

BY ANNE CASSIDY

# EDDIE'S BOYS

REMEMBERING THE HEYDAY OF COLLEGIATE BOXING



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**T**he men wore suits and ties, not trunks and boxing gloves. Some were stooped slightly but most looked younger than their ages, which ranged from 70 to 85. The men had returned to their alma mater to pay tribute to a man, a team and an era. The man was longtime Catholic University boxing coach and athletic director Eddie LaFond, B.A. 1927. The team was the Cardinals boxing team, which flourished from 1931 to 1955, produced two national champions and, in those years, never had a losing season. The era was the golden age of intercollegiate boxing, which ended 45 years ago but came alive for a few hours last November at the CUA boxing reunion held in Caldwell Hall.

"Eddie LaFond was first a teacher, then a coach and always a father," said Joe Incarnato, B.A.E. 1952, a former lightweight boxer who donned his old Cardinals letter sweater before making some remarks to his fellow pugilist alumni. "On several occasions when introduced to someone, I was greeted with, 'Oh, you're one of Eddie's

boys.' I took this as a badge of honor. To be one of Eddie's boys set you a little apart from other athletes."

The boxing reunion was eagerly awaited and long overdue. Sixteen boxers attended, but more than 50 were listed on the program under the heading *Requiescat in Pace*. The former boxers attending the reunion — like many of those who have died — graduated and went on to distinguished careers in business, law, architecture, engineering and other fields. As one after another rose to share stories about LaFond, who retired in 1969 and died in 1982, a picture emerged of an old-fashioned gentleman and of a sport that has changed dramatically in the last half century.

"We're here to celebrate the great tradition of boxing at Catholic University. It was a source of pride and school spirit," said former athletic director Robert Talbot, B.A. 1959, who helped plan and host the reunion. When the Cardinals went undefeated during LaFond's

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*At top: 1950 boxing team members Tom Cronin, Jack Redmond, Jim Doherty, Joe Incarnato, William Ennis, Bill Maher, Babe Greenburg, Cliff Sisler and Gene Higgins. Inset: Boxing alumni from 1942 to 1955 gather in Caldwell Hall last November.*



