

Grossmont honors distinguished alumni

By Paul Sterman
Californian staff writer

EL CAJON — Grossmont College paid tribute Monday to two of its most distinguished alumni — athlete Joe Roth and actor David Leisure.

The two were the first to be inducted into the school's new "Walk of Fame" established to honor graduates who, in the words of Bob Haywood, director of student affairs, "excelled in life and their field and have brought honor to our college."

The football field is where Roth made his mark, quarterbacking the college's 1974 team to the state championship. The gridiron star — who attended Granite Hills High School before entering Grossmont in 1973 — went on to become an All-American

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player at the University of California, Berkeley before succumbing to cancer in 1976.

Leisure's arena of achievement has been the stage. He has been an actor for the past 15 years and achieved notoriety in recent years for his role as the consummate liar, "Joe Isuzu," in television com-

Please see FAME, Page A2

Walk of Fame dedication



Ron Dipping/The Californian

Joe Roth's plaque on the Grossmont College Walk of Fame was unveiled Monday. Among those at the dedication were, from left, Dr. Ivan Jones, president of the college; Larry and Lena Roth, the late athlete's parents; and John Roth, his brother.

FAME

continued from Page A1

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Bronze plaques set in concrete and bearing the honoree's name under the design of the school's mascot — a griffin — were unveiled in the college quad Monday.

Roth was praised as a courageous athlete and a kind person whose exploits extended well beyond the football field.

"Of all the people I've met, Joe was the most near to perfect I've ever seen," said David Jordan, who coached Roth on the 1974 championship squad. "He had a great influence and impact on the people around him. . . . He was a great person. I hope to see him again one day."

Leisure, who attended Grossmont from 1968 to 1970, was

saluted for having the determination and persistence to succeed as an actor. He has appeared in numerous movies and stage productions and currently has a prominent role in the weekly television series "Empty Nest."

"You have to have patience and stick-to-itiveness to get you through," said Clark Mires, chairman of the college's theater arts department, who directed Leisure in several productions.

The families of Leisure and Roth expressed gratitude for the honor accorded both men.

Emma Leisure said her son — who could not attend the ceremony because of filming engagements — credits Grossmont with supplying the foundation for his acting career.

"He really enjoyed it here," she said. "He felt he could talk to the professors, and they didn't mind him going over to their houses to

study scripts. It was real encouraging, and it really affirmed what he thought he wanted to do."

Roth's parents, Larry and Lena, who came down from Washington state to be present at Monday's unveiling, and John Roth, Joe's brother, all spoke warmly of the young athlete's years at Grossmont.

"He was quite a kid," said John Roth. "He had a lot of fun here. He took a lot away from here, as far as what people gave to him — teammates, students and faculty."

Roth's mother recalled the joy of watching her son compete at Grossmont, especially in the triumphant year of 1974.

"When the team won the state championship — I remember that game so well," she said, smiling at the memory. "It was wonderful."

Added Larry Roth: "When Joe went, he left very deep tracks."