

Spiritan Magazine

Volume 31
Number 4 *Calendar*

Article 3

11-2007

Neil McNeil High School 1958-2008 A Spiritan Endeavour

Follow this and additional works at: <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-tc>

Recommended Citation

(2007). Neil McNeil High School 1958-2008 A Spiritan Endeavour. *Spiritan Magazine*, 31 (4). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-tc/vol31/iss4/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Spiritan Collection at Duquesne Scholarship Collection. It has been accepted for inclusion in Spiritan Magazine by an authorized editor of Duquesne Scholarship Collection.

1958-2008



A Spiritan Endeavour

Neil McNeil launched into life as the only Catholic boys' school east of Yonge Street in Toronto. A determined, youthful, energetic, focused educational endeavour, more than 99% male, mainly Irish in its outlook, it gradually evolved into the more cosmopolitan way of life in east end Toronto and Scarborough. Soon gone were the "strap" and the weekly report books borrowed from the Spiritan schools in Ireland, and taken home for parental perusal and signature each week. A weekly assembly assured the learning of *Neil Boys Are We* — any graduate of the school then and since can sing this school anthem by heart and often does so whenever two or three classmates gather together (especially if a glass of beer lubricates their larynxes).

Over time at Neil the Irish influence diminished but never disappeared. At one time there were up to 12 Spiritans on staff, the result of annual reinforcements from Ireland. Too many talents in one location as it turned out. Dispersal followed to Edmonton, a community college, two Greater Toronto Area school boards and as founding principals of three new Catholic high schools. Lay principals have now taken over leadership, many women teach on staff, student enrollment has dipped but resurfaced to a very encouraging level, innovative programmes ensure that all students are given an opportunity to succeed, a younger staff relates very well to the current multi-hued, multi-faceted student body. Neil remains an all-boys school — one of several single-gender high schools in the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

Spiritans who went elsewhere and those who remained continued to embody the spirit of Neil McNeil: a high regard for

quality education, an ability to teach students and not only subjects, an ease in relationships, a desire to promote a worldwide view, a missionary outreach that has a special care for those on the margin of church or culture, a sense of tradition combined with a willingness to read the signs of the times, a belief that Catholic Education must touch the heart as well as the head and the spirit as well as the body, a sense of gratitude for the many people they have met as colleagues and School Board personnel, as parents and trustees, as coaches and consultants. If Spiritans have given much to Catholic Education they have received more than much in return. Theirs has been a ministry uniquely blessed in its coming and its going.

The 2008 Spiritan calendar captures elements of life today at Neil McNeil. It also pictures Spiritan education in several other settings across the world. Neil does not stand alone. It belongs in a larger cluster of educational endeavours enabling young people to aspire to the fullness of life, east of Yonge Street and in exile east of Eden. ■



Former Spiritan principals of Neil McNeil High School: (left to right) Gerald FitzGerald, Peter Fleming, John Geary and Michael Troy.