



The year was 1941 and as Brother Victor welcomed the Class of 1945 into the Willow Street school for the first time, a feeling of uncertainty hung like a pall in the air. Everyone knew that it was only a matter of time until the events overseas would have a dramatic impact on the lives of each and every American, including these young Brothers boys beginning the fall hoping for the best but preparing for the inevitable. William Dennis Owen was one of the boys who entered the Academy that fall. He, like many of his schoolmates at the time, paid his own tuition by peddling newspapers. He was the apple of the eye of Margaret Byrne Owen, his charming Irish mother and served mass at St. Charles Church every morning before school. He looked forward to being a Brothers boy and little did anyone know the impact that this young man would have on CBA over the next six decades.

Owen was a fine athlete who played two sports at the Academy, football and basketball. As a footballer, he played end during the 1943 and 1944 seasons, fighting for a starting spot with Bill Sullivan, but never really becoming a regular on the football squad. He did play hard, and in fact, electrified the crowd on a long runback against then archrival Aquinas in his last scholastic game in November of 1944, but the gridiron was not where the young westsider excelled. It was on the hardwoods that Denny would make his mark.



The 1943 basketball season was one of promise for the Golden Tornadoes. They had two stalwarts, Norb King and Denny Owen, who were two of the better players in the City League. Coach Carl Batcharie was entering his last season at the helm to take over a post with the CYO. So the Tornadoes went through the season and amassed a 7 - 5 league record and were 11 - 7 overall. They had only lost to powerful Aquinas and to league co champions Vocational and Central. The newspapers proclaimed that they were considered a very well coached and formidable foe. Owen had a tremendous season finishing third in the league in scoring and was selected as a first team all city league all star. When post season time came along it looked like CBA might be left out of the playoffs and that Rosary would represent Syracuse in the Parochial School State Championships in Little Falls. But a scheduling conflict with the Heightsmen allowed CBA to compete in the prestigious tournament. So off our boys went, led by Owen to Little Falls to face the best Catholic school teams from all over the state. It was in this tournament that Denny saw his finest hour. In the first game, CBA faced its' sister school from Albany. In a mild upset, the Tornadoes,

paced by Owens 21 points, catapulted into the semifinals with a 53 - 27 victory. Next up were the tourney favorites, Catholic Central from Troy who dismantled a strong DeSales team 43 - 25. Right from the start the Crusaders proved no match for the streaking CBAers. Owen again sparkled scoring 11 points, just 5 less than the entire Crusaders team, and they advanced by a 36 - 16 margin. The final game against St Francis from Utica was never even close. CBA jumped out to a 13 - 1 lead en route to a 42 - 20 victory. Owen was named to the all tournament team and voted the most outstanding player of the tourney. For the year, Denny scored 248pts. in 21 games, a tremendous feat for a basketball player during that era.

The next season was going to be the coup des gras of Owen's career. With the momentum of a state championship and an experienced new coach, Joe Byrne, it looked like there would be no stopping Owen and the purple and gold, that is except by Uncle Sam. Even before the season it was known that Denny had been accepted into the Navy and that he could be called to duty at any point in the season. In fact in the preseason outlook for the 1944 - 45 season, it was stated by Coach Byrne that he hoped to at least have his star for most of the season. Playing like every game could be his last, Denny put up some great numbers for the season. For most of the season Denny was the league's leading scorer and was being chased by local basketball legends Bobby Felasco and Mike Stark. The Brothers had a good year, with several exciting comebacks to their credit, the most stunning of which was a game against Aquinas, who was about as close to what you would call an arch rival of CBA at that time. Down 29 - 12 at the half, CBA stormed back led by Owen's 15 second half points, to win the game 39 - 32. The team went on to finish third in the league standings. Owen amassed 220 points over the 15 games he played during the season, good for second place in the point race. For his efforts, Denny was again chosen as a first team all city selection, one of the only players to accomplish that feat in the decade. But when playoff time came around, Owen was far from the Jefferson St Armory where the games were being held. He was inducted into the navy in February of 1945 and called to serve in the naval Air Corps a few weeks later. Denny was given a hero's sendoff at the time and his days of being a carefree high school athlete were just a fond memory.

Following his stint in the service, Denny returned to college and even played some basketball at Georgetown University. When he graduated in 1951 he returned home and joined his father as a manufactures representative in the W.S. Owen Company. Although he was active in many organizations and has been very generous with his time and resources, he has always had a special place in his heart for CBA. In 1960 he was recruited as a captain for the fundraising drive for the new school on Randall Rd. and he has figured prominently in CBA's decision making, fundraising and



financial management ever since. As a beloved trustee and former president of the board, Denny has been involved in virtually every major event that has taken place at the Academy in the last 40 plus years. From the original drive to help move the school to Randall Rd, to the Burning of the mortgage on the building in 1975, through the Campaign in the mid eighties to the most recent Centennial Celebration Owen has been one person who has been a constant throughout these important activities that have helped mold Christian Brothers

Academy into what it is today. We have all admired and appreciated his gentle but firm leadership and deep Generosity.

In 1983, Denny was granted a Diploma of Affiliation from Rome which officially associates him with the Brothers of the Christian School. It is the highest and rare honor and at the time, Dennis was only the fifth lay person to be so honored by the Brothers. Mr. Owen, we won't in any way try to compare that honor to the one that you are receiving tonight. But please accept this award as a token of our sincere appreciation for all that you have done for our school.