A glitch in the Hoban class scheduling system may have led to a more motivated student in the classroom and a different path taken in life.

Mike Thomas was an admitted underachiever at Holy Family Elementary School. Placed in average classes his freshman year at Hoban, he coasted along, having a good time as a Hoban Knight. Sophomore year he found himself in honors classes and realized he had to work a lot harder at his studies. It seems his schedule had been mixed up with a classmate. Dave Thomas, who had the skills to meet the rigors of the honor classes.

Yet the scheduling mix-up was a positive experience for Mike, and he learned quickly to appreciate the demands of the brothers who taught him. At the time 40 Holy Cross brothers were teaching at Hoban, making up 80 percent of the faculty. From the brothers, Mike learned lots of facts, but more importantly he learned how the brothers inspired students to want to learn and how to use that knowledge in real life. Even at a young age, Mike appreciated the sacrifices the brothers made for the students.

Following graduation, Mike continued his Holy Cross education at the University of Notre Dame, majoring in accounting. Culturally, this was a time of great change in the country. The late ‘60s and early ‘70s brought a different lifestyle to college campuses and young people. “I credit the training from the brothers in high school and the centering principles they instilled in me for the choices I made at this time,” Mike said.

Mike graduated magna cum laude and second in his accounting class. He took a job with Ernst and Young in 1971 in Akron, moving to Cleveland and then to managing the Columbus, Ohio, tax practice from 1977 to 1980. There he met John H. McConnell, owner of Worthington Steel. With his increased wealth, McConnell became a philanthropist of epic proportions in the Columbus area. His emphasis was on health, and he made one of the largest contributions ever to Riverside Hospital, building the McConnell Heart Health Center.

It was his relationship with Mr. McConnell that made a dramatic impact on Mike in the area of charitable giving.

Mike retired in 1997 from JMAC, Inc. Retirement didn’t last long. In 1999, a group of investors left Banc One Capital Corporation to start Stonehenge Partners, Inc.

Stonehenge Partners directs the investment activities of privately held businesses. The company invests in manufacturing, distribution, business services and healthcare companies. Typically, the owner is aging and wants to sell the company. The goal is to improve profitability and sell at a profit. As a principal in the company, Mike is responsible for providing counsel as it relates to matters of investment origination and portfolio asset management.

“The exciting part of what I do is helping business executives fulfill the American Dream,” Mike said. “I help buy a company from the founder, continue with management, letting them know they have a real stake in the success of the company. With this success comes more job opportunities and income opportunities for a lot of people.”

As Mike’s hard work paid off and his own wealth grew, he also saw the desire to give back.

When the Congregation of Holy Cross came knocking at doors of former students asking for help in the care of aging brothers, Mike remembered what the brothers had done for him and the impact they had made in his life. Mike answered the knock with the largest donation made to the campaign. But his charitable gift didn’t end there.

A few years ago he made a trip to Africa with Columbus zookeeper and friend Jack Hannah. While on a tour, Mike heard a guide talk about the lack of educational opportunities for young girls in Kenya. He decided to help build a school and donated a significant amount to complete that task. Today the school educates 42 students, most of them on scholarship.

Why was this father of two sons and a daughter compelled to help young girls he didn’t know and the brothers who taught him? “There are a lot of places to make contributions. I felt it was important to help the folks that have a harder time,” he said.

In May 2004 Mike was diagnosed with a serious health issue, but with good medical intervention he is a survivor of a slow-acting leukemia. He is semiretired once again. He mentors young people at Ohio State University’s Fisher School of Business.

“I don’t want to regret that I didn’t do something that could have helped others,” he said.