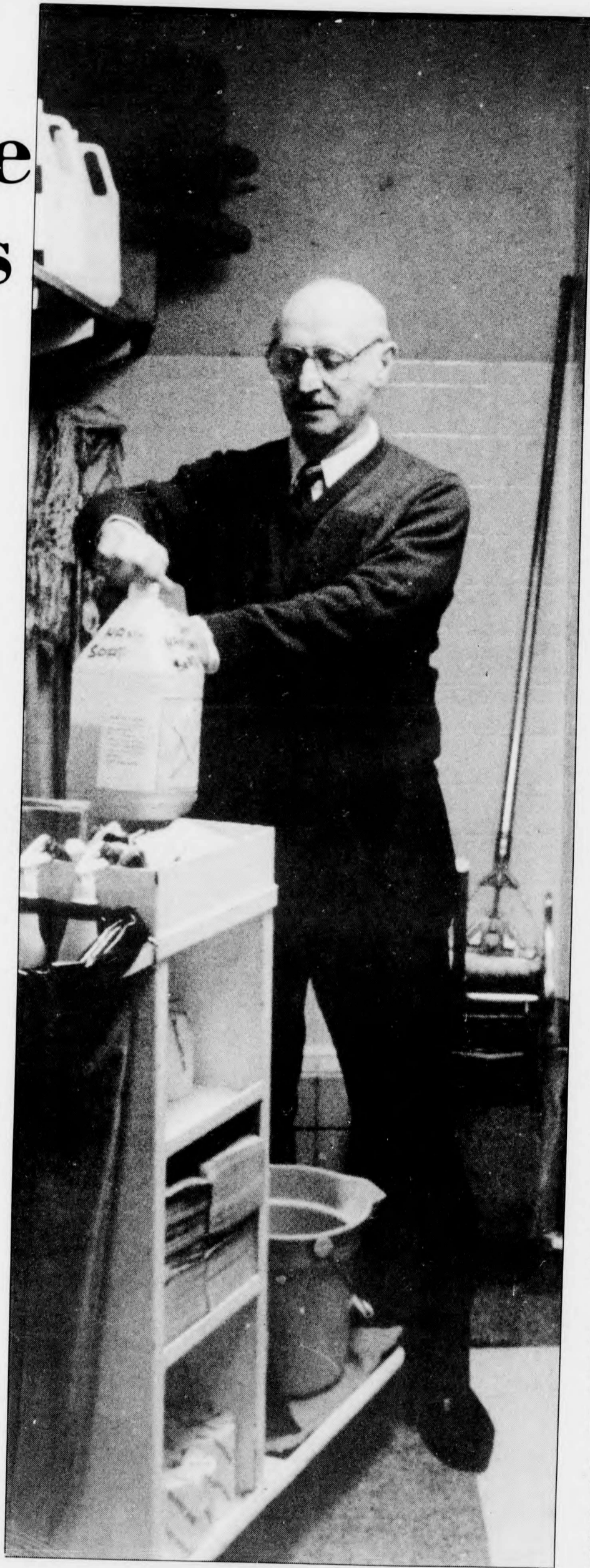


Top of the Mops



by Anton Katz

It's ironic that the calendar on Jose Altieri's desk hasn't been changed since February 25. Everything else about his manner suggests great skill in organization.

Known simply as "Joe" to most people, Altieri has an

important job on campus; he currently serves as one of two daytime janitorial supervisors, ensuring that 19 daytime janitors keep York clean.

Altieri came to York in 1972 and for six years worked as a cleaner. He became lead hand of a group of buildings in 1978, and in 1980, supervisor of Atkinson, Osgoode, Administrative Studies and other buildings. His appointment to head supervisor in 1989 brought new responsibilities and changes. "I am no longer working the night shift, so naturally days are different for me," he explains. "Both shifts are good so I guess that means I enjoy what I do."

Life in Toronto is quite different than in his home country of Brazil. There he was a bookkeeper, serving a multinational company. His decision to come to Canada was strictly for the benefit of his children. "I was informed [while] in Brazil about the education in Canada, especially for young people, and we didn't have this in Brazil."

The move paid off. One of his sons attended journalism school in Canada and the US and is now a news director with channel 4 in Brazil. Jose Altieri Jr. is currently a second year political science student at York.

Coming to Canada was not without its hardships. He talks of the 'initial shock' he faced, having to support a wife and five children in a new country. Language and cultural differences posed problems too.

Altieri's day is a busy one. His shift begins at 5 a.m. when the six night supervisors assemble in his office. They inform their replacements of any incidents or problems occurring during the night. His desk is covered with notes telling him to order supplies, fix machines or investigate accidents. After the supervisors have left, he attends to his duties.

His job requires him to be a good delegator. He fills out work order forms, contacts maintenance for repairs, makes purchases and requests cleaning supplies from storage. This is not to say his approach isn't hands-on. "Often," he says, "if I can solve the problem, I do it myself." He is also in touch with his superior, superintendent Norman Noddle.

Altieri fills out time sheets for his workers' payroll, contacts building supervisors for reports of worker absences and walks around doing an inventory of supplies, checking on the cleaners and reporting vandalism to Security.

When pressed for a complete list of his responsibilities, he hesitates. "It's a lot of little things," he explains.

For example, he's about to call Rutgers, a video-club company, that prepares videotapes that teach safety in the janitorial work. Safety is essential, and to this end Altieri is in the process of providing a Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System (WHMIS) book for every building. Altieri has given many of York's 139 janitors instruction in WHMIS and has even instructed a group of workers in Italian.

Excellence in service is another priority. Once a month all the janitors meet, exchange ideas and give feedback. Altieri describes the meetings as asking, "What do we need to give the best service to our customers?"

As someone who now wears a tie and dress shirt, he hasn't forgotten the concerns of the janitors. Countless is the list of washrooms, floors, blackboards, classrooms, stairwells, fixtures, carpets and walls he's rendered clean in his 18 years at York. Recently, three cleaners complained they spent four and a half hours filling eight garbage bags to clean one room in preparation for a Halloween party.

Altieri has seen many floods, a good share of fights and some other standout experiences. He once washed 16 blackboards in a college, only to have a prankster scribble all over them again. He's broken up his share of squabbles and been privy to unsuspecting lovers in their late-night rendezvous.

Altieri is very good at helping others and helping himself. He worked as a volunteer at the airport, and spent Sundays as a travel aid for Italian, Portuguese and Spanish immigrants. He is now part of group called the Race Relations Implementation Work Group and has received two certificates for his efforts. He stresses that these are pursuits he enjoys, gaining great satisfaction in lending a hand.

He's given himself an edge, by taking a human management course at Seneca College, and received a certificate in English proficiency at Glendon College in 1977.

Languages have played an important part in Altieri's life. He speaks Portuguese, Italian and English fluently and has begun to learn French. His family is like a miniature United Nations. He has 10 siblings; his four sisters marrying Spanish, German, Italian and Portuguese husbands, while his brothers married Italian and Portuguese women. His parents are native Italians, who settled in Brazil and now live in Canada.

This diversity of heritage makes Altieri accepting of all kinds of people and, therefore, the right man for a job involving constant communication. He is grateful for the opportunity to tell his story. "For the first time in 18 years, I have been asked to tell about myself. Thank you."