

FEATURE

AQ alums to note glory days at 50-year reunion

By Mike Latona
Staff Writer

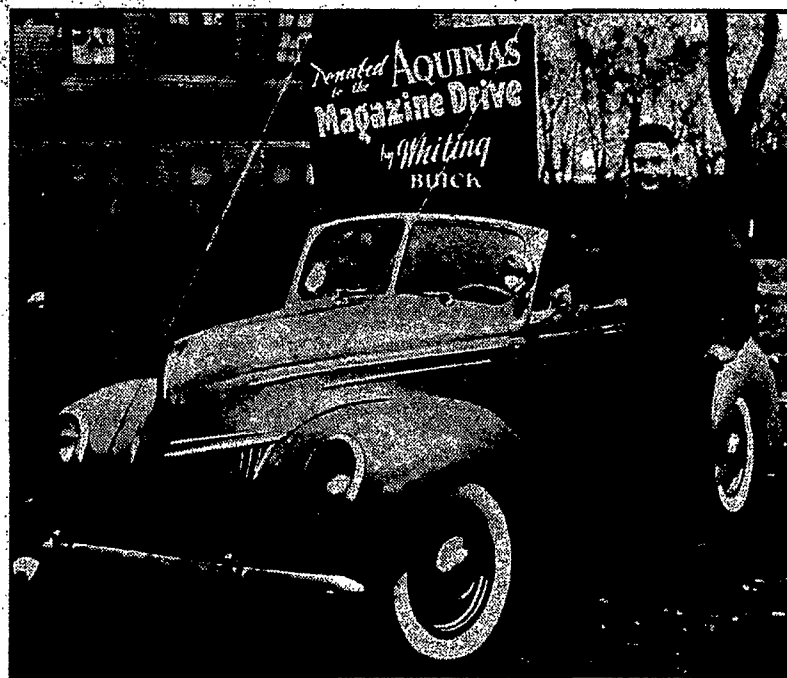
ROCHESTER — Fifty years after graduating, Ron Timmons still speaks with reverence about his days as an Aquinas Institute student.

"You were so proud wearing that Aquinas jacket, the maroon jacket with the 'A'. I still have mine — but I don't know whether it fits or not," chuckled Timmons, a parishioner at St. John the Evangelist Church in Greece.

Aquinas pride will swell to a fever pitch when Timmons' class of 1950 celebrates its 50th-anniversary reunion the weekend of Sept. 14-16. More than 400 people were in that class, making it the largest in school history.

The reunion itinerary will consist of a golf and stag-party outing at Webster Golf Club on Thursday, dinner/dance at Oak Hill Country Club on Friday, and the Aquinas-McQuaid football game and a reception on Saturday. Timmons, the reunion's assistant chairman, said that registration forms will be available by June.

Dr. Michael Finigan, chairman, noted that the reunion will be structured around a football weekend due to the high-profile Aquinas squads of the late 1940s and early 1950s. In fact, Timmons and Finigan both attended the inaugu-



In a photo from the 1949-50 Aquinas yearbook, Pete Blackwood, of the class of '50, poses with a notable magazine-drive prize.

al football game at the former Aquinas Stadium on Oct. 2, 1949, when AQ defeated Bishop Byrne High School of Texas, 26-6.

You think that, say, 1,000 is a pretty good crowd for a football game today? The attendance figure at that 1949 con-

test was 22,650.

"All the city and county dignitaries were there. I think I remember getting there a couple hours early to get a parking spot," Timmons recalled.

The Oct. 6, 1949, edition of the *Catholic Courier Journal* reported that Bishop James E. Kearney dedicated the new stadium while commemorating

the 98 Aquinas graduates who died in World War II, praying that "the generations who gather here may be worthy of the sacrifices these men made for them."

Finigan said that AQ's football powerhouses of that era drew communitywide interest unlike any local high-school team, before or since.

"It was such a unique experience. Nothing in this area could match that," said Finigan, who served as scoreboard operator that day.

Overflow crowds prevailed at the school, also, during that time; in fact, Finigan said that his freshmen class didn't even attend the high-school building on Dewey Avenue. In the fall of 1946, it became the first Aquinas class to occupy

an annex building on LaGrange Avenue. The class moved to the high school for its sophomore, junior and senior years.

Finigan said that attending Aquinas factored greatly into his future success.

"Many of us who graduated were pleased with our solid education experience," said Finigan, who went on to become a doctor, and served as a Navy medic from 1961-63. He is currently a pulmonary specialist at Genesee Hospital, where he attends Mass; and is also a clinical professor of medicine at the University of Rochester.

Asked why the class of 1950 was so large, Timmons said, "It was after the war and the economy was good. You could afford to send your kids to Aquinas."

He noted that tuition was \$75 per year. Indeed, the class of 1950 narrowly tucked its four years in between two wars. How narrowly? Graduation day — June 25, 1950 — was the same day the Korean War began.

"We were asking, 'Where is Korea?' Well, a lot of us found out," said Timmons, who served two years as an infantryman in the U.S. Army in Korea and earned a Purple Heart. He retired in 1991 from Eastman Kodak Co.

Fifty years later, Aquinas is now a coed school and Aquinas Stadium — later Holleder Stadium — has been leveled and replaced by an office park. Timmons said that his classmates have done a certain amount of reminiscing at past reunions, but they generally prefer to keep up with current events.

"So many things have happened," he said. "Only a handful of people had TVs. You go down the list — VCRs, computers, cell phones. All these things that we see as a necessity, but they didn't even exist then."

Search is on for 1950 graduates of Aquinas Institute

Aquinas Institute class of 1950 reunion organizers are still searching for several class members.

James J. Adams; Angelo P. Andrese; Gerald F. Burchard; Vincent R. Clark; Richard H. Collins; Edward L. Conley; Robert J. Friday; Richard F. Gawlowicz; Donald J. Kiley; Charles E. Koenig; Edward W. Koerner; William R. Lawrenz; Gerald J. Mahoney; Richard L. Mathews; Richard D. Maxwell; John E. Merchant; Stephen A. Miller; John H. Nen-

no; Joseph F. Pilato; Charles A. Profeta; Arthur J. Reilly; John H. Robinson; David A. Rowntree; Bernard G. Russell; Philip Scardino; William M. Sheppard; John B. Sinacori; Paul R. Tartaglia; Arthur S. Taylor; Anthony S. Vito; Guy A. Vito; Edward Walsh; and John M. Westlake.

Contact Ron Timmons at 716/226-3092, or the Aquinas Institute alumni office at 254-2020, with any information.

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Pope John Paul II



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