

Message from the President

Building community: A daring plan

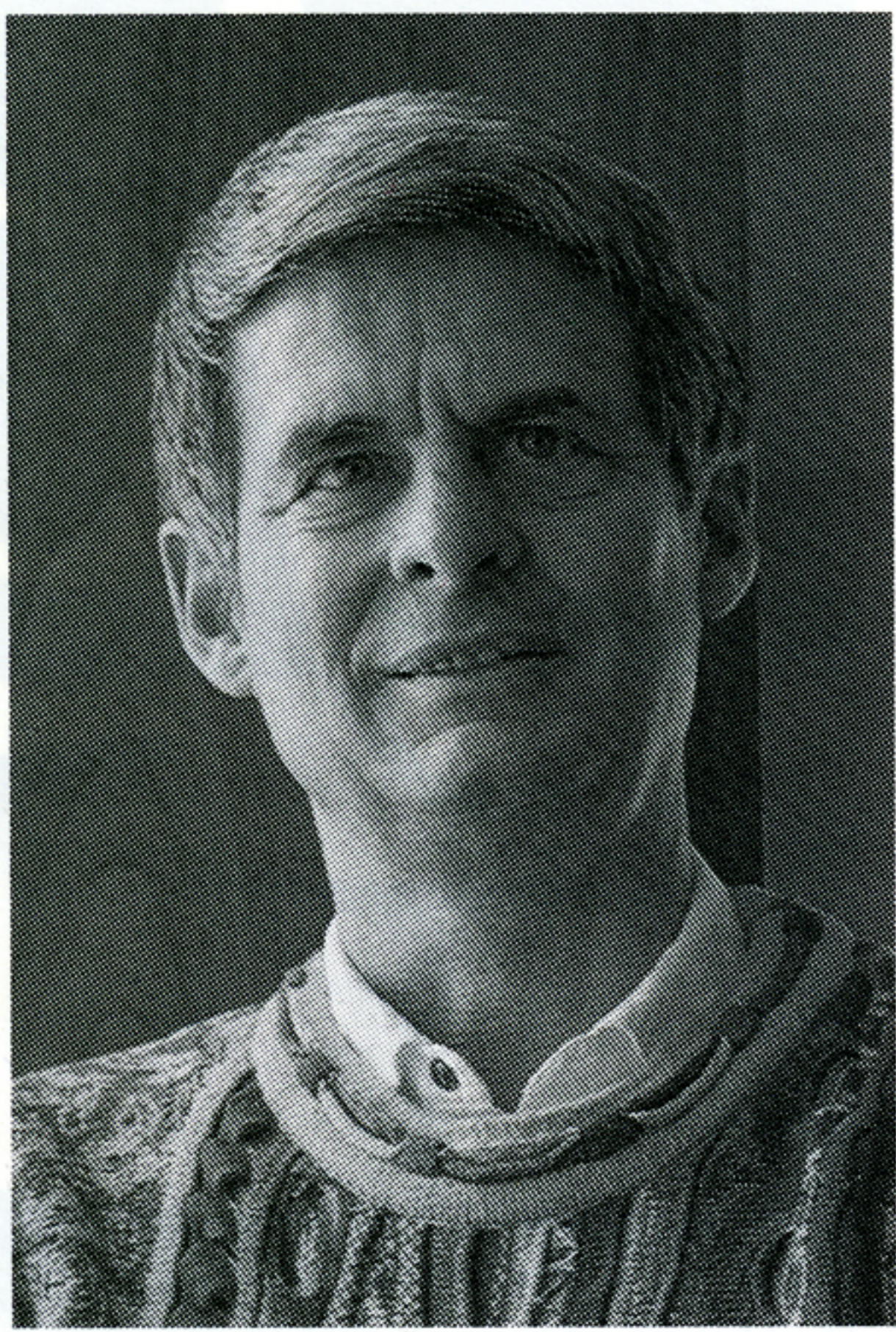


Photo: Ron Hewson

Doug Letson, President,
St. Jerome's College

The College's Board of Governors has given its unanimous approval to proceed with the \$2 million development of a 275-seat cafeteria which will provide a common meeting ground

High-school students swarm the College

By all accounts, this year's Campus Day was the best yet. Over 150 high-school students and their parents showed up at St. Jerome's the morning of March 12, anxious to get a first-hand look at the place. They attended information sessions, toured the main building and residences, and had a chance to talk with College faculty, staff, and students.

"It was the best Campus Day since I've been Registrar," says Dana Woito. "Mother Nature helped. It was a glorious spring day." But Woito also gives credit to the student volunteers who showed visitors through the residences. "They're the best ambassadors the College could have."

These are unsettling times in Ontario, troublesome times on the province's campuses, challenging times at St. Jerome's – we are, all of us, unmistakably on the verge of a new and exciting era.

As one sign of the times, we are now facing the reality of the decision taken by the School Sisters of Notre Dame to redirect their energies to social justice activities and, as a result, to conclude their 34-year collaboration with St. Jerome's College. Their March 2 celebration, thank-you, and send-off provided an opportunity for past residents and long-time friends to recall what was and to reflect on what can be. Clearly, no one can replace the Sisters; realistically, we need now to look for meaningful ways to build on their legacy.

For their part, they have embarked on their own exciting future as they become involved in social justice apostolates like the Betty Thompson Youth Centre in Kitchener where the Sisters have decided to become actively engaged in

ministering to the young living on the city's streets.

There has been a lot of excitement on campus about a College decision related to the departure of the School Sisters of Notre Dame – the combining of the NDC and J.R. Finn cafeterias into a single, integrated, and modern facility. At a special February 22 meeting of the College's Board of Governors, the Board gave its unanimous approval to proceed with the \$2 million development of a 275-seat cafeteria which will provide a common meeting ground for the women and the men of the two residences as well as offer a welcoming place for St. Jerome's registrants not living in residence: a well-lit and comfortable area to eat, to meet, and to mingle – to help build community and facilitate a

sense of identity amongst those various groups who have chosen to identify with St. Jerome's.

It is a daring plan at a time when government is gutting university budgets – the cutbacks are particularly hard on smaller institutions like St. Jerome's which do not have the flexibility to react to such huge reductions in grants, in part because of our size, in part because we do not receive the capital grants awarded to secular universities, but also because we have long since had to learn to do with less. At St. Jerome's there is simply no excess to cut. Nevertheless, St. Jerome's Board was persuaded of the spiritual need to build community, of the physical necessity to update aging kitchen and dining facilities which have been in service since 1962, and of the potential generosity of the College's friends and supporters who we are convinced will assist us in our need to renew.

Renewal does not, unfortunately, consist of mere bricks and mortar. As you will read elsewhere in *SJC Update*, four of St. Jerome's faculty have elected to accept the much celebrated Special Early Retirement Program introduced by UW – as members of the UW Pension Plan, St. Jerome's faculty and staff were eligible to receive its benefits somewhat earlier than any of us had anticipated. The early retirement decisions of psychology professors Peter Naus, John Theis, and Judy Van Evra leave the College's Department of Psychology with an urgency to be reborn, especially when one considers the Long-Term Disability status of Professor John Orlando who is still convalescing from a serious auto accident which he was involved in last Easter. And because of Professor Mary Malone's decision to retire early, the restructuring of the Religious Studies Department is already under way.

St. Jerome's College clearly stands on the threshold of a new and exciting era. More than ever it needs the support and encouragement of those who have gone before, of those who believe in what St. Jerome's was and what St. Jerome's can be. We do hope that our graduates and friends will share in the excitement. 🍀

Class of '96 rises to the challenge

When tuition fees rise almost 20% this fall as a result of government funding cuts to universities in Ontario, scholarships and bursaries will become even more important to students struggling to make ends meet. But thanks to the success of the 1996 Graduating Class Challenge, there will be a little more financial support available to St. Jerome's students who need it. This year's graduating class has pledged to contribute over \$5,700 to the Graduates' Association Scholarship/Bursary.

"This is the most successful grad class challenge ever, both in terms of amount pledged and participation," says Dave Augustyn, Co-ordinator of Graduate Affairs at the College. "Six students from the graduating class – Julie Bielik, Dave Donohue, Chris McGrath, Andrew McKenna, Danielle Searles,

and Joe Vincec – helped organize the effort and canvassed their classmates."

Since 1990, graduating classes have pledged over \$23,000 to the Graduates' Association Scholarship/Bursary, tangible evidence of their commitment to the accessibility of higher education and to academic achievement. Graduating students see the pledge as a way of giving future students the opportunity to grow socially, spiritually, personally, and academically in the St. Jerome's community.

Interest generated by the fund is awarded to students in the form of scholarships and bursaries. During the 1995/96 academic year, for example, four students received a total of \$3,700 from the Graduates' Association Scholarship/Bursary. 🍀