



Thomas Aquinas College NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1991

10000 North Ojai Road, Santa Paula, California 93060

First Day on the Job: The Feast Day of St. Thomas Aquinas

Thomas E. Dillon, New President of the College

January 28, 1991, the feast day of St. Thomas Aquinas, was also Thomas E. Dillon's first full day on the job as the new president of Thomas Aquinas College.

Having served as dean for ten years, Dr. Dillon commented to Los Angeles Times reporter Leo Smith, "Now I feel responsible for the whole institution."

It is perhaps a measure of the College's success under the 20-year-long tenure of outgoing President Ronald P. McArthur that a Los Angeles Times reporter was covering the transition.

Since the 1971 founding of the College by McArthur and six like-minded associates, 372 students have been graduated. Despite this modest number, the College has come to occupy an increasingly prominent place in the landscape of American higher education.

Most recently, *The National Review College Guide* named Thomas Aquinas College as one of America's 50 top liberal arts schools. (See article below.)

McArthur would be unlikely to cite any particular personal responsibility for the College's success. Rather, as he wrote several years ago, he would point to "the almost overwhelming tradition of Catholic education which comes down to us from a beginning many centuries before Christ, and which has incorporated and elevated all natural learning with the light of faith. That tradition we hope to bring alive for our students."

Incoming President Thomas Dillon is a product of this tradition, and it is a special grace that he began his work on the feast day of College patron St. Thomas Aquinas, the greatest of the doctors of the Church.

Like McArthur, the 44-year-old Dillon is a graduate of St. Mary's College of California. He received his master's and doctoral degrees in philosophy from Notre Dame and joined the Thomas Aquinas College faculty in 1972.

At a recent dinner honoring Ronald

McArthur, Dr. Dillon acknowledged his personal debt to the outgoing president, saying, "When I was a college freshman, I was not ready for the Great Books. It was my good fortune, though, to have had Dr. McArthur as a tutor, and he was especially adept at helping make those books accessible. There is no question that as my tutor, he was instrumental in changing my life for the better."

Describing McArthur's contribution to Thomas Aquinas College, Dillon went on to say: "Dr. McArthur left behind a comfortable position as a tenured professor at another college to take up the unlikely task of starting, in the most difficult of times, a new Catholic college — a college where there would be no compromise of high intellectual standards and no compromise of the Catholic faith."

"This endeavor took uncommon courage and perseverance, and it has entailed great personal sacrifices

through the years. We are all very much indebted to Dr. McArthur, for without his vigorous intellectual and moral leadership, without his steadfast determination to do the best things in education, Thomas Aquinas College would not have been possible."

Looking ahead to his own term as College president, Dillon challenged the audience to recommit themselves "to the noble ideals which Dr. McArthur has passed on to us and which have formed this College."

In a gesture both fitting and moving, Dillon concluded his remarks by repeating the traditional charge given by McArthur to Thomas Aquinas graduates on Commencement Day.

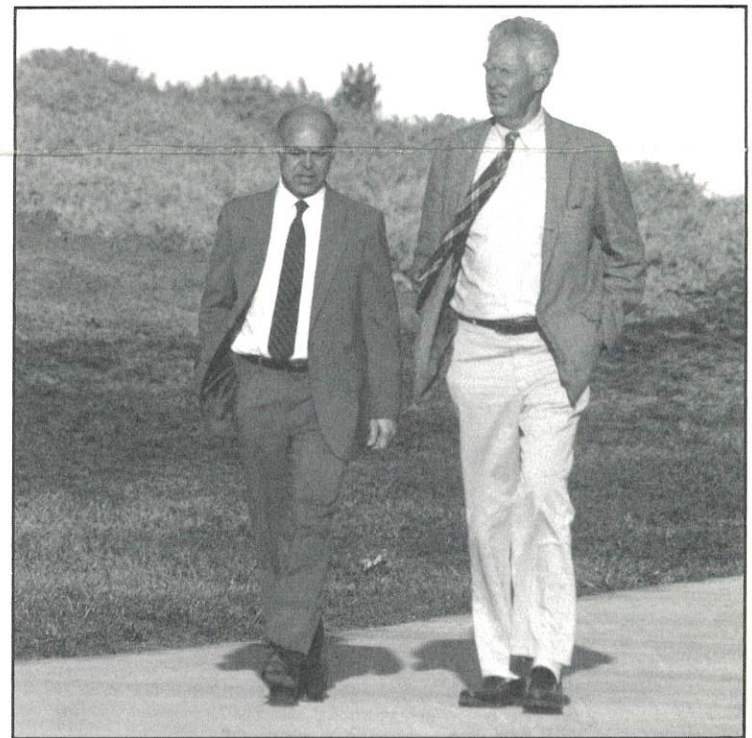
Rooted as the College is in tradition, the transition from the tenure of Ronald McArthur to that of Thomas Dillon will not be abrupt. But tradition is a living thing, and guided by it, Dr. Dillon will also leave his mark on the life of Thomas Aquinas College.

MILESTONES: THE MCARTHUR YEARS

1968, SUMMER: Ronald McArthur and Marcus Berquist write first draft of the Blue Book, *A Proposal for the Fulfillment of Catholic Liberal Education*. Henry Salvatori backs proposal with seed money, becoming first donor.
1969, JULY: Thomas Aquinas College incorporated to implement *A Proposal*. McArthur named president.
1971, SEPTEMBER: Thomas Aquinas College opens doors to students at campus in Calabasas, Calif. First class, 33 students.
1975, JUNE: First College Commencement, 17 students graduate.
1978, FALL: College moves to Ferndale Ranch campus, its present location.
1979, MAY: St. Joseph Commons, first permanent campus structure, is dedicated.
1980, JUNE: Thomas Aquinas College receives full accreditation from

Western Association of Schools and Colleges.
1982, JUNE: Mother Teresa addresses graduating class.
1987, JANUARY: College governors approve plan for increasing enrollment.
1987, SEPTEMBER: Record-sized freshman class enters College, 51 students.
1989, APRIL: St. Katharine Residence Hall for women is dedicated by Archbishop Roger Mahony.
1990, MAY: St. Augustine Hall, providing 10 classrooms, is dedicated by the Most Reverend G. Patrick Ziemann.
1990, SEPTEMBER: 48 students move into newly constructed St. Bernard Residence Hall for men.
1991, JANUARY: Ronald McArthur retires from College presidency.

On the eve of the transition, outgoing president Ronald P. McArthur, right, talks with incoming president Thomas E. Dillon.



LOS ANGELES TIMES PHOTO by George Wolf

Thomas Aquinas College Named One of America's 50 Top Liberal Arts Schools

The newly published *National Review College Guide: America's 50 Top Liberal Arts Schools* has placed Thomas Aquinas College within the select group of America's finest liberal arts colleges.

William F. Buckley, Jr., in the introduction to the guide, wrote: "Many parents have written to me during the 35 years that I have edited *National Review*, asking, many of them, that I recommend a 'good' college for their sons and daughters. This book is an open letter to all such inquirers."

In judging a school's suitability for inclusion in the guide, the book's editors, Charles Sykes and Brad Miner, used three criteria: the quality and availability of the faculty, the quality of the curriculum, and the quality of the intellectual environment.

Concerning faculty, the guide's editors wrote: "We look favorably upon a school that puts its best people between its underclassmen and a blackboard and values faculty teaching ability

above other measures of performance."

In discussing core curricula, Sykes and Miner commented: "A good core is not simply a collection of humanities courses. Ideally, it should embrace the seven-discipline sequence of what was traditionally called the *trivium* and the *quadrivium*. . . . Knowledge of the Great Books and other sources of traditional wisdom is the soul of citizenship. . . ."

Thomas Aquinas College might well serve as the touchstone in both these categories. As the College's *Bulletin of Information* explicitly states: "The faculty members of Thomas Aquinas College. . . believe that a teacher's worth is in teaching," and that "the (seven) liberal arts are first in the order of learning."

Sykes and Miner describe the Thomas Aquinas curriculum as "a sweeping tour of the greatest and most influential works of the Western civilization, surely one of the most rigorous curriculums of any school in the country."

Thomas Aquinas Students Capture Top Awards: Substantial Grants for Serious Research

Three Thomas Aquinas College students — senior Anne M. Milligan, Glenview, Ill.; junior Sean A. Kelsey, Freehold, N.J., and sophomore Jason C. van Boom, Altadena, Calif. — have competed for and won major awards for their writing projects.

Van Boom and Kelsey have been awarded \$2,200 Younger Scholars grants by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), Washington, D.C., to conduct independent research and writing projects this summer. Nationwide, the NEH selected 87 college students to receive the awards.

Commenting from Washington, NEH Chairman Lynne V. Cheney said, "We are pleased to provide these outstanding young people this unique opportunity to conduct serious humanities research and writing projects this summer."

Sean Kelsey's study project is entitled "Aristotle's Argument for Immortality." "Karl Popper and the Testing of Scientific Hypotheses" is the subject of Jason van Boom's project.

In the past, a number of NEH Younger Scholars have seen their final research papers appear in scholarly publications or win awards in academic competitions.

Anne Milligan won the \$1,000 top prize in the 1991 essay competition sponsored by the Los Angeles-Pasadena Committee of the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America.

She read her essay, "How the Modern Humanists Destroy the True Intentions of the Founding Fathers," at the society's scholarship meeting held April 18.

In the past, other Thomas Aquinas College students have also competed successfully in the essay contest, which encourages original research in American colonial life between 1600 and 1810.

Commenting on the number of Thomas Aquinas winners, Mrs. Carson McKissick, Los Angeles-Pasadena Committee Patriotic Service Chairman, said, "It shows the students are reading material in depth which sparks genuine interest in our country's heritage."

Commencement '90

The Class of 1990 With Titles of the Senior Theses

Kathleen Jane Ayre
Vancouver, British Columbia
Love Is a Desire for Generation and Birth in Beauty: *On the Nature and Fruit of Marital Union*

Zeta Gay Chong
Delta, British Columbia
The Mirror of All Christian Kings: *Kingship in Shakespeare's The Tragedy of King Richard the Fourth, The First Part of King Henry the Fourth, The Second Part of King Henry the Fourth, and The Life of King Henry the Fifth*

Kenneth James Cools
Colbert, Washington
A Justification for Revolution Considered in Terms of the Establishment or Reestablishment of the Common Good, Peace

Edward De Vita
Vancouver, British Columbia
On the Nature of Time: A Comparison of the Relativistic and Aristotelian Views

John Frederick Gisla, Jr.
Sacramento, California
The Theory That Would Be King: What Are the Major Consequences for Human Civilization of the Philosophy of Evolution?

John Joseph Goyette
Woomera, South Australia
The Vindication of Newton's Universal Theory of Gravitation

John Joseph Higgins
Millbrook, New York
Music's Movement of the Soul According to the Principles of St. Thomas Aquinas

Daniel Lewis Jost
Lake in the Hills, Illinois
The Order and Perfection in the Tenth Book of Euclid's Elements

Clarinda Rose Kalian
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Regeneration in the Brothers Karamazov

Anne Beste Kemp
Arlington, Virginia
Double, Double, Toil and Trouble: Is Equivocation a Key to Understanding Macbeth?

Thomas Edward Kieffer
Phoenix, Arizona
On the Necessity of a Mediatrix

Michael Patrick Langley
Sterling, Massachusetts
Is Man Monogamous?

Agatha Catherine Lenzen
Sidney, Nebraska
Concerning the Status of Souls in Heaven: Will There Be Equality?

James Alexander McCoy
New Rochelle, New York
Suffering as the Ultimate Happiness in This Life

Rebecca Martha Mathie
St. Catherines, Ontario
Socrates Does Injustice and Is Meddlesome: An Examination of The Clouds

Rex Ebright Mohun
Novato, California
Natural Law and the Attainment of Virtue

Angela Mary Murray
Arvada, Colorado
Gulliver: A Model, or an Object of Mockery

Julia Kathryn Murray
Arvada, Colorado
Prospero Versus the Prince: A Reading of Shakespeare's The Tempest as a Response to Machiavelli's The Prince

Joanne Margaret Mary Orlowski
Vancouver, British Columbia
The Relationship Between the Universal Causality of God and the Freedom of the Will

Caroline Marie Louisa Pegis
Riverside, California
How the Characters in War and Peace Move from War to Peace Through the Development of Tolstoy's View of Faith

Raymond John Michael Pegis
Riverside, California
A Defense of the American Republican Form of Government in View of St. Thomas' Treatise, On Kingship

Carl Frederick Schmitt
Lancaster, Massachusetts
The Father and I Are One: A Linguistic Consideration in the Light of History and Philosophy

Margaret Evelyn Marie Short
Ridgely, Connecticut
Subiecti Invicem in Timore Christi

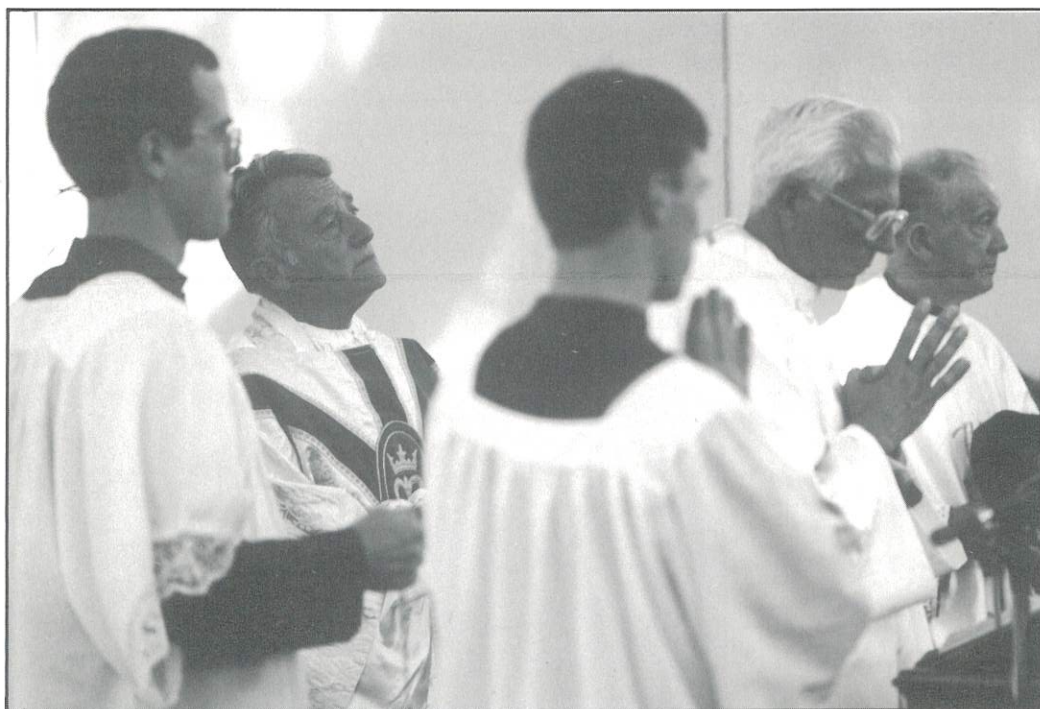
Wesley Eugene Stupar
Thousand Oaks, California
According to Plutarch, Was Julius Caesar or Alexander the Greater?

John Matthew Van Hecke
Colgate, Wisconsin
An Argument Against the Wave Theory of Light

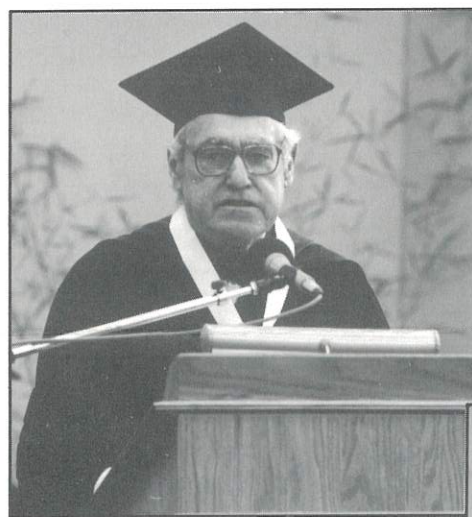
Andrew Thaddeus Wrzesinski
Sherman Oaks, California
Political Prudence: A Source of Confusion in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates

Lisa Zee
Los Angeles, California
Joy, the Flower of Virtue: An Explanation of Matthew 11:25-30

Nicholas Daniel Zepeda
Forks, Washington
You Must Therefore Be Perfect: Is Perfection Attainable for Sinners?



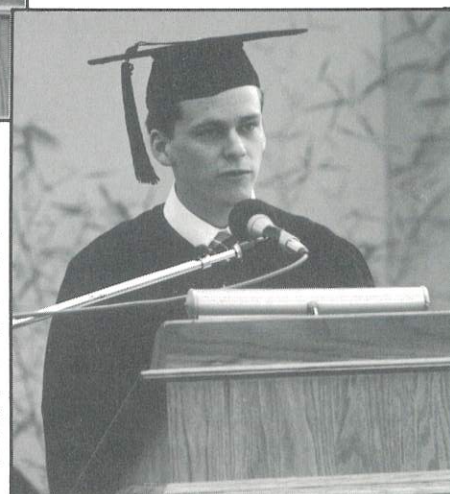
SPIRITUS DOMINI: The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole world, alleluia: and that which containeth all things hath knowledge of the voice, alleluia, alleluia, alleluia.
— from the Baccalaureate Mass, 1990



PHOTOS: Timothy O. Teague

"Anima humana est naturaliter Christiana, the human soul is naturally Christian," said John J. Higgins, quoting Tertullian in the Senior Address. Exhorting his classmates, Mr. Higgins added, "Let us perfect our intellects, yet keep in mind the words of St. Bonaventure, 'I want to know God only so as to love Him.'"

"I commend the parents and their graduating sons and daughters for having chosen Thomas Aquinas College for a liberal arts education and as a preparation for leading a good, happy and meritorious life," said Commencement speaker Herbert Ratner, M.D., as he opened his address.



A Summer Weekend With the Great Books Receives an Enthusiastic Response

By Michael F. McLean
Vice President for Development

Friends of Thomas Aquinas College gathered on the campus last July for the College's first summer weekend great books seminars. The lively discussions focused on issues in political philosophy and theology.

The weekend began on Friday evening, July 20, with the participants discussing St. Thomas' *On Kingship*. Led by Dr. Ronald P. McArthur and Dr. Thomas E. Dillon, this opening conversation centered on St. Thomas' conception of the nature and purposes of government.

The Saturday morning seminar, led by Dr. McArthur and your reporter, considered the first nine chapters of St. Thomas' *Summa Contra Gentiles*, concentrating on the nature of our knowledge of divine things; the reasonableness of the Catholic faith; the challenge of unbelief and how it is best met.

On Saturday evening, July 21, the contrasts between the classical and modern conceptions of the human good,

political order, and just governance were considered in a discussion of Machiavelli's *The Prince*.

Those attending the great books weekend were: James and Judy Barrett, Calistoga, Calif.; Joseph and Lydia Brown, Thousand Oaks; Mr. Philip Cronin, Visalia, Calif.; Dr. Robert Hunt, Phoenix; Sr. Mary Ann Kirkland, I.H.M., Wichita, Kans.; Vincent and Patricia Lemmon, Sacramento; Mr. Francis Montgomery, Los Angeles; Miss Catherine Rottier, Fremont, Mich.; Mr. Fred Ruopp, Los Angeles; Mrs. Gerry Smith, Los Angeles; Dr. Robert Sullivan, Phoenix; Don and Rita Swartz, Los Angeles; Richard and Connie Tushla, Santa Paula.

Response to the weekend seminars was enthusiastic. "The readings were well chosen, concise, and thought-provoking," commented one guest. "The sessions were inspirational," said another, "and we would definitely come again."

A weekend with the great books will be held for members of the President's Council from July 19 to 21, 1991.

Msgr. Gallagher Retires as Chaplain

In late November, the College marked the retirement of Rev. Msgr. John F. Gallagher, "a tremendous priest, a tremendous man", as Dr. Ronald P. McArthur describes him.

The retirement ceremony for Msgr. Gallagher — Thomas Aquinas' first permanent chaplain — was held following Thanksgiving Dinner on November 25.

In honoring Msgr. Gallagher, Dr. McArthur said: "He has prayed for us, offered Mass, given us the Sacraments, and given us a perfect example of what it means to be a priest, of what it means to be about Christ, about God."

Msgr. Gallagher became the College chaplain in 1974. Born in Ballina, Ireland, he attended the seminary at Thurles, Ireland, where he studied for the degree of doctor of canon law. Before coming to Thomas Aquinas, he was the pastor of St. Rita's parish in San Diego. During World War II, he was a chaplain in the U.S. Army Air Force.

Since his retirement, Msgr. Gallagher has been residing in Ojai.

New Dean, Chaplain Appointed

The College began the new year with a new dean and a new chaplain. Kevin D. Kolbeck, Ph.D., a tutor at Thomas Aquinas since 1984, succeeded Dr. Thomas E. Dillon as dean of the College in January. Rev. Gerard G. Steckler, S.J., Ph.D., assistant chaplain since 1982, has succeeded Rev. Msgr. John F. Gallagher, J.C.D., as chaplain.

Dr. Kolbeck holds the Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Notre Dame. His principal scholarly work has centered on the relationship between modern science and natural philosophy. A graduate of Cornell College (Iowa), Dr. Kolbeck also holds the Master of Medieval Studies degree from Notre Dame where he was a graduate fellow.

Fr. Steckler received his Ph.D. in history from the University of Washington and holds degrees in philosophy and theology from Gonzaga University and St. John Berchmans' College. He has taught at Seattle, Gonzaga, and Gannon universities. Rev. Vincent J. Young, O.M.V., continues as assistant chaplain.

Viewpoint

Herbert Ratner, M.D., 1990 Recipient of the St. Thomas Aquinas Medallion, Gives Address

Dr. Herbert Ratner, called one of the great medical philosophers of our age, delivered a contemporary, yet timeless, address to the 1990 graduating class.

"St. Thomas Aquinas states in the following excerpt from one of his sermons: 'God, like a good teacher, has taken care to compose the most excellent writing that we may be instructed in all perfection.

"All that is written, says the Apostle, is written for our instruction. These writings are in two books, the Book of Creation and the Book of Holy Scriptures.

"In the Book of Creation, there are so many creatures, so many excellent writings, that deliver the truth without falsehood, that Aristotle when asked whence it was that he had his admirable learning, replied: 'From things which do not know how to lie.'"

Thus, Herbert Ratner, M.D., introduced the principal theme of his address to the graduates at Commencement, 1990: A reflection on the Book of Creation — the Book of Nature — "authored by God the Father, Creator of Heaven and Earth."

In discussing the importance of the Book of Nature — "another great book which in its way matches the Bible" — and the relation of education through the Great Books to it, Dr. Ratner said:

"In giving us the Book of Nature, which was God's earliest revelation to man, God also gave man the ability to reason in order to be able to understand nature, even to the extent of subsequently being able to translate some of the hieroglyphics of nature's lexicon."

Dr. Ratner pointed out that prior to the Prophets and the Mosaic law, and prior to Christ, the Book of Nature was the only revelation that man had, together with the natural inclinations that God planted in him.

The Book of Nature — in which the teachings of the natural order are set forth — has served man well. St. Thomas said that consideration of creatures is useful for building up the Faith and that knowledge of the nature of creatures avails for refuting errors against God.

Ancient and early modern science recognized the importance of what the Book of Nature has to say. Alan of Lille, in the 12th century, called nature the vicar-general. Francis Bacon said that "the only way to conquer nature is to obey her."

However, since the late 19th century, Dr. Ratner observed, man has turned away from the teachings of the Book of Nature. "The modern scientist," Dr. Ratner noted in another's words, "adapts reality to his own ends,

creating a personal reality in his quest for satisfaction. Man has become a seeker not of truth but of deceptions."

Scientists, psychologists, sociologists, and theologians, said Dr. Ratner, find in nature what is not there and are featured in the mass media, which creates the impression that progress is being made.

The rise of such a revolutionary spirit, Dr. Ratner stated, has brought grave problems that can lead to the decline and fall of Western civilization.

In this spirit, the meanings of words have been changed so words no longer have the same relation to things. Thus, for the contemporary feminists, "the fetus is no longer a young unborn offspring, but a blob of protoplasm."

"To the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists, conception — that is, fertilization — is no longer the beginning of individual human life, but implantation (days later) is the beginning, and this permits abortifacients to be passed off as contraceptives," Dr. Ratner said.

Modern education, Dr. Ratner pointed out, has lost sight of the natural order, yet it is from the natural order that we get all our norms, including the natural institution of the family.

Quoting D.W. Richardson, the 1956 Nobel laureate in medicine, Dr. Ratner said that man today is not controlling nature, but distorting it.

The greatest threat now to civilization that has come from this distortion is the child-care program "with mothers going off to work and dumping their babies in nurseries."

Such a program ignores the Book of Nature with its mammalian teaching of the need of bonding of mother and child, which promotes the child's emo-

tional security, particularly in the first three years of life.

The child denied the experience with the primary tutor of love and fidelity "inherits a disorderly world of despair and distress which leaves him with a feeling of worthlessness which will haunt him through life. This is the basic core of drug use, alcoholism, delinquency and divorce," Dr. Ratner stated.

The Book of Nature, therefore, is the antidote to many of the problems that trouble our society. When they are properly understood, the teachings of nature are a bulwark against technologies and substitutes that displace and corrupt natural processes and human relations.

Through their education in the Great Books, the graduates of Thomas Aquinas have had an introduction to the Book of Nature, and the curriculum of this College will, it is hoped, save them from the thinking characteristic of the modern scientist, Dr. Ratner emphasized.

Reading the Book of Nature, as reading the Scriptures, requires exegesis to help extract its truths. And the Great Books read at Thomas Aquinas College include those of the greatest exegeses of the natural order, in both early and later times.

Paying further tribute to the College, Dr. Ratner said that it "could be unequivocally stated to be the best College for a liberal arts education in the United States (because) only Thomas Aquinas has theology — the queen of the sciences — as its unifying principle. It matches Cardinal Newman's concept of the idea of a university, and no higher tribute than this can be paid."



ST. AUGUSTINE HALL DEDICATED

PHOTOS: Timothy O. Teague

The Most Reverend G. Patrick Ziemann Presides Ten-Classroom Building is the First in a Planned Quadrangle

Most Successful 9 Months in College History

\$1 Million Pledge for New Library

By Michael F. McLean
Vice President for Development

By the end of March 1991, Thomas Aquinas College had received over \$2 million in gifts, more than in any other nine-month period in its history.

The Dan Murphy Foundation, which has been most generous to the College throughout the years, made the largest gift, a \$1 million pledge for the construction of a library.

At the Board of Governors meeting on January 31, Chairman Frederick J. Ruopp expressed appreciation to the Foundation on behalf of the College, saying: "We are deeply grateful for this most generous gift, which is the largest in the College's history."

Several other foundations also contributed major gifts to the College. The Fritz B. Burns Foundation gave \$250,000 for the construction of St. Bernard Hall. The Ralph M. Parsons Foundation gave \$150,000 to the scholarship fund, and the Andersen Foundation made a \$75,000 unrestricted gift.

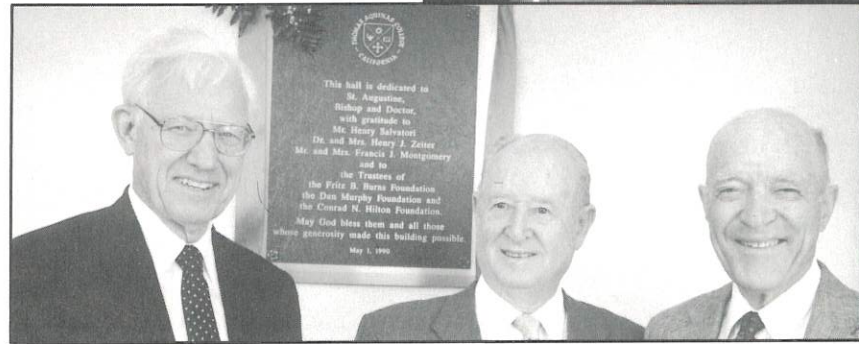
Other foundations contributing to the scholarship fund included the Dr. Scholl Foundation, the Fletcher Jones Foundation, the Homeland Foundation, and the Helen V. Brach Foundation.

Important gifts to the building fund were received from Mr. Ray Heffernan, the James L. Knight Charitable Trust, Mr. William H. Hannon, Mr. and Mrs. John B. Friedrich, Mr. and Mrs. J. Edward Martin, Dr. and Mrs. Henry J. Zeiter and the Carrie Estelle Doheny Foundation. The largest unrestricted gift was made by Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Sullivan.

Thanks are due to all of the friends and benefactors of Thomas Aquinas College for their generosity and firm commitment to the College's goals.

Despite this record level of giving, however, the College still has important goals to reach by the end of the fiscal year in June. Nearly \$300,000 must be raised in scholarship funds, and another \$200,000 is needed to complete the funding of St. Bernard Hall.

The May 1, 1990 dedication included remarks by Sir Daniel J. Donohue, right, President of the Dan Murphy Foundation, which helped fund construction of St. Augustine Hall. Present also were members of the Fritz B. Burns Foundation, below, left and center: Joseph R. Vaughan, a director; and William H. Hannon, Chairman. Francis J. Montgomery, below right, is a member of the College Board of Governors. The Burns Foundation and Mr. Montgomery also provided funds for construction.



Requiem Aeternam Dona Eis, Domine: et Lux Perpetua Luceat Eis

Sister Eileen MacDonald

On December 11, 1990, Sister Eileen MacDonald, a member of the College Board of Governors since 1971, died.

Sister Eileen was, from 1968 to 1974, superior general of the Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary. In 1976, she was co-foundress of a new house of the Immaculate Heart Sisters in Wichita, Kansas.

Sister Eileen was ardent in prayer and devoted to upholding the Faith and traditions of the Church. Her spiritual intercession on behalf of the College was an invisible pillar upholding the institution.

An educator herself, Sister Eileen was a consistent advocate of the curriculum and teaching methods of Thomas Aquinas College.

Mrs. Francis E. Browne

Mrs. Francis E. Browne, an active member of the Board of Governors from 1974 to 1983, died on May 16, 1990.

Mrs. Browne's zeal for the College found outlet through her service as a

board member, and she fulfilled her duties with energy and enthusiasm.

Mrs. Browne was generous not only with her time but also with her finances, and her support played an important and often critical role in the life of the College.

Father Donald Neilson

Father Donald Neilson, a long-time friend of Thomas Aquinas College, died suddenly on February 10, 1991.

Described as "a lightning rod for God's grace," Father Neilson, as a parish priest in Vancouver, British Columbia, influenced scores of young people to attend Thomas Aquinas College.

His enormous gifts made him an attractive and popular figure, but Father Neilson always pointed beyond himself to Christ and the Church, setting others on the path of obedience to God.

In addition to the above, please pray for the repose of the souls of Malcolm Mugeridge, Evelyn Ruopp, Sheldon Cooper, Ray Heffernan, Mrs. Henry (Grace) Salvatori and James L. Knight.

Newsmakers

GRADUATION '90

Classical Studies

A Canadian physicist finds understanding of the ages as a student at Thomas Aquinas College.

By Robyn Loewenthal

Four years ago, Edward De Vita was living in Vancouver, B.C., earning more than \$30,000 a year as an engineering physicist. Age 32 and single, he lived in an apartment, drove a Mazda, and had good friends. Not a bad deal for most people. But one day, he noticed some books on a friend's bookshelf, and it changed his life.

Last Sunday, De Vita received his bachelor of arts degree in liberal arts from Thomas Aquinas College in Santa Paula. He has spent the last four years and \$55,000 of his savings living in a dorm with a curfew, a dress code, and men 10 years his junior, enrolled in a unique curriculum based solely upon selected classics of Western civilization dating from 2500 B.C. to the early part of this century.

"I came here to study the 'Great Books,' the theology and philosophy," said De Vita, his accent betraying his Canadian origin.

"This was the kind of education people used to get," he said. The opportunity of a lifetime — to be generally, liberally educated.

De Vita already had a B.A. in applied engineering physics. Before deciding that once was not enough, he had worked for nine years at a company called TRIUMF, where he designed giant magnets for the cyclotron used in hospital treatment that creates radioactive isotopes.

"In high school, I wasn't as interested in literature, but I became more desirous of broadening my education as I got older," said De Vita. "What we read in philosophy could be applied in math, science lab, and even literature classes."

Thomas Aquinas College only offers one degree, a B.A. in liberal arts. It is

one of a handful of colleges nationwide that offers a four-year curriculum using the "Great Books" as its formidable reading list.

Regardless of previous education, students must enroll as freshmen. There are no elective courses, and the responsibility for learning is on the students, who participate in tutorials and small seminars after reading works by such writers as Machiavelli, Descartes, Einstein and Aristotle. A professor presides at these sessions, but learning is based upon the Socratic method of question and answer, not lecture.

According to Dean Thomas E. Dillon, students read the "Great Books" in order to understand for themselves the principles and methods of various disciplines, rather than being told by experts what they mean.

"In the mathematics tutorials, we read Euclid and Apollonius on conic sections so that we are well prepared to read the texts of Galileo and Newton themselves," Dillon said. "Then we read Descartes' application of algebra to geometry."

Students also study Latin for the first two years and read some classics in the original language.

Each student is assigned a writing tutor his first year and must produce a senior thesis. De Vita's 58-page work, "On the Nature of Time," compared the Aristotelian and relativistic views of time.

Established in 1971, Thomas Aquinas College is a private, coeducational, independent Catholic school not affiliated with any religious order or diocese. Although about 90% of the students are Catholic, participation in religious activities is not required.

Enrollment is 176, there are 18 faculty members, and classes have 14 to 18 students.

Despite the rigorous curriculum,

Books and Boats — two aspects of life at Thomas Aquinas featured in the Los Angeles Times last May and June.

about 70% of the students complete the four-year program compared to 20% in traditional colleges. While Dillon observed that "students don't come here to get a job after four years," he added that a higher percentage of their alumni go on to graduate and professional schools than from traditional college programs.

Nestled on 163 rolling acres adjoining Los Padres National Forest, the college has few distractions aside from the sounds of nature. Thomas Aquinas is a residential campus with a goal of fostering a 24-hour educational process. With rare exceptions, such as married students, everyone lives in the dorms all four years. To show respect for their pursuits, students do not wear jeans or sneakers outside of sporting events. Women wear dresses or skirts, and men avoid collarless T-shirts. In class, students are addressed as Mr. or Miss. Possession of alcohol or drugs is strictly forbidden, along with any dorm visitation by members of the opposite gender.

Students are encouraged to help each other with their education.

"Ed's mature, got a wealth of wisdom and is very affable and quick-witted. People come to him for almost everything," said David Houseal, De Vita's 26-year-old roommate.

"When papers are due, I'll come in at night and find three or four guys on the bed asking questions," said Houseal. "Because he's had more life experience and is a bright man, Ed can make sense out of a lot of things."

Besides study groups, men and women students socialize at school dances, intramural coeducational sports and recreational activities such as horseback riding and hiking.

Despite the age difference, De Vita

has made friends and become involved in many aspects of campus life.

"Do I dance? Not very well, but I give it the old college try," he said. "But the lambada is out."

De Vita plays classical guitar and enjoys hockey, tennis, and chess. He was the college's volunteer choir director and helped select videos for campus screenings.

"Ed has a good sense of humor and a dry wit. He's good at impersonations and voices," said Carl Schmitt, 22.

"He does a great Bogart," said John Goyette, 20. "Ed loves old, classic films."

Both classmates were very impressed that De Vita returned to school because he felt he had missed out on a liberal arts education.

De Vita is not the only older student at the college. About 10 students ages 26 to 31 are currently enrolled, and this fall, two 26-year-old freshmen with business degrees will join them.

De Vita said that coming from a more mature perspective required an adjustment. "For the first month, I thought I had made a mistake. For instance, in the classroom, the younger students were more rambunctious."

But he is glad he stayed. The product of a strong Italian Catholic background, De Vita now is considering entering the priesthood after returning home this summer. He would eventually like to teach in a program similar to that of his new alma mater.

One thing's for sure. Those books made an impression on De Vita.

"I want to reread Homer's 'Iliad.'"

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CARDBOARD BOAT RACING

Sink and Swim

At Thomas Aquinas College in Santa Paula, contestants try to sail in a contest that's all wet.

By Kathleen Williams

As surely as basketball reigns at UCLA and the glory of rowing provides inspiration at Harvard, the spirit of competition thrives at Thomas Aquinas College. It is in the running of the arduous Cardboard Boat Race.

Unsung in intercollegiate sports — in fact, unparticipatory — the tiny Santa Paula school (enrollment 175) proved last weekend that a buoyant spirit can overcome engineering that is, for the most part, all wet.

The sixth annual race highlighted the school's Alumni Day activities, when several hundred fans crowded the shore of a stream-fed lagoon on campus to watch participants slather their crafts' hulls with baking grease, the only waterproofing allowed.

The one- and two-person boats, constructed entirely of grocery cartons and tape, boasted such features as sculptured prows, keels, and elaborate oars — also fashioned of cardboard, with only enough tape to secure their separate parts.

Crew attire for the 50-yard run

ranged from jerseys and cutoffs to suit coats and ties — the latter worn by those with confidence in their design skills. As all students at the school are liberal arts majors, they all were, mechanically speaking, in the same boat.

At the cry of "Lower your boats!", half of the field of 13 entries hit the water for the first time, their vessels being too frail for test runs.

Cheers went up as teams climbed aboard — and half of the fleet immediately took on water and sank, leaving the rest to maneuver past flailing crews.

The crowd went wild as the self-powered crafts plunged through the waves at speeds up to a knot and a half. All three made shore — but the disintegrating hulks of vessels and major steering problems had cost them precious time. It remained for the second heat to produce the winner.

Tension mounted during a delay to clear the flotsam from the water. Then the remaining heat was under way.

A flat-bottomed dingy piloted by senior Angie Murray and sophomore Alicia Lawless unexpectedly pulled ahead of sleeker crafts and lunged to



LOS ANGELES TIMES PHOTO by Alan Hagman

Matt Badley and Taj Peerzada hand-paddle their cardboard craft toward the finish line. They won their heat but finished second overall.

the finish in a wake of bare-handed paddling — a technique the women chose to prevent lost oars. All equipment launched must cross the finish line with the boat, a rule that results in most entrants being disqualified.

Overwhelmed by the success of their first race, Murray said, "We never dreamed it would go five feet!"

The craft favored to win, a vessel painted silver and captained by senior John Van Hecke, keeled over near the starting line and was found to track better minus Andrew Wrzesinski, its crew. The pilot, credited with inventing the grease caulking technique on a winning entry two years ago, not only finished the course, but kept afloat for a total of three laps. But because of the abandonment of crew, his run was dis-

qualified.

Rules of the race have been hammered out over its six-year history. Each year, students come up with new innovations and, having been steeped in the school's Socratic tradition, tend to argue the merits of their creations rather well, said student activity director Katie Ayre.

The winning time for this year's race was clocked at one minute — but officials were uncertain if it established a record. They were clear about it having surpassed last year's showing. In that unlucky contest, the entire field was disqualified.

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