

Franciscans celebrate 100 years in western Canada

A Gala to recognize the work of the Franciscans was held October 3rd, 2008. Justice Ed MacCallum, a graduate of St. Anthony's College was the guest speaker. He spoke of the success of the school, the graduates and recalled some humorous moments living in a dormitory run by a religious community. Here are some excerpts from Justice MacCallum's Centennial speech.

"St. Anthony's College [SAC] was established as a vehicle to foster vocations to the priesthood and religious life, but it served an important corollary purpose as a home for boys who needed a focussed environment and a firm hand to get through high school...

It was a strict place, especially by modern standards. Except for one afternoon per month, if you were good, you were confined to barracks. We somehow got along without radio, TV, newspapers, and female companionship; we caught up with most of these things later in life, although some of us still can't dance...

A few uncharitable commentators have compared SAC to other North Edmonton destinations such as The Fort and The Edmonton Max, but only in jest...

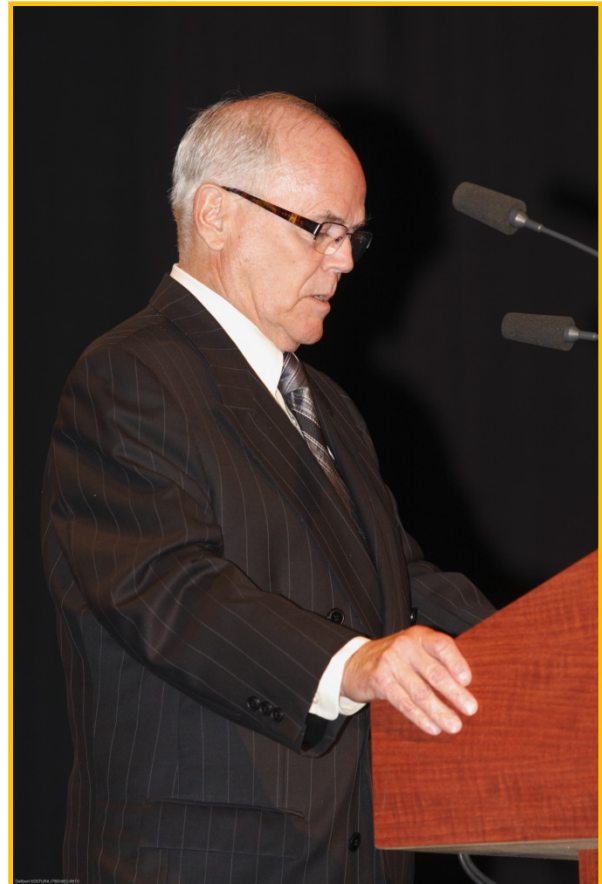
Actually it was a place of tranquility, designed to elevate the spirit and mortify the flesh-it worked...

The monastic vows of poverty, chastity and obedience were taken by the friars and observed by the students. Not that we minded. Many of us came from poor homes where poverty was not unthinkable...

Chastity, a quaint notion nowadays, was no big deal for most of us-especially those from Irish Catholic homes where education in such matters was commonly deferred until marriage made the subject academic...

The third vow, obedience, was the easiest to accept, considering that most of the staff were tall, tough and Teutonic. Banish from your minds any image you might have of pink cheeked Bavarians prancing around in lederhausen to the rollicking music of Oktoberfest...

The Seiferlings, Wagners, Sebastians, Kueflers and Fuchs of our day were recruited from the hardest German stock that Saskatchewan had to offer in the 30's and 40's...



Father Canisius, for heaven's sake, could walk around the gym on his hands...
Try telling him you wouldn't do push ups!

He coached hockey and making the team meant keeping the ice clear, so it was about 10% stickhandling and 90% shoveling. Opponents called our rink Lake Superior. It measured 210' X 95'-NHL take note- and it regularly blew in with snow which we then shoveled over the boards and at each other in about equal measure...

Once, in a close quarter snow fight, Billy Dardis nailed me in the head with his scoop shovel resulting in a spectacular vascular event which called for the ministrations of our enthusiastic infirmarian Father Edwin...

Father was largely unschooled in his discipline and under his care it could be truly said that the cure was worse than the disease...

In today's litigious world I would have sued Dardis, the Franciscans, and the manufacturer of the scoop shovel, because I suspect that the injury led to premature and permanent baldness. Certainly, more than a few brain cells were murdered, which cost me my chance to become a bishop, and later on chief justice-both positions requiring a full deck...

But I digress... Back to SAC, specifically to the kitchen. The cuisine, to be charitable, was memorable. Mind you, nobody starved, because the fare was substantial... Porridge was delivered daily by Edmonton Transit Mix...

Graduates of SAC have distinguished themselves in the clergy, in business, agriculture and the professions out of all proportion to the size of the institution. One might attribute this to natural selection - only the strong survived the porridge, but in truth success came through the efforts of the dedicated, sensible friars who followed a principled approach in all they did. Spirituality imbued all activities. Lifelong friendships were formed between students and staff and not one of us was left untouched by their example... "

Justice Ed MacCallum