I was called into the headmaster's office."



*Giving the 1994 Commencement Address*

"Br John McLaughlin asked me, 'What are you doing?'"

"I'm giving my boys a Christmas present," I replied.

"How long have you being doing this?"

"At least for a decade."

"Br. John then said that a couple of parents called and complained about the cigars. I said, 'If you're telling me I can't do it, then I won't.'"

Years later a couple of the alumni brought their cigars, with the ribbons still around them, to their class reunions. They kept them for all those years."

### *An Ill Wind Blows*

The aftermath of Hurricane Katrina resulted in an unusable campus and a logistic nightmare. The school's administration scrambled to find a location to conduct classes. For the first semester of the school year, arrangements were made to platoon with Dunham in Baton Rouge.

Keeping to its normal hours, Dunham allowed Holy Cross to use its facilities when the 3:00 pm bell rang. Holy Cross provided bus transportation for the students who hadn't found lodging in the Baton Rouge area; the teachers carpooled, getting back home about midnight. Coincidentally, Dunham's teams were nicknamed Tigers. The second semester found them closer to home platooning with Cabrini High School.

"He ain't heavy; he's my brother."

Even as a youngster, I was somehow intrigued by Holy Cross.... It reminded me of Boys' Town (my second favorite movie). From my mid-city perspective, HC was "way far away." It had the "rep" of being a boarding school for tough guys. To some extent that was true, but HC was so much more.... The incorrigible troublemakers were routinely "discontinued" (HC's marvelous euphemism for "expulsion"). The good guys - the overwhelming majority - remained to embrace and experience the HC process, a gradual year-by-year series of epiphanies: acceptance, transformation, elevation, graduation. Indeed, they became HOLY CROSS MEN.

The 2006-07 school year saw portable classrooms at the Dauphine St campus. The school was surviving but there so much misinformation going around it wasn't clear what would happen: It was a period of uncertainty, not only for the school but the entire Greater New Orleans area. The rumor mill started: Would the school go elsewhere? If so, where? Would the school stay on Dauphine St? Would Holy Cross partner with Holy Angels and become co-ed? Would it even exist?

And Michael Leach's dilemma was compounded by the exponential increase in the technology that the school was requiring the teachers to use. He considered himself a dinosaur in an electronic world.

*Still using pencil and yellow legal pad*

at my ass. I'm old-fashioned. I still have a flip-top phone. I still use a pencil and yellow legal pad. When computers became part of everyday life on campus, I was lost. And it got worse. It made me less effective in the classroom cramping my style. I liked walking around while giving a lecture, but the computers tied me to a screen pushing buttons. I never caught on to technology. Had it not been for that, I could have gone another 10 years; I still had the 'juice' in me," he exclaims.

"Technology was like an alligator snapping

Bewildered by technology and the uncertainty of what the future of Holy Cross would be were two of the factors leading to his retirement. But the most important reason was to take care of his wife Anne who received a diagnosis of cancer in 2001. Five years later, with the cancer spreading rapidly, he assumed the role of Anne's primary caregiver. He says that it was a tough decision to retire from teaching but his wife's health was his top priority.

Although no longer a teacher, he had the comfort of knowing that he left a lasting impression on those he taught and on those who knew him.

Dr. Ken Tedesco '66 explains: "From 1968 to 2005, spanning four decades of historic and social and educational challenge, Mike Leach planned and delivered a unique set of courses that prepared the young men entrusted to him. Mike taught his students to be the best they can be. In the process, his students discovered themselves."

"Mike roused the unaware with electrifying instruction. To borrow the words of former Yale President A. Bartlett Giamatti, Mike "taught his students how to unmoor their imaginations so that they could sail for themselves – and in that voyage they learned how to captain for the rest of their lives."

"Mike Leach was everything a parent hopes for when they entrust their children to the care of a school: A motivator. A mentor. A principled, surrogate parent. A worthy role model. He was one of THE great Holy Cross teachers who inspired generations of young men to be Holy Cross Men. Of course, Mike embodied that Holy Cross Man. He is a man of Faith. A man of Character. A man of Integrity. A man who brings hope."

"Thank you, my dear friend and colleague, Mike Leach, for showing me how to be a Holy Cross Man."

### *The Dream Comes True*

At the top of his list of best memories would have to be what happened almost 20 years after he retired. In May, 2022 Michael Leach was awarded an honorary diploma from Holy Cross as a member of the graduating Class of '22.

He was introduced by long-time friend and former Chair of the Math department Mike Heller, who was at the school all but the first two years of Leach's tenure.

Heller proclaimed at the graduation ceremony: "Michael Leach - nickname "Teach" -Alumni from 1968 through 2005 all ask to have Mr. Leach join them at their reunions. Now we ask Mr. Michael Leach to officially become a Tiger by accepting an honorary Diploma for Holy Cross School."

"There was no pretense in Mike. What you saw was the real thing. He was always frank with flair with wry humor that was almost poetic."



"Like many of us, Mike found his calling in the classroom. His decades of students will attest to his skill and dedication. As head of the English department, Mike put together a classic package of courses that prepared his students for post HC advancement – in both further education and in life."

Echoing that sentiment is Jacques Couret '91 who declares, "I cannot think of anyone more deserving and more "Holy Cross" than Leach. Beloved teacher, charming character, hilarious sense of humor, a true gentleman, the coolest of the cool. I could go on. Leach was the best. And if you were lucky enough to have him for English/Brit Lit, you just know. May he know to the deepest depths of his heart how much we Holy Cross men love him and think of him often as adults. I'd go back for one day at Holy Cross in a heartbeat, and I'd love to sit in his class once again."

Leach's diploma, in part, reads: "In recognition of his inspirational teaching skills and devotion to decades of Holy Cross students. From 1968 to 2005, spanning eras of historic social and educational challenges, Michael S. Leach planned and delivered a unique set of classic courses to prepare students for successful future in higher education and in life."



*Headmaster William Gallagher presents Mike Leach with his Holy Cross diploma*

On becoming an honorary Holy Cross Alumnus Leach responds, "The decades rushed by and I never thought it would happen, although I dreamed it would. When I received my honorary diploma I was at once humbled and proud at the same time. What a way to look back on my career. It meant so

much to me. I'm proud of that diploma and have it prominently displayed on my wall so I can show it to everyone who comes over. It means an awful lot to me; it's one of my treasures."

His office may be where he keeps that one particular treasure, but his second floor study is a literal shrine to the Gold and Blue. Overflowing bookcases –which is what one would expect of an English teacher – are topped with photos, awards presented to him from former classes, and miniature characters from *The Wizard of Oz*. Adorning the walls are more photos – some framed with past graduation programs – and, of course, a lithograph print from *The Wizard of Oz*.

## Down Memory Lane

Reminiscing on his long career in the classroom, Leach says that he always liked school – even when he was in grade school. An early influence in his life – one that would have an enormous impact - was Sr. Camille Marie, a St Joseph nun teaching at Holy Rosary grammar school near Bayou St. John. He described her as a tremendous teacher.

“I learned a lot from her. Somehow she made you feel lousy if you didn’t give the best effort you possibly could. An analogy would be a football player who would run through brick wall for the coach. Same thing with Sr. Camille: she supported you, she encouraged you, she believed in you. She wanted you to be the best. She inspired me,” reflects Leach.”

“More important than that, I’ve always been sort of a leader. To be a good teacher you have to have leadership qualities. While at Holy Rosary I was playing sports in the Catholic School Athletic League. I wasn’t the best player, but oftentimes I was the captain. My judgments and opinions were respected.”



*Diploma proudly displayed in his office*

“I had something in me that suggested I was a leader. I felt that once I got in the education system, it would be an asset for me. You had to convince the students to follow and to listen to you. They’ve got to believe in you. I think the students realized that. As Vince Lombardi said, “It is essential to understand that battles are primarily won in the heart...(people) respond to leadership in a most remarkable way and once you have won (their) heart, (they) will follow you anywhere.”

“I always felt comfortable in the classroom. I felt that I belonged there. I did my best to be fair, and that is

difficult. I tried my best not to play favorites. I tried to maintain those two pieces of classroom integrity. I enjoyed the challenge of teaching and seeing if I could make a difference in these guys’ lives. If I could inspire the students, well – that’s worth a triple Old Fashioned for me,” smiles Leach, looking back on almost four decades on Dauphine Street.

And he did make a difference in students’ lives, preparing them for their future. Shane Brossette ’85 points out, “It was because of the folly of our youth that we didn’t realize - at the time - how much Mike Leach and our other teachers were shaping us.”





*At this point, we end the story by letting the legend himself - with his pencil in hand and yellow legal pad on which to write - have the final say.*

### *Twice Blessed*

Anne: Anne and I married in 1968. She embodied the style of “quiet elegance” (sort of like the lovely actress Grace Kelly). . . . Tragically, she was diagnosed on the threshold of stage-four cancer in 2001. She fought the disease valiantly for nearly nine years. Throughout her travail she epitomized Ernest Hemingway’s definition of courage: “Grace under pressure.” She passed away on February 13, 2010.

Jean: Jean (Douglass) and I dated at SLU (then SLC) in 1965. She was a freshman, and I was a junior. In my judgment she was cutest freshman co-ed on campus. We ultimately went our separate ways but “rediscovered” each other after Anne died. We married on August 19, 2015. . . Suddenly, I had three stepchildren and seven stepgrandchildren. Jean is “Mamom” and I am “Papop.”

Yeah, I’ve been “twice blessed.”



## Sun Award

Years before Michael Leach was acclaimed as an honorary Holy Cross Alumnus, he was presented with the Sun Award. David Havrylkoff '77 explains:

"The Sun Award came from an on-campus underground, weekly newspaper named the Sun. It was the brainchild of Allyn Stroud and Bret Carreras of the Class of 77.

The Sun took a satirical look at our class and classmates, and also looked at things that faculty members were doing or not doing. It was printed on mimeographed paper so there were definitely members of the administration or faculty who were providing help for the Sun to keep going."



## Old-School Tie



Prior to the 1979 Baccalaureate Mass, Michael Leach was presented with an autographed tie. He removed the tie he was wearing, replacing it with this very special tie. Leach says that it is one of his prized possessions.

Gregg Salathe '79 explains: "It was

given in appreciation for what a wonderful teacher he was. It was from the senior honors English class.

*All of Mike Leaches commencement speeches and others are online at <https://hubhobbyshop.com/the-speeches-of-michael-s-leach/>*

*"he ain't heavy; he's my brother"*

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*Michael S. Leach*



*Mike's father graduated from Holy Cross in 1926. He was a boarder who resided on the third floor of the Lower School building. . . Years later, Mike taught English on that very same third floor where his father had lived.*



## Career Day at Holy Cross

At last month's Career Day, three of the all-time great teachers - Mike Heller, Michael Leach, and Michael Orkus – gave a presentation and answered questions about a career in education.





*King Chronos LXX - Al Waguespack*

## All Hail King of Chronos!

Al Waguespack reigned as the King of Chronos in Thibodaux. Since being involved in the group since 1972, the Krewe of Chronos is celebrating its 70th year and is the oldest carnival club in Thibodaux.

Al said as King, he had parties to attend every weekend for six weeks. The entire Waguespack family was involved, taking part as pages and junior dukes.

"It's a family affair," said Al. They all rode in the parade on parade day. They also took part in the krewe's tableau with the presentation of the court. "







*King Al and his court, which consisted entirely of family members*

## -----CHALKBOARD-----



**Frank Galle** went with his son and grandsons to the Matagorda Island Wildlife Management Area for the annual Youth hunt. Frank's son Brian explains, "We had to take the boat to get to the island and setup primitive tent camping with no water or electricity The island is a decommissioned WWII base where there is an abandoned airstrip and bomb bunkers and loaded with deer and pigs"

*Toni and Gary Ritzmann* celebrated their 50th anniversary in the Sicilian Room at Rocky and Carlos. On hand were three of their groomsmen: Donnie Maheu, Harry Legendre and Pat Wolfe.



*Toni and Gary*



*Pat, Donnie, Gary, Harry*

*Pop Up*

### *Lunch on Campus*

Alvin Albe says that arrangements can be made for a Class of '71 lunch on Holy Cross' campus. He's suggesting that we could plan one for next fall.

*Results* of Holy Cross' Annual fund raising drive for the 2022-23 school year are in

TOP 5 CLASS TOTALS	
1. CLASS OF 1971	\$100,964
2. CLASS OF 1972	\$ 51,531
3. CLASS OF 1943	\$ 50,200
4. CLASS OF 1965	\$ 46,681
5. CLASS OF 1973	\$ 36,364
TOTAL ALUMNI GIVING	
\$592,507	

### *Christmas Party*

Attending Virginia Boulet and Alvin Albe's Christmas party were Dan McGovern, John Fiorito, Ronnie Sumich, John Tessitorre. It was held at the Basin Street Station





*Christmas Party*



*Day at the Races*

### *Day at the Races*

In attendance at the Fairgrounds were Dan McGovern, Darek Guichard, John Tessitore, TJ Smith, Roni Sumich, and Roy Scott. They even was held in a private room with a private balcony at the end of the grandstands in the stretch. It also had a dedicated betting area.



*Debi Sheyd Colomb* took a trip to see whales. Of it she says, "The trip was to Magdalena Bay where the gray whales birth their babies. According to the Captain, we were in a pod of 30 to 40 whales. My head was on a swivel from seeing all of those whales in one spot! It was a quick 6 day trip for me and my friend - Dan didn't go on this trip - but worth every minute!"

*Whale*



*Peggy Jones and Larry Folse* attended a Speakeasy Murder Mystery at a Dinner Theater in West Monroe Everyone dressed in 1920's garb. There was also a costume contest with Larry dressed as a gangster and Peggy as a flapper. They made it as far as the final four couples



*Larry and Peggy*



*John in Barcelona*

*John Fiorito* took a trip to Spain. Here he is in Barcelona.

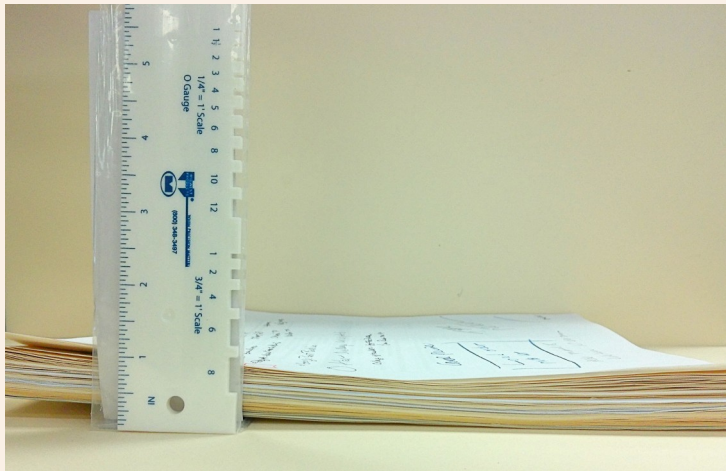
### *Anniversaries*

Debi and Dan Colomb 27  
Toni and Gary Ritzmann 50  
Kathy and Robert Turner 40  
Sarah and David Falgoust 42  
Kathy and Jerry Lodriguss 48  
Janice and Billy Arsenaux 42  
Francis and Charlie Kothmann 46  
Roxanne and Donald Hergert 51

*Claudia and Steve Schulz* continue their work as the New Orleans Archdiocesan Coordinators, as well as the National Finance Team for CEE USA. Claudia handles the local responsibilities and Steve handles the National Finances. They are committed to these responsibilities until December 2024. They also welcomed a new grandchild: Weston Andrew Rummer. In addition to a trip to Greece, they made numerous mini-trips visiting North Carolina, Williamsburg, New Hampshire, and Maine.



*In New Hampshire*



### *Behind the Scenes*

Each newsletter starts as a blank page. From there story ideas are written down, researched and fleshed out. Next comes the interviews, rough drafts and back-and-forth with the interviewee. Edits, improvements, and polishing continue as photos are reviewed and cropped. The completed story is then sent to the interviewee for final sign-off. This issue took almost an inch of paper – printed on both sides – to produce.



Waterfall . . . . . *photo by Leslie Anticich*





## Guiding Light: Five Decades of Inspiration

"The last 50 years went by a lot faster than I thought it would," comments John Glorioso on approaching five decades in the classroom. "I'm pretty proud of that. Not a lot of people teach for that long."

Like so many other high school students, Glorioso wasn't quite sure what he wanted to do with his life. But one thing that he did know was that he was going to go to college. That idea was reinforced by working every summer for an air conditioning company. Since he was the youngest employee, he was the one working 6 to 12 hour days, crawling around in attics, and lugging fifty-pound compressors to the roof.



"After graduating from high school, they asked me to stay on to learn the winter/heating job. Using what I now think was a poor choice of words, I said 'I'm not doing this for the rest of my life; I want to go to college.'"

Since he was good at math, he decided to follow the engineering curriculum at UNO.

"My oldest brother was a lawyer and he said law firms were always consulting engineers for cases involving maritime law, oil rig incidents, and traffic accidents. He said that after getting an engineering degree, I could then go to law school. But I wasn't happy in the engineering courses."

*John Glorioso - 50 years in the classroom*

At UNO, he ran into Terry McGaha '70 – a chance meeting that changed the trajectory of his life. McGaha was in charge of the Holy Cross transportation program and they needed a bus driver.

"So they hired me. I really enjoyed it. I didn't know I wanted to be a teacher until I started driving a bus, where I was interacting with the kids. I also worked at the Holy Cross summer camp throughout my college days."

Then came little odd jobs around the school.

"Math teacher Don Maestri asked me to grade his test papers and he paid me for each class. He had 5 classes. Once, while grading, the first few papers got all the answers correct except for one question. And they all got the same question wrong. . I checked the 'answer key' and the key was wrong. . . Now Maestri had me making 5 answer keys per test, paying me for each key. Then one day, Maestri had to be somewhere and asked me to fill in. At this point, I'm a teacher. I just didn't realize it."

Another opportunity presented itself when one of the middle school science teachers quit. Headmaster Br Robert Hampton asked him if would fill in teaching anatomy to the 5th graders and the cosmos and planets to the 6th graders. He said that he enjoyed teaching before actually becoming one.



*The quarterback and the coach*

But there was a problem. To become a teacher, one had to have a commanding presence in the classroom. What worked in a small-sized middle school class might not work with a large-sized high school audience. And deep down, Glorioso - the quarterback of the 1970 football team - was actually a quiet, introverted person who was not comfortable speaking in public. And that included calling plays in the huddle.

Before the start of the 1970 season, head football coach John Kalbacher called him into his office.

“Coach Kalbacher asked me if I wanted to be quarterback. I said that I did. He replied, ‘You have to be more assertive in the huddle. If you’re quarterback, you’re going to have to be a leader. You have to be heard.’”

Glorioso got a degree in education as a math teacher, doing the student-teacher part of the course at Holy Cross. Once again, his aversion to speaking in public affected his presentation.

“I was scared to death. Ken Tedesco ‘66 was the observing teacher. He said that I never looked up. ‘You know the material – back and forth- but you were looking down at the floor the whole time.’”

He received his certification and spent the next 20 years at Holy Cross. Starting in the middle school, he eventually moved up to high school math, teaching everything except calculus.

Other duties over the years included student activities director, junior and senior class moderator, transportation director in charge of 20 busses serving 700 students, and disciplinarian. He also ran softball tournaments for the Holy Cross Athletic Association, was summer school principal/summer camp counselor, and was on the admissions committee helping to determine who would be admitted to the school.

Among other accomplishments, he helped Terry McGaha start both the 7th and 8th grade baseball teams. He had an opportunity to be a coach for the varsity football team, but declined.

"I do regret that I didn't coach, but the hours a coach had to work were ridiculous. And I would have to give up my administrative duties."

By the early '90s HC's enrollment was falling and crime was exploding – it seemed that every day brought a new crisis. With all of his administrative duties he felt that he was losing what he really loved doing: teaching. He moved across the lake in 1992 commuting for 3 years. It was not something that he enjoyed doing.

"I had 3 babies at home and, with the administrative duties I had, sometimes wouldn't leave the campus until 6 pm. I couldn't do it any longer. I couldn't be the type of father that I wanted to be and still keep doing all the things I loved at Holy Cross."

He said that the administration was shocked when he told them he was leaving telling him "You can't go!" Leaving Holy Cross without a job lined up, he interviewed with Mandeville, Fontainebleau, and St Paul's.

"As soon as I stepped on St Paul's campus I knew that was where I wanted to teach. When they saw my resume, they wanted to know if I was interested in administration. I told them that I wanted to get back in to the classroom."

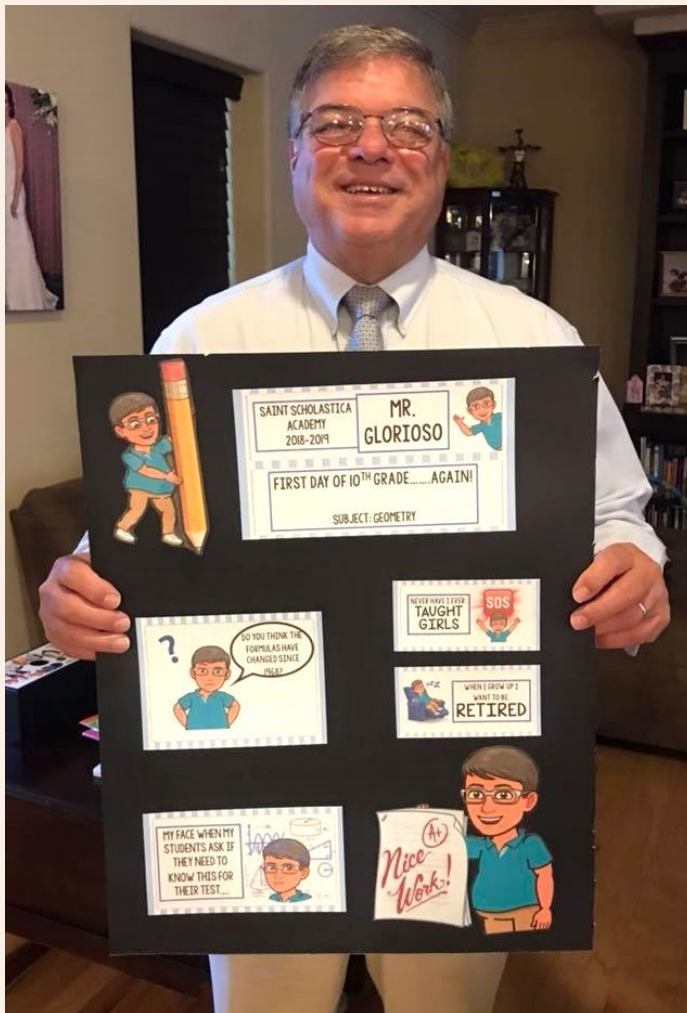
By this time he had a Masters of Arts degree.



*At St Paul's for 23 years*



For the next 23 years he was at St Paul's. During that time he coached JV football for a year and was hitting coach for the 9th grade and varsity baseball. One year, the baseball team won the state championship. He also assisted with the Mu Alpha Theta math tournaments which drew academic teams from high schools across the state. Not neglecting his fatherly duties, he coached his son's baseball team and daughter's basketball team.



*"First Day of School" photo - this one is for St Scholastica Academy*

For the last six years, he's been teaching at St Scholastica Academy. Duties there include being bowling team coach and being in charge of Mu Alpha Theta, the math honor society.

Over the years, he has established a classroom routine - his desk is placed in the back of the room with a podium in the front.

"Now the first thing we do is to put the cell phones away. When the students sit, I take roll. Then I walk to the podium. That's their signal to be quiet. I start all of my classes with a prayer. After all, we are a Catholic school. They learn that the most important thing we do here is to give reverence to God."

He says that teaching boys was more challenging than teaching girls.

"After teaching girls, I ask myself why I waited more than 40 years to do this. I find that the girls care more about grades."

Class size has changed over the years. When he was at Holy Cross there were 35-39 students in each class. At St Paul's, class size averaged 27 students. "The principal apologized to me for such a large class – I'm, thinking – '27 students? That's like a vacation!'"

At SSA his biggest class is 23, the smallest is 19.

He has had some challenges with students over the years: some were academic, some were disciplinary. He says the real challenge is when the student is both types. "If you're not able to control the class, you not going to be a teacher. You have to be supported by the parents and the administration."

His long career is filled with memories. One particular “Kodak moment” occurred under the oaks at Holy Cross.

“I had lunch duty and was by the gazebo talking with Coach Greg Battistella. There were kids going back and forth and one of them stopped and asked, ‘Coach B, why do you call him Mr. Glorioso?’

He replied, ‘Because Mr. Glorioso was one of my teachers when I was at Holy Cross.’

Then Charlie DiGange walked up and I greeted him as Mr. DiGange

The student said, ‘You call him Mr. DiGange?’

‘Yes. He was one of MY teachers when I was at Holy Cross.’

Then Earl Schneider walked up and Charlie called him Coach Schneider and told the youngster that Earl taught him.

Then Br. Melchior drove up in his cart and we told the youngster that Br. Melchior taught ALL of us.”

And then at St Paul’s he had a student who was more interested about what was happening on the baseball diamond then he was in the diamond-shaped rhombus in geometry class.

“There was a student who played on the baseball team who wasn’t doing too well in my class. He didn’t seem too motivated, so I got in his face telling him ‘You think baseball is going to be your life? You should worry about your studies.’ The student wound up on the LSU team that won the 2009 College World Series later signing a Major League Baseball contract with the Toronto Blue Jays.”

Reflecting on his career Glorioso comments, “It’s always nice when kids come back years after graduating and realize the impact you had on them. As they get older they realize that they learned something other than just math. I’m most proud of when the kids come back and thank me and they become teachers too. It makes it all worthwhile.”



*John and Rhonda*

As testament to that Shane Brossette ‘85 comments, “John Glorioso, Barbara Zeugner, Sue Ellen Lyons and other Holy Cross faculty inspired me first- to learn- and THEN to emulate



their love of learning by teaching. They kindled my thirst for inquiry, critical thinking, and passion for professionalism. Best of all, they EACH made me want to be a teacher! I have since strived to follow in their footsteps.”

One of the myths Glorioso debunks is that teachers have an easy job. One of his neighbors commented on the teaching profession saying “You’re off all summer. How hard could it be?”

“So I asked him a question: ‘If you’re at work and have to go to the bathroom, what do you do?’ He said that he’d just go to the bathroom. Well, I can’t do that. I can’t leave the classroom. People don’t realize how much teachers work.”

“Every evening when I’d get home, one neighbor was shooting baskets with his sons and I’d go over join them. There was one time that for 3 straight days, he wasn’t out there, so I asked if anything was wrong. He said he had to do a presentation for his company. A few days later he was back shooting baskets. He said he put on a 10 minute presentation for 5 people. I told him that I do a one hour presentation every day, and I have to make my audience pay attention!”

Another former student, Craig Hart 84 appreciated – although belatedly - all the hard his math teacher put in saying, “John Glorioso, all the thanks to you for the love, patience, wisdom, guidance, humor, pride and dedication you gave us day in and day out. What an inspiration to all of us. I imagine most of us had no idea how your love was shaping us, but looking back now we understand and we are truly, truly grateful.”



*Glorioso has three children: Katharine, John Gernon, and Camille, all of whom have college degrees and successful careers. He also has three stepchildren – Lauren, Gavin, and Jann. He and Rhonda have 12 grandchildren.*

## Sailing the Aegean (and Atlantic): A Modern Odyssey



*Claudia and Steve*

Last year we got to take our long-anticipated tour of Greece. We flew to Athens, then took a ten-day Viking ocean cruise around eastern Greece and Turkey.

We went to Athens and sailed to Volos, Thessaloniki, Ephesus (Turkey), Rhodes, Santorini, Crete, Nafplion, then back to Athens. We saw a lot of antiquities and ruins – the history was amazing. Our favorite was Ephesus where we got to visit John the Apostle's home after the Crucifixion, where he brought Mary, Jesus's mother, to live out the remainder of her life and from where she was assumed into heaven.

On the ship, the *Viking Sky*, there were several lectures on St. Paul, comparative religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), and Greek mythology. All in all, we had a very spiritual, educational and entertaining cruise. On the way home we were supposed to fly from Athens to Milan to Montreal to New Orleans.

Our flight from Milan to Montreal was delayed so we missed our connection and had to be flown to Toronto. We stayed in a hotel, then flew home early the next morning. Mardi Gras was the following Tuesday and we spent it staying home and sleeping late. It took a while to get over the jet lag.

Later in the year, we flew to Rome to board the *Carnival Pride* and take a fifteen-day transatlantic cruise ending up in Tampa, Florida. We visited Cartagena, Spain; sailed through the Straights of Gibraltar to see the Rock of Gibraltar on one side and the coast of Africa on the other; the Islands of Madeira and



*The Library at Ephesus*



Ponta Delgado, Azores; then five days crossing to Grand Turk Island before making our way finally to Tampa.



*View from the deck*

We had a wonderful time. One of our biggest surprises was the 25-hour days as we gained seven hours coming East to West. We made good use of the time – sleeping late and staying up late. There was plenty of good entertainment and we were able to make a lot of friends among the crew. We celebrated Claudia's birthday with the Chef's Table dining experience where we were served 15 courses. Even though each was small, we were stuffed when we were done. As always, we would end our day with midnight Pizza or Soup. We also made a lot of trips to the Tequila bar and to the Ice Cream stations.

*Steve Schulz*

None Shall Pass . . . . . *photo by Mike Strohmeyer*



## Canyon Chronicles



Toni and I finally made our trip to the South rim of the Grand Canyon. We took the train ride from Williams Arizona to the top. We made a stop in Winslow Az. to the corner of the Eagles song Take it easy.

We then made a stop in Vegas and took the gondola ride. Toni went to the top of the Eiffel Tower there. This was an early 50th Anniversary trip. On the way home it was snowing in Albuquerque New Mexico.

*Gary Ritzmann*

## Flashback to 1973

Video of David Falgoust kicking his second PAT against LSU 14-0

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjZwsfeE3\\_U](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjZwsfeE3_U)





## From Wrestling Mat to Mentorship

Teachers don't always realize the long-lasting impact they have on some student's lives. Just ask Rick Zimmer, who has been on both sides of the teacher's desk. Zimmer's father died when he was 11 months old, his stepfather was an alcoholic, and Holy Cross wrestling coach Br. Melchior Polowy – who could be considered one of the original social influencers – unknowingly became a role model for him.

"I don't know what I would have done if it were not for the brothers and teachers at Holy Cross," he says. "I was in Br. James Plutte's class and was impressed with his relationship with us. He made class interesting. I thought it would be pretty cool to be a teacher."

A wrestler for five years and a member of the Student Council, he went on to graduate from UNO. While there, he overheard a conversation about an upcoming rugby practice and thought he'd like to give it a try. He was out of shape from his peak fitness during his high school days on the wrestling mat. The training was tough. He hated it, but was enough of a competitor not to give up – the ghost of Melchior urged him to "grind" it out. After about 2 weeks of practice, he played in a game in Memphis against Dry Gulch.



*Rick Zimmer and Amy Matthews*

"After that game I was sold on Rugby," he continues. He ended the year as leading scorer for the team.

He also coached club teams based at Emory, Tulane, and LSU. The teams showed talent and Zimmer helped optimize their performance. He was also an administrator and assistant coach for the New Orleans Women Rugby Club.

Although his original plan was to become a teacher, he discovered that the money was better in the private sector. Instead, he became an adjuster for All State Insurance Company. Moving to Georgia he opened an office as an All State

agent. While there He continued with rugby, becoming the president and administrator of the Atlanta Renegades club.

After one rugby game he attended a party where he ran into a girl wearing an LSU sweat shirt. She was Amy Mathews who had a friend on the Pensacola team. Amy's brother was Edgar "Matt" Mathews '75, who was Student Council Coordinator in his senior year. About a

year and a half later Rick and Amy were married. Amy worked as bond broker in Atlanta. When the company was sold, she took a job at First NBC in New Orleans.

“Things in the insurance industry were not going as planned. At regional meetings the executives would always give us bad news ending the meetings by saying, ‘At least it’s not New Orleans,’” Zimmer said. “So I decided to move back to New Orleans to be with Amy.”

“It was a tough job market. I’d get to a final interview and nothing came of it. I started substitute teaching. I’d come home and tell Amy stories about what went on in the classroom. After 6 months she said, “Just go be a teacher. You enjoy what you’re doing.”

Returning to UNO, he continued his education and received a Master’s degree - an MED Special Education Mild-Moderate. The degree entitled him to be a vocational specialist, certified in teaching life and Vocational skills to students with autism and those with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD). He taught them everyday necessities, such as how to cook, and interact with other people socially and in the workplace.

“I started my career in St Bernard with a one-on-one project with an autistic student - she was gifted in spitting - and had problems relating to other students,” he added.

Then a call came from Andrew Jackson High School’s Athletic Director, Hall of Fame Softball Coach Rose Scott. She knew that Zimmer had wrestled in high school and asked if he’d be an assistant coach of the wrestling team. Later he became head coach.

“There’s a different skill set needed for being a Head Coach versus being an assistant coach,” he continued. “There’s a lot of player development and interaction with the parents. An assistant can live on the science of coaching. A head coach uses the art of coaching,” Zimmer commented.

In the starting lineup that first year at Andrew Jackson, the team had six students who knew how to wrestle and eight that didn’t. The team ended the season with an 11-3 record and a second place finish at the St Paul Invitational. Eventually all of his wrestlers placed in state competition.

“That made me feel pretty good,” smiles Zimmer. “Then the principal said there was this pretty good wrestler coming out of LSU and asked if I wanted him as an assistant. It was Eric DesOrmeaux ‘95. It was a blessing to have Eric, who’s now the principal at Holy Cross, as an assistant for 3 years.”

“I developed a relationship with the kids on the team and their parents. These were working-class kids who had to work because they needed money toward their parent’s house notes,” explains Zimmer. “Instead of paying a landscaper to cut my grass, I had the kids do it. They also must have planted 40 to 50 trees on my property. Since I was working right next to them it was also a mentoring situation.”

Zimmer took his teams to summer wrestling camps hosted by different colleges. In 2004, the Andrew Jackson team went on a joint trip to the Citadel in South Carolina with the Holy Cross and Hahnville wrestlers.

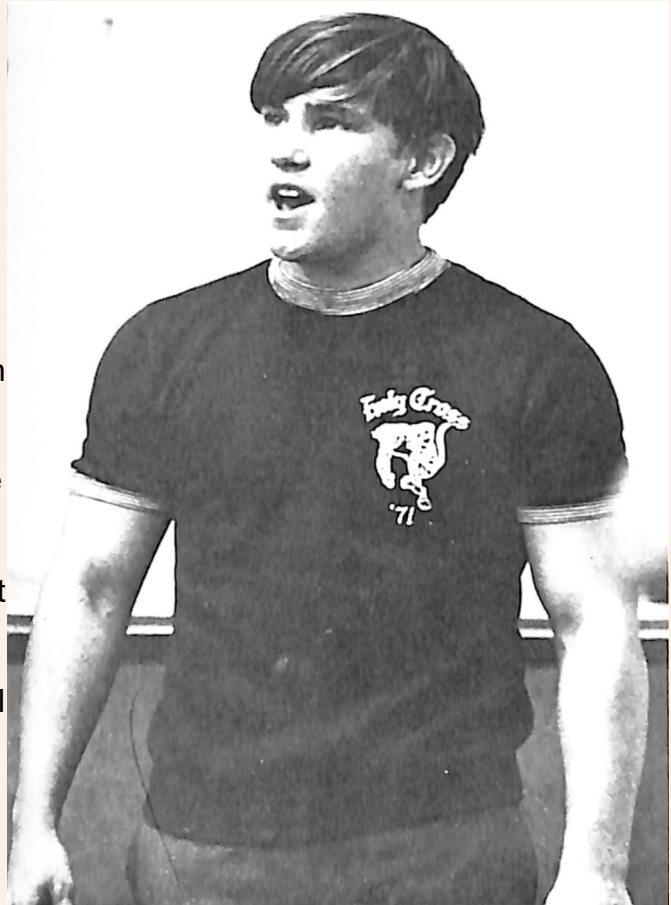


At the end of that school year Holy Cross grad Paul Fradella, who was assistant principal at Mandeville High School, asked Zimmer to start a program on the Northshore. He landed at Fontainebleau High School where former Holy Cross basketball coach Johnny Vitrano was principal. So after spending 10 years at Andrew Jackson, and being the department Chair of Special Ed, he became a Fontainebleau Bulldog.

Then came August 29, 2005 - Katrina hit, schools were closed, students were scattered.

One of the displaced students was a Holy Cross wrestler who was part of the contingent that had been at the Citadel training camp. Living up to his philosophy of putting people in a place where they can be successful, Zimmer helped the Tiger junior keep his training active.

“Coach Zimmer was the head wrestling coach at Andrew Jackson in Chalmette when I first met him.” says Troy Turner '07. “When Katrina left me displaced he was at Fontainebleau and took me in. He is also the uncle of one of my best friends and teammates at the time. We did freestyle and folk style summer sessions there. Earlier that summer both teams (HC and AJ) took a trip to the Citadel for a wrestling camp and bonded. Then Katrina hit and scattered us all around. It was probably in October that Fontainebleau was set to open and Holy Cross had nothing planned. Having been wrestling summers with Coach Rick for two years I reached out to him. I have family that lives on the Northshore so I stayed with them and went to school at Fontainebleau under Coach Rick to continue wrestling until Holy Cross reopened in December.”



Turner continues, “That same year - and back wrestling for HC at the annual Ken Cole tournament - I was in need of mat side coaching. Having wrestled at Andrew Jackson in the off season I knew Coach DesOrmeaux and, without hesitation, he came to my aid to help me win that match. The following year he became our new head wrestling coach and Dean of Men.”

Zimmer’s love of wrestling started in the 8th grade under the tutelage of Br. Melchior. He recalls how he started and what his first practice was like:

“Pascal McGoey and Harold Rosseli convinced me to come out for wrestling during my 8th grade year. We practiced in the old gym even though it had been greatly damaged by Hurricane Betsy in 1965. At the end of football season a number of football players made the transition to wrestling on a Saturday. Our typical Saturday practice included running the levee,

warming up with a series of front rolls, back rolls, cartwheels, flips, bridging, drop-steps, crabwalks, bear-crawls and other calisthenics and tumbling before drilling and live wrestling.”

“On this particular Saturday we started with 8 ovals, 50 sprints up and down the levee followed by a run to the bridge and back. Once this was completed we moved to the old gym for ‘the warm-up’ under the eye of Brother. I can remember thinking, ‘Damn! When is this going to stop?’”

“Several football players literally crawled to the edge of the gym and proceeded to throw up. Brother blew his whistle and said with a smile on his face, ‘Now that we’ve warmed up, let’s start practice.’ And we did - for about two more hours of drilling and live wrestling. “

Using the techniques learned from Br. Melchior, Zimmer - as coach - built his teams into competitive athletes. At Fontainebleau he eventually became Athletic Director.

He also helped start a program called “Bulldog Buddies.” He was looking for an additional way to integrate the academically and cognitively challenged students into school activities.

“We listened to a talk about the ‘Best Buddies’ model; it was designed as a nonprofit that makes money. We liked the concept of Best Buddies; we didn’t want to be part of the national organization. I did not want to spend my time raising money for Best Buddies when my time would be better spent working with the kids. We decided we could do it better and kept it in house,” he remarked.

That first year the 12 student-mentors were drawn mainly from the youngsters on the wrestling team. The next year there were 36 mentors. In the third year there was a “meet and greet” in the school’s auditorium to explain about being in the buddies program that drew 200 students. The fourth year the mentor program exploded with 400 kids. Within a few years students with special needs were elected as homecoming queen and king.

“The other students could see the abilities that these kids have. It had an impact on school culture, and other schools modeled what we did. Mentors had to make contact with the kids in the program at least once a week. Realistic friendships developed out of it,” he noted

Their program was presented with the St Tammany Parish School Board Citizenship Award in 2013. The Times Picayune-States Item described the program in an article stating “The vision is to integrate the special needs students into the school, workplace and community by creating long lasting friendships with people who do not have intellectual disabilities, while also developing a respect for diversity and collaboration with others. The friendships are fostered by weekly contact through phone calls, social media, notes, and lunch-time meetings.”

Fontainebleau also hosted a Special Olympics. When the buses arrived on campus bringing participants from other schools, Fontainebleau’s school band and cheerleaders welcomed them. Zimmer said that it allowed the athletes with special needs to feel honored and special.

He retired from Fontainebleau High School in July, 2018 after 14 years of teaching in public schools. He bought a kayak and planned on spending time exploring and fishing on the lakes



and bayous of southeastern Louisiana. His retirement didn't last long – he was recruited by St Paul's High School to be an assistant wrestling coach and to continue to work with behaviorally challenged students.

"St Paul's follows the Lasallian system of which there are five core values. Inclusion is the tenancy of what we do. The mentor program lives up to this Core Value. Our students are considered part of the Lasallian Family at Saint Paul's, just as Holy Cross considers itself a family. These kids flourish under this concept," he observed.

"One youngster in particular comes to mind. If he refused to do something, I would be called – sometimes trudging across campus – to help. His mother told me 'The reason he listens to you is he knows you have his back.' This student knew that I had his best interest at heart. He grew to trust me. It's all about how to make kids trust you and accept them as they are and help them improve their lives. It's not just about teaching, it's about them learning life skills. We care about their souls, as well as their minds. This has an impact on the kids."

## UNO Rugby Team Wins

**The University of New Orleans rugby team posted its first win of the season, and second win ever, by defeating the Jackson rugby club 18-16 at UNO Saturday afternoon.**

**UNO took an early lead when Rick Zimmer scored. Ronnie Gibbs added the two point kick after the try and UNO led 6-0. Jackson quickly tied the score at 6-6 and went into the locker-room at the half with a 9-6 lead.**

St Paul's also has a mentor program, although their program does not have para-professionals to support the students with special needs as do the public schools. St Paul's has juniors and seniors functioning to support the special needs students in class.

"It's just better. Instead of an adult sitting in a class with them, one of their peers are there to help."

And it changes the culture of the school. One student has been a manager of both the wrestling and baseball teams. Another manages the Lacrosse team. St Paul's has had a student be on the basketball team. Another student started for our varsity wrestling team and had a winning record, while also representing his class on the student council. None of this would have happened without realistic friendships being developed allowing their abilities to be seen. Being a mentor is a senior year elective. The first year there were 3, then 15, then 30. There are now 67 mentors from the senior

class.

The underclassmen can be lunch and social mentors. They go to lunch and ball games with the students in the program. Some even get together and do thing son the weekend.

"This year was the most fun I have had. I primarily coached the pre-freshman team, which won the junior high state championship. We worked hard on conditioning drills, practicing 1 takedown, 5 setups and five escapes/reversals, about seven pinning combinations - right out of Br. Melchior's playbook," said Zimmer. "At the LHSAA State Wrestling Championships, this year, St Paul's had 5 wrestlers place and 3 state champions. We fell short of our goals as a team, but the finals were really fun!"

"Being on time, working late – these lessons are just as important as learning wrestling technique. We start every class and end every practice with a prayer. Wrestling is also about how to be a good person and being a person of faith."

"If the practice starts at 3:30, that's the time they're expected to be at the mat. If we're scheduled to leave for a wrestling match at 7:00 am, they're expected to be there at 6:45. One morning, I pulled up at 6:25 and the whole team was there. They had gotten there at 6:15."

"At a wrestling match during this year's semifinals one of my wrestlers asked me to sit in his corner. This was the first time he had made it this far and needed someone to calm him down. He was pretty nervous and he knew I could help him get through the match."

And it all goes back to the days on the mat in the old gym on Dauphine Street when Pascal McGoey suggested that Zimmer go out for the wrestling team. It has come full circle as Zimmer coaches Pascal McGoey's grandson at St Paul's.

## *Lessons Learned*

"There are many lessons I learned from Br. Melchior as a coach. First of all, he was meticulous in preparing us for both matches and tournaments. I can remember going to a practice before our first dual meet and literally practicing getting on the bus, the correct way to carry our jacket, hanging it in the bus, saying the rosary on the bus as we crossed the bridge. We entered our opponents' gym silent, as a team, and in single file. We sat down as a team and at our captains' direction.

"Second, Brother was 20 years ahead of the times in both conditioning and strength training. We were rarely outworked on the mat. As a wrestling coach I tried to instill a love of 'the grind'."

"Finally, we were fundamentally sound, but only drilled 21 moves. Brother had a black board that had 21 moves on it: seven top, bottom and neutral (on your feet) techniques. He would tell us that we had to drill those moves every day whether we used them or not. We only used the moves in a match that we had perfected. We would often beat our opponents by being fundamentally sound, mentally tougher and physically better conditioned - all lessons I learned from Brother. We always trusted Br Melchior. We didn't want to let him or the school down."



“Brother was a wonderful role model as a man and as a coach. He was an ordinary man who did extraordinary things. He had a sense of humor, was a character and modeled character to all of us who were blessed to be taught or coached by him,” concludes Zimmer.

For someone who thought he was retiring six years ago, he still puts in long hours – it’s part of his DNA. He refers to himself as being more of a Clydesdale than a Greyhound saying “The grind is what you do to get better.”

It’s about building relationships with the students and their parents  
It’s about putting people in a place where they can be successful  
It’s about trust and acting as a family.

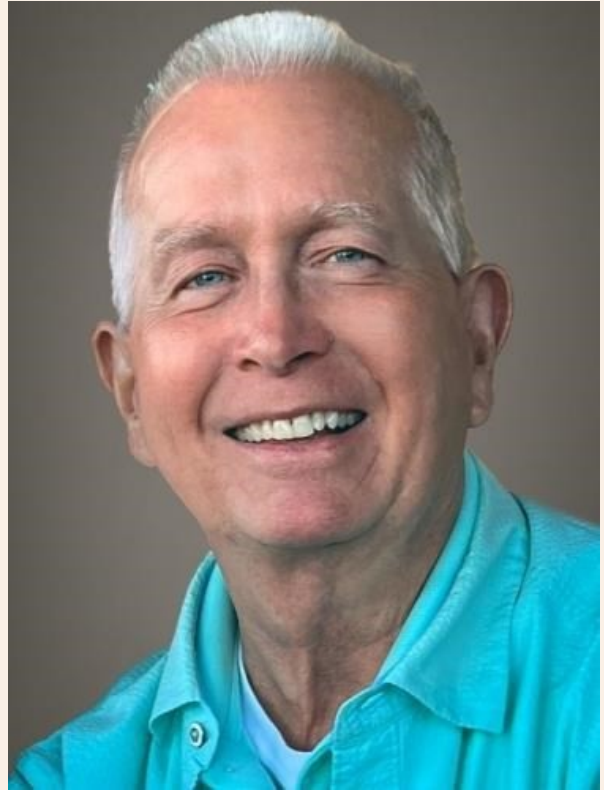
Brother Melchior is most certainly smiling.

Land of the Midnight Sun . . . . . *photo by Bobby Wahl*



## James Buchanan Blitch Jr.

died at his home in Abita Springs, Louisiana on March 15, 2024, at the age of 76 after a three and a half year battle with cancer. Jim was born in New Orleans to Hilda Goodspeed Mouledoux and James Buchanan Blitch Sr. on October 26, 1947. He is survived by his beloved wife of 27 years, Lovelle Johnston-Keen Blitch and his two sons, James Buchanan Blitch III and his wife Melissa, and Jason Mackenzie Blitch. He is also survived by his adored grandchildren, Madison, Abigail and Gavin Blitch. Jim is also survived by his stepson, Russell Clark Pottharst Jr. and step grandson, Cohen Blake Pottharst. Jim was the eldest son of a large and tightly knit family and will be deeply missed by his siblings, John "Jack" Crandell Blitch, Ronald Buchanan Blitch, Courtney Ann Blitch (George Long), David Alan Blitch (Margaret), Leslie Blitch Wells (Russell) and Lisl Blitch Moyer Huckins (Paul). Jim was a graduate of De La Salle High School and Louisiana State University where he received a bachelor's degree in construction management. He enjoyed a long and distinguished career supervising large projects for leading construction companies in Louisiana and across the country. Before retirement, he ran his own construction consulting and outsourcing firm. Jim served four years in the United States Air Force as a Morse Systems Operator and Radio Dispatcher, serving at Keesler Air Force Base and Elmendorf Air Force Base in Anchorage, Alaska. He was honorably discharged with the rank of Staff Sergeant and earned the Air Force Good Conduct Medal and the National Defense Service Medal.



## Clinton Schmidt

passed away peacefully on Monday, December 4, 2023, at the age of 67. He was born in New Orleans, LA, on September 19, 1956 to Patricia and Harry Schmidt, Jr. He is survived by his loving siblings, Connie Aucoin, Marie Kickel, and Harry Schmidt III. He is also survived by his nieces, nephews, cousins, and wonderful lifelong friends. A native of New Orleans, and proud resident of Slidell, LA for over 15 years, Clinton graduated from East Jefferson High School, in Metairie, LA. After high school, he began his professional career as a commentator for WSMB radio. Clinton was successful and well respected as a radio presence from the New Orleans to the Northshore area.



## Alvin Robert Albe Sr.



passed away peacefully on the morning of February 15, 2024 at the age of 91. Alvin was born September 17, 1932 in New Orleans, Louisiana. Alvin married Yelva Petithory Albe on September 28, 1952. They were each other's lifelong companions for the past 71 years. Alvin attended F.T. Nicholls high school and worked most of his life as a supervisor at National Linen Service in New Orleans. Alvin was preceded in death by his parents, Charles Albe and Wilhelmina Peetz Albe; sisters, Myrle Albe Carter, Mildred Albe St Angelo, Ivy Albe; brothers, Charles, Ferdinand, William, Malcom and Joseph. Alvin is survived by his loving wife, Yelva Petithory Albe; his children, Alvin R. Albe, Jr. (Virginia), Linda Albe Reeg (Frank), Robert H. Albe and Donna Albe Shepherd (David); his seven grandchildren, Jennifer Albe Miller, Lauren Albe Jumper, Leslie Albe Field, Karen Reeg Oliveri, Steven Reeg, Sean Busby and Rachel Shepherd; and his eight great grandchildren, Jackson, Madison, Abby, Lily, Frank V, Alexandra, Carter and Liam. Alvin lived a long and fulfilled life. In his golden years he loved

going on cruises with his family and visiting casinos with his wife.

## Videos & links

**NEW Friday Night Lights:** The Offensive Line – without them, nothing would have happened.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MsxzB3YrLJ8>

**Yearbooks:** All four years of our high school days can be found on Dan McGovern Google drive as well as a class roster and Los Islenos Crawfish party photos

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1--F4KLMT8hfN1ojGkcV556B1E8S1E3o9?usp=share\\_link](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1--F4KLMT8hfN1ojGkcV556B1E8S1E3o9?usp=share_link)

Holy Cross Bulletins on google drive :

[https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Ysn\\_Z77exN9gZn-x\\_7QdcTf\\_NR0HE8B0](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1Ysn_Z77exN9gZn-x_7QdcTf_NR0HE8B0)

Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/HolyCross1971>

Web Page - - access all 22 previous HC71 newsletters

<https://hubhobbyshop.com/holy-cross-new-orleans/>

YouTube Channel

<https://www.youtube.com/@holycrossneworleansclassof1971>

## CHANGE OF VENUE



Now At Holy Cross

*Holy Cross High  
School*

5500 Paris Ave  
New Orleans LA

Sunday April 21, 2024

1:00 pm to 6:00 pm  
Outside or in the  
Huddle