

*Professor Ben Frankel with three of the thousands of students he has taught at Saint Mary's College of California over the past fifty years*



years, Ben Frankel managed the Executive Symposium, an annual meeting which brought together high-level business, labor, and industry leaders to hear distinguished speakers and share insights on economic matters. He has served on every major faculty committee and numerous other committees as well. One of the highlights of his several January Term courses was the year a group of football players signed up for *Music for Non-Musicians*. Ben had so inspired them that they practiced for hours and announced a performance at the end of the term. Scores of students filled the room to enjoy the wonders of classical and contemporary music performed by a group of football players turned musicians within a month. "It was fantastic!" exclaimed Ben. As leader of the debate team, he crowded his eight-member team into a well-worn Mercury station wagon to traverse California on holidays and weekends to engage in forensic competition with teams from other California colleges and universities. "It was an extraordinary experience for all of us," Frankel reminisces. One member of his team went on to earn his doctorate and is now a colleague on the Saint Mary's faculty.

His interest in the history of Mexico and South America prompted Ben to master Spanish, and he was particularly honored when his definitive book, *Venezuela and the United States in the 19th Century*, in Spanish, was selected by the Venezuelan government as its gift to the United States in celebration of the United States' Bicentennial.

Over the years, students have been touched with Dr. Frankel's congeniality, his spontaneous laugh, dedication, historical acumen, numerous anecdotes, impartiality, and personal concern. While he endured a few college pranks, such as the time students carried his Volkswagen to the landing at the top of the stairs, there were also times when students expressed their endearment by anonymously washing and polishing his car while he was in class.

Included among his many awards are the honorary doctoral degree presented by the Board of Trustees in 1994, the St. John Baptist de La Salle Award as the Professor of the Year, and the Distinguished Service Award. He was designated as an Honorary Alumnus by the Alumni Association and subsequently presented with both the *Signum Fidei* (Sign of Faith) and Alumnus of the Year Awards by that association.

It is no wonder that Christian Brothers Superior General John Johnston conferred upon Ben Frankel the appellation Affiliated Member, designating him an honorary Christian Brother, one of the few members of the Jewish faith to be so honored. 🌟

*These are the voices of those whose lives are touched by the work done through the District of San Francisco. In some cases, the speakers are current students or alumni, at other times, they are Brothers, Lasallian educators, or others with experiences that inspire and motivate us to examine how our work has the power to change and save lives.*