



75th Anniversary 1908 - 1983



Faculte St. Jean: A retrospective

by Gilbert Bouchard

Faculte St. Jean wears many hats. Perhaps not the largest, or most prestigious of the university's faculties, but it does have its own unique personality and history.

The only post-secondary bilingual institution in Alberta, St. Jean offers degrees in the arts, the sciences and in education in a French environment.

St. Jean also fosters French culture in the province with a french pre-school, the TFE (Theatre Francais D'Edmonton), and various francophone organizations.

The institution began its life 75 years ago, 1908, in Pincher Creek of all places. An apple box, two stories building with only a porch and a bay window jutting from its unpainted face was the first home of Le Juniorat St. Jean. The building housed a handful of students under the watchful eye of a young Oblate priest, Father Andre Daridon. The students studied mainly latin.

The Pincher Creek location had its drawbacks; therefore, the young Juniorat moved to a more central location. Temporary quarters were established on 111 street in Edmonton in 1911, and that same year in June furniture and equipment was moved to a new building in the Strathcona area near Bonnie Doon. Two of the structures constructed in 1911 are still standing, one was enlarged in 1921 and 1943 and now is utilized as a student residence. The other, the chateau is utilized by various French organizations. From that September in 1911 to this day St. Jean has occupied its same 8406-91st Street location.

St. Jean was formally inaugurated on December 27, 1911 (the Feast of St. Jean the patron saint of the Juniorate).

The Juniorate's primary function was to prepare their boys (the school was all male till the 50's) for various religious vocations. Many of the graduates of the Juniorate (offering the equivalent of our junior and high school) became priests, brothers, and lay clergy for the Oblate and the Missionaries of Mary Immaculate orders.

St. Jean was more than a school in the sense that it was more of a religious community, a tight regulated community to boot. The Juniorate did more than teach courses, it prepared its boys for life, and created within them a strong sense of morality and catholic philosophy. All this aside the boys certainly were not pampered.

The schedule the boys followed mimicked the schedule of the novices where most of the boys were heading to anyways. That day began at six in the morning when the boys arose (sleepy heads would find themselves dumped rudely on the floor) they attended morning prayers in the study hall which would conclude with a

reading from the father superior. After this, they marched straight off to morning mass in the Juniorate's chapel. The chapel itself, though small, was quiet, pretty and very ornate, today its furnishings are in St. Paul and the room itself serves as a playroom for the St. Jean daycare.

After mass the boys crawled off to breakfast (about seven o'clock) which they ate like all their meals, in total silence. Then they'd march back upstairs and make their

beds and tidy up (sloppiness was never tolerated, a boy would make his bed till he got it right and past inspection). A few minutes of free time, then classes till noon. Lunch was a dry affair (like breakfast and supper for that matter), prayers before and after, and inspirational readings while the boys ate (readings would be something instructional, history, some religious theme, etc.) free talk might be allowed during dessert. Classes after lunch till four,

Lettres, and Rhetorique (an equivalent of grade 12).

The boys developed a fair knowledge of French, English, Latin, and knowledge of culture, religion and whatever else the priests thought was vital to their development. The program served its purpose, and did indeed prepare its charges for later life, building character, savoir-faire, savoir-vivre, and developing good habits in a heavily regimented atmosphere.

The students developed other skills, such as drama, music and singing, oratory skills, and sports. Many first class sportsmen developed their skills at St. Jean: Edmond Duchesneau, Father Langlois, Anthony Jordon, Johnnie Gottselig (who played for the Chicago Blackhawks for 12 years and was a renowned stick handler).

A note in passing to perhaps the one most important human fixtures at the Juniorate St. Jean, Brother Anthony. A small polish OMI brother who after years of missionary work with the indians of northern Alberta spent his last 37 years at St. Jean. A devout and stalwart man, he was a powerful force in the early days of the Juniorate. The grotto he built still stands in front of the residence. Beatification is underway for this remarkable one armed brother.

By 1943, St. Jean was no longer the Juniorate, but was now the College St. Jean. It now offered a four year arts course with affiliation with the University of Ottawa as well as its high school and junior high school program. Its mandate also evolved. It was no longer just an institution to prepare the young for future vocations. St. Jean also sought to train the intellect as well as the soul of the French population of Alberta. Training the youth with both discoveries of human reason and divine revelation, the college strived to produce a complete thinking man: a feeling, morally strong youth to provide the west with its doctors, teachers, lawyers, farmers, engineers, shopkeepers and accountants.

The liberal arts course, capped by two years of Thomistic philosophy was the bare bones of the program fleshed out by various extra-curricular activities and a rich cultural experience. The University of Ottawa graded the final exams for grade 10, 11 and 12 and the arts courses.

St. Jean's mandate was complicated and difficult to balance at the best of times, that of maintaining a developing French culture plus operating as any other Alberta high school and post-secondary institution. Working closely with the Department of Education, programs were adjusted and computed to allow students to transfer to and from St. Jean from almost any other Alberta institution with little trouble. Students would receive an Alberta high school diploma after completing Belle-Lettres.

In 1961, Laval university opened its college of Education (Western section) at the St. Jean campus. Graduates of this new four year program, stressing french and religion, received their B.Ed. degree. Then, as now, St. Jean prepared future French teachers.

A two year program (with an extra year for bilingual schools) and a third year at the university of Alberta would provide a professional teaching certificate.

In 1966, in an effort to facilitate its aim of preparing competent bilinguals for a bicultural and bilingual Canada; the college affiliated itself with the University of Alberta. And in September 1968, the General hospital school of nursing joined with the college to establish the only western bilingual nursing course and the only two year course in Edmonton.

By 1965 the college had grown to 344 students (up from 151 in 1948, and 163 in 1954). Then in 1970, November 27 to be exact, Le College St. Jean became Universitaire Saint-Jean, although owned privately the college was now an educational component of the University of Alberta. And by April 14, 1976, the University of Alberta and the Government of Alberta purchased the College, her grounds and her buildings.

Now in its latest incarnation, the Faculte St. Jean aims to allow students of French extraction, as well as their English confreres to continue their studies in a French environment. The University, through the Faculte, fosters French culture in Alberta and allows Alberta students to master their two official languages.

The Faculte will hold an open house on the 18, 19 and 20th of March.



St. Jean mourns the death of Brother Anthony, in the St. Jean chapel as it was in 1945. Furniture and religious artifacts are now in St. Paul. The chapel now serves as a playroom for preschoolers.



Boys and staff gather on the steps of what is now the St. Jean residence in 1944. Back then only one floor was utilized as living quarters for the students. Today all four floors accomodate only 65 students.

a rest break till five, where the boys would play handball, skate, or maybe a bit of baseball depending on the season. A snack of bread and syrup would fortify the students for an hour of study till supper at six. A bit more free time after the meal, then the eight o'clock prayer would inaugurate evening studies 'till the boys hit the sack at ten.

This schedule was adhered to six days a week (Monday to Saturday), Sunday afternoon usually was free for games and personal endeavors, after mass and study.

One Sunday afternoon a month was reserved for a trek to the city, where, if the boys had been reasonably good the previous month, they could take in a movie, wander about the city, or even take a smoke (if you had your parents permission to smoke that is). These afternoons of freedom were greatly coveted, since the boys had no other freedoms.

By 1932 over a hundred students bunked four wide in an open dormitory, lined up for the wash basins, lined up for the johns, and lined up for their weekly shower on Saturday night. But what do you expect for \$15 a week all included.

The day I've just described was a typical day from 1911 'till 1943. The Juniorate for this period was affiliated with the University of Ottawa and the Alberta Department of Education to ensure that St. Jean's courses were accredited and that students could transfer in and out of St. Jean with relative ease.

The Juniorate's program was a six year endeavor. The first year was Preparatoire where the students from all over the province were brought to the same level in their studies in French. Followed by Element-Latin, Syntaxe, Method, Belle-

THIS YOU'VE GOT TO SEE!



TV'S NEW FUN SHOW!

THE EDDIE CANTOR

COMEDY THEATRE"



SEE IT ON CHANNEL 3 CFRN-TV

10:00 p.m. Friday

brought to you with the good wishes of

COCA-COLA LTD.



1955