

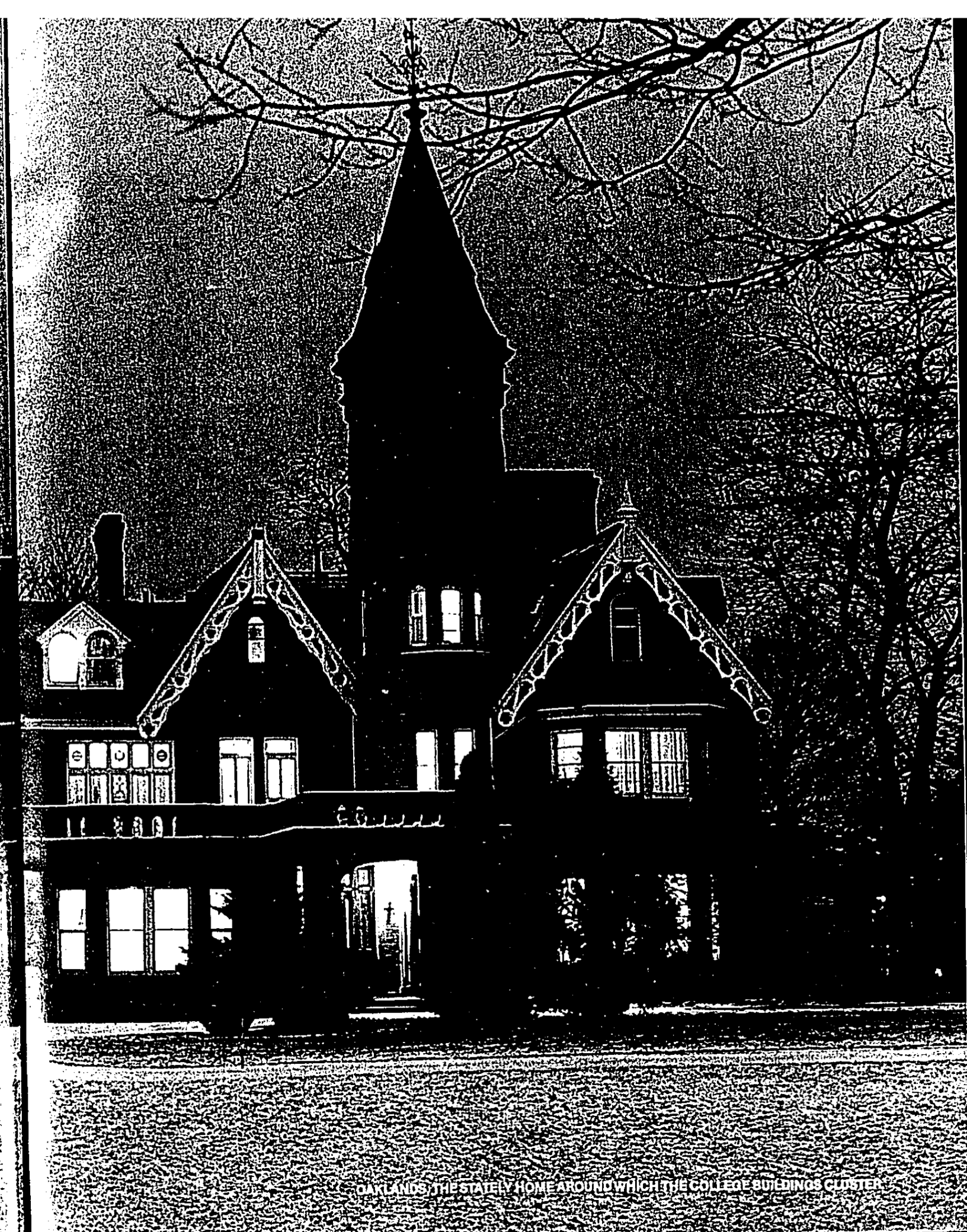
# ALL THINGS RIGHT & DUTIFUL

DISCIPLINE AND TRADITIONAL ROMAN CATHOLIC VALUES ARE STILL THE MAJOR SUBJECTS AT DE LA SALLE COLLEGE • BY WILLIAM STEPHENSON

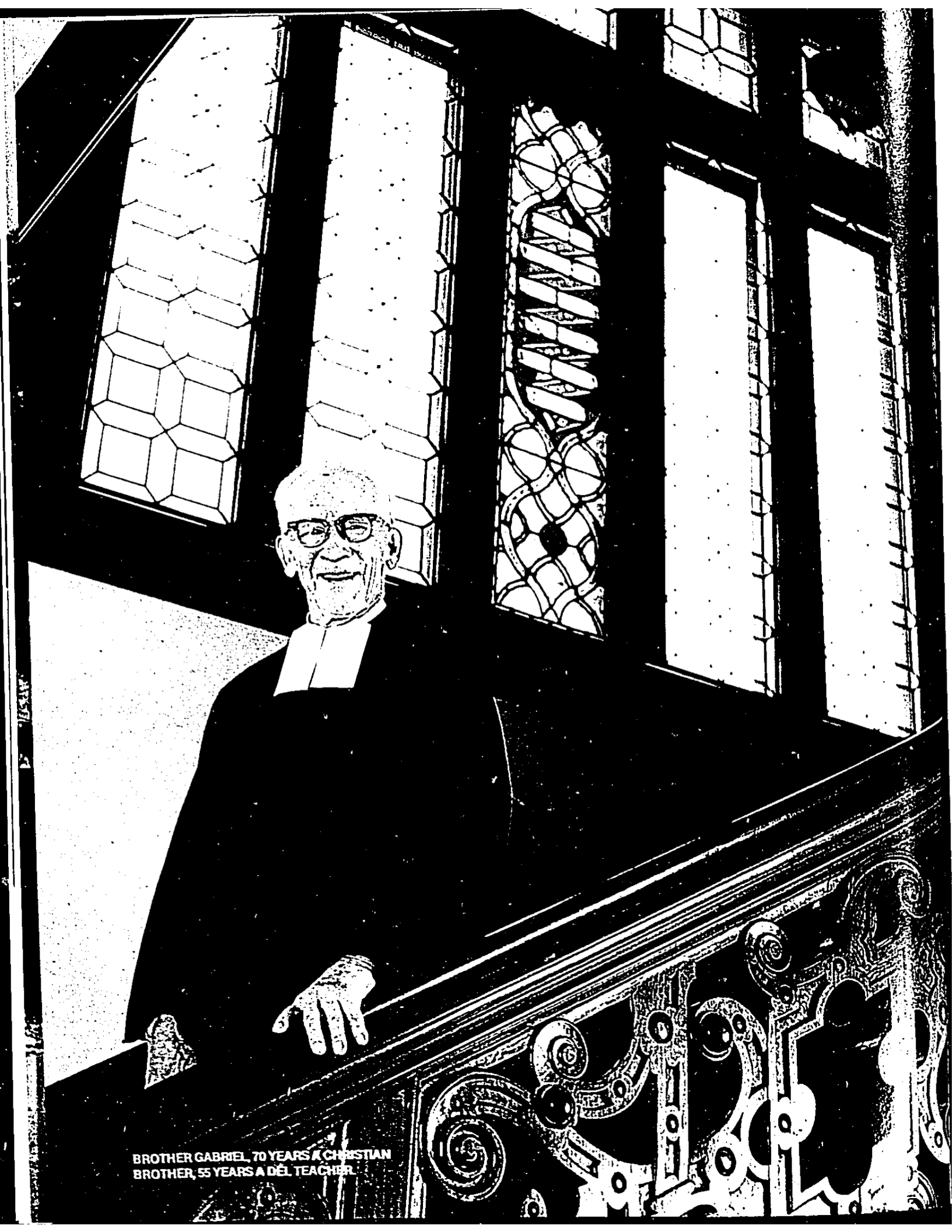
**W**HAT DO YOU MAKE OF A TORONTO SCHOOL THAT SENDS POSSES AFTER STUDENTS who play hooky, sometimes despite parental excuses? A school so crowded the kids almost have to go to the toilet in shifts, yet which will hold special classes for as few as one youngster? A tough place that even in the Year of the Child still believed a tick of the sick did wonders for daydreamers? A school that badly needs a swimming pool, but went along with parents' demands and added on more courses in Latin instead? That's De La Salle College, "Oaklands," the bustling bailiwick of the Christian Brothers, energetic instillers of the Roman Catholic way of life in generations of young gentlemen. ▶

PHOTOGRAPH BY FONTANA





OAKLANDS, THE STATELY HOME AROUND WHICH THE COLLEGE BUILDINGS CLUSTER



BROTHER GABRIEL, 70 YEARS A CHRISTIAN  
BROTHER, 55 YEARS A DEL TEACHER

Parents leave their sons' education to us, so we feel free to use methods a bit different from the norm, to be part of our students' lives seven days a week," explains Brother Edgar Fazackerley, the trim, 57-year-old principal of "Del," as the college at the brow of the Avenue Road hill is affectionately known. "You might say we're Home and School or the PTA carried to the ultimate extreme."

It is this dedication to molding their 1,000-plus grade- and high-school students – and the insistence on whole-hearted participation by the boys themselves – that decrees the Del staff be *Christian Brothers*, not the full-fledged priests their own educations and teaching expertise might appear to warrant.

"Teaching and supervisory schedules are so heavy there'd be no time left for parish duties if we were priests," explains Brother Gabriel, 86, veteran of 70 years in the order, 55 of those as a teacher.

How Gabriel could teach for 55 years at a school not yet 50 years of age is explained by the fact that the *Christian Brothers* – an order founded three centuries ago this year by French aristocrat Jean-Baptiste de la Salle and currently active (and often persecuted) in more than 60 countries – established its first Toronto school at Jarvis and Lombard streets back in 1851. Thus Oaklands Del is regarded as only



FIRST THING WHEN SCHOOL'S OUT, OFF COME THE HATED JACKETS AND TIES.

an extension of the old one, not a new and distinct school.

Gene Lockhart, the late Hollywood character actor (his daughter June was Lassie's TV mum) was proud of having been in Del's 1909 commercial course – first in Canada to teach typewriting – when the college was at Duke and Frederick streets. Its last major location before Oaklands opened in 1931 was at 69 Bond Street, where many of its famous traditions were developed.

Among these were the school's sprightly paper, *The Delescope*; its cadet corps; and the celebrated drum-

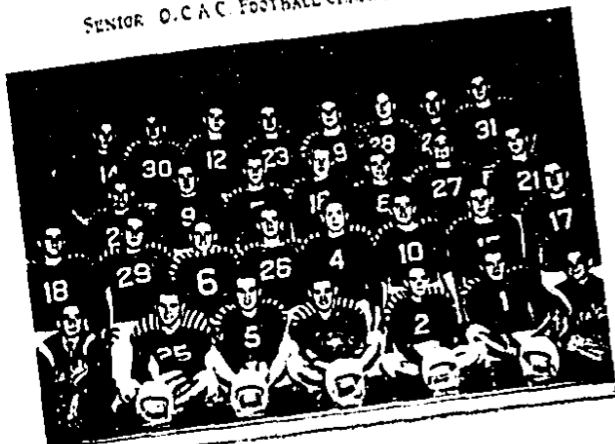
and-bugle bands, up to 125 boys strong, whose glorious blue-and-gold uniforms demolished maidens' inhibitions as easily as their music wowed judges of marching band competitions, including those at the 1939 New York World's Fair. Bands were discontinued at Del in the mid-Seventies when travel costs began outstripping value received. But lately they have begun to return, as few as 22 boys, wearing much less flamboyant raiment, but bands nevertheless.

"Let's face it," says Phillip Kortenaar, 15, who plays the flute. "Once bands get in your blood, you just gotta play or go bonkers."

Then there was the choral society, which out-warbled all opposition in 1924, and the drama society, which inaugurated the custom of teaming up with Catholic girls' schools to stage comedies, passion plays and musicals, usually to capacity houses in Massey Hall. They still pack 'em in for performances in their own 850-seat auditorium at Oaklands. A picture on the corridor wall shows distinguished American composer Richard Rodgers beaming at a Del cast of the *Sixties* fea-

DEL AND FOOTBALL WAS A WINNING MIX. AT LEFT, THE 1955 CHAMPIONS COACHED BY ARGO NOBBY WIRKOWSKI.

SENIOR O.C.A.C. FOOTBALL CHAMPIONS 1955



DE LA SALLE "OAKLANDS"

Front row: Paul Morrison, John Taylor, Ben Stankovic, Bill Burns, Tom Ryan, Willie Gossard, George Morgan, Jim  
Second row: John Wiers, Frank McElroy, Joe Gossard, Paul Taylor, John Henry, George Connolly, Jack O'Connell, Jim Carr  
Third row: John Henry, Tom Carr, Paul Patterson, Paul Gossard, Vince Archibald, Tom Weller, Jim Carr, Tom Gossard  
Fourth row: Don Walsh, Paul Gossard, John Henry, Tom Carr, Tom Gossard, John Henry, Tom Gossard  
Fifth row: Tom Gossard, John Henry, Tom Carr, Paul Patterson, Paul Gossard, John Henry, Tom Gossard  
Sixth row: Paul Gossard, John Henry, Tom Carr, Paul Patterson, Paul Gossard, John Henry, Tom Gossard



turing Diane Stapley - whose three brothers were at Del - as she accepts kudos for her role in his musical, *Carousel*. The 1978 offering was *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, 1979's was *Finian's Rainbow* and this spring's musical will be *South Pacific*.

But it was from entirely different material that Del's greatest public acclaim was carved.

"For a long time we were to high-school football what St. Mike's was to college hockey," recalls Brother Michael, Del's math whiz and sports coach, now taking it easy in his 80th year. "For Junior B hockey we, too, could pack the Gardens in the late Forties, when we won the title five years running. But football was our big winner."

Del put so much emphasis on this bruising sport that it usually hired a top Argo as its own coach. Nobby Wirkowski was at Del in 1952, the year he quarterbacked the Argos to their last Grey Cup. Unlike the Argos, Del's senior team has topped its own league eight times since then, the last time in 1969. The juniors won last year.

But sports and musical comedy, singing and sexy uniforms, though they may represent the stuff of which graduate nostalgia is compounded, do not make an institute of learning. De La Salle has other dimensions.

"Parents probably send their sons to us for the discipline and sense of personal direction we give them, more than for the academic or athletic honors they might attain," explains Brother George Morgan, 40, student guidance counsellor and a Del grad of '58.

At one time Del educated tads from Day One to college entrance. Now super-tight budgets and space permit only minor Grades 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10, accommodating 160 boys. Parents of the 862 boys in Grades 11, 12 and 13 - not all of them Catholics - ante up \$675 per son. It's good value, however. Where Ontario demands a minimum of 27 course credits, Del gave its kids 32 until forced financially to throttle back recently to only 30.

One popular course, Family Life, handles all aspects of Canadian living, even sex, with more maturity than many university courses elsewhere. Religion, added on each day, is not rote catechism but a sensitive exploration of the Catholic ethos and the reasons for it.

So crowded is the main school building that eight portable classrooms are required and the students' Smoking Room - included in the plans when the school was opened in 1950 and featuring lots of ashtrays but no seats - is now a staff lounge. Students may still smoke, but only outdoors. "We



THE FIRST DE LA SALLE (ABOVE) WAS ESTABLISHED IN 1851. ITS PRESENT HOME WAS BUILT IN 1860 BY WEALTHY TORONTO DRAPER JOHN MACDONALD.

don't keep tabs on when or what they smoke," explains Brother Edgar. "We only hope it's tobacco." For trying stronger drugs, three boys were expelled last year.

Despite the crush in the gym, washrooms and especially the cafeteria - the first lunch-sitting is at 10:30 a.m. - scholastic standards at Del are steadily rising. Last May 3 some 6,500 students from all over eastern North America bucked current educational taboos against competition in the classroom and openly competed for chemistry research fellowships at the Universities of Toronto and Waterloo. When the results were announced, two Del students - Dominic Tse and Armando Mastrapaolo - shared the top three places with a student at the United Nations International School in New York.

"Their dedication is fantastic," marvels Dr. Desmond Pearce, who left nearby Upper Canada College to head the science department at Del four years ago because he thought science was not as appreciated at UCC as it might be. "We recommend at least two hours of homework a night, but some boys literally have to be forced into bed by their parents." Non-brothers like Pearce - and a few women teachers - now greatly outnumber the religious brothers, though Brother Edgar admits to "hopes" of correcting the imbalance in the future.

Until 1960 Del was also famous as a boarding school, though the live-ins never numbered more than 60 or 70. Many were from Latin America but a



few were from other parts of Canada and others, like Pierre Salinger - later press secretary to the first Catholic American president, John F. Kennedy - came to Del from the U.S. The school now has about 75 students from Hong Kong, but they all live with relatives or in communal apartments. (Most famous student still very much around is undoubtedly Eddie Shack, who came to Del to brush up on his English, and who shared the popularity honors with a beautiful white Samoyed school mascot named Della, now also retired. Eddie can be counted on to turn up each closing night at the school's fine indoor rink, paid for mainly by students and their parents.)

Another practice almost unique to Del was spanking even grown boys for such transgressions as blaspheming, defacing school property or reading skin magazines. CFRB's Bill Deegan remembers the punishments as regular happenings, "and good for us, too." Major Fred Tilston, who won the Victoria Cross in World War II, considered the wallopings as "normal, but more painful than usual" parts of the



Del curriculum. So did Mike Wadsworth, who later went from Del scrimmages to the Argos and thence into law. Hugh Bruce, another Toronto lawyer, didn't particularly mind the clobberings. "But what got me," he remembers, "was that while the brother was laying it on hard enough to leave permanent scars, he'd be praying for even *more* strength to make sure I got the message!"

Today relations are much more relaxed, though some brothers still use wooden paddles – humorously inscribed "Board of Education" or "That Old Del Spirit" – to remind boys who is boss, and make liberal use of the "D-Tention" for youngsters who don't pay proper "A-Tention." Few boys mind this, or even the two-teacher posses who round them up from wherever they may be (pinball parlor, lurid movie or, in the case of one Chinese student seeing snow for the first time, from a distant park) and supervise their detentions. But to a boy the students detest the continuing punishment: having to wear school blazers, green for grade school, navy blue for the upper forms.

"Nobody else has to wear them, not even UCC," grumbled one crowd of a dozen boys. "We take them off the moment we leave the grounds."

Another pet peeve is teachers who load boys up with homework on important social or sports weekends: "One brother does it because he says he likes reading fiction; that is, the stuff he gets from us because we haven't time to read all the books and have to fake our answers. He's forgotten what it's like to be young."

But keeping boys' noses to the wheel is not the end purpose of Del discipline any more than it is the creation of sports or stage stars.

"We've proved we can excel in the physical aspects of education," explains Brother George. "Now we must put our emphasis on instilling in all our students the desire to help others, not for school credits or even for their own satisfaction but simply because the need is there."

As an integral part of this program Del is asking each boy to devote at least 25 hours per year to this selfless purpose; to bring in, at year's end, a note signed by the head of Princess Margaret Hospital or a home for retarded children – or perhaps just the little old lady down the block – testifying to the aid and comfort they've received from that particular Del boy.

In so doing, though neither the Del boys nor the brothers may realize it, they are only imitating Scottish-born John Macdonald, the biggest Canadian drapery wholesaler of his day, who in 1860 built – as a home for his children (eventually there were 10 of them) –

the mansion where most of the De La Salle brothers live today. Macdonald, the militant Methodist and the only Liberal ever made a senator by his friend and namesake, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald, regularly gave away to charity one-fifth of all he earned. He financed so many educational and religious institutions that he had no fewer than 37 silver trowels as mementoes of cornerstones he'd laid. But he had many odd private charities, such as the home for Alaskan girls.

At his death in 1890 he was lauded as "A Merchant Prince," and "one of the greatest human benefactors Canada was privileged to call her own."

The Macdonald family lived at Oaklands until 1905, when it was taken over by Mary Virginia McCormick, spinster daughter of the Cyrus H. McCormick who invented the first practical mechanical reaper in 1831. Miss McCormick, a Presbyterian like her father, installed in the austere Methodist mansion such fripperies as a needle shower, her own private bowling alley and a dentist's chair, though the only professional man actually living in the house was her personal doctor. Also residing on the grounds of Oaklands were the members of her private black band. She was wont to call upon them at any hour of the day or night to perform in the ballroom.

Mary Virginia's only real eccentricity, however, was that if a horse-drawn vehicle stopped nearby – even a grocer's cart or an ice wagon – she might climb aboard and drive off. But each fall when she left for California she did so in style, never using fewer than 14 limousines for her entourage and herself.

"Miss McCormick contracted a throat ailment in 1926 and never did come back to Canada," recalls Brother Michael, who helped transform the maiden lady's hideaway into the Christian Brothers' school. "But her estate was generous, letting us have her magnificent home and grounds for a reasonable \$300,000."

The bowling alley, the ballroom and even the dental equipment had to go to make way for classrooms, chapels and other more practical requirements. But one bit of the original 1860 handiwork was left intact. This was a motto on the stained-glass window in the fine hallway:

*Through this wide open gate  
None come too soon, nor return too  
late.*

"Senator Macdonald probably considered that a noble expression of hospitality," says Brother Edgar. Then, with a grin, "But I wonder how our boys reporting in here to take their lumps must feel about it? It doesn't bear repeating." ●