

BLIND BOY FROM WAHROONGA SCHOOL

GOING TO LONDON

Big and husky, with the build of a footballer, David Kerin, a part aborigine who has been blind since he was four, is to go to London, England, later this year to start a three-year course in physiotherapy.

David will be 18 this May. He comes from the Northern Territory, but he has spent most of his life in schools for the blind in Sydney.

Now having mastered braille, the system of punchmarks in stiff paper by which blind people read, David has qualified for his trip abroad by passing the 1961 Leaving Certificate.

To do this, he gained A's in English and Oral French, and B's in Latin, Modern History and in Physics.

David was one of the first pupils at St. Edmund's School for the Blind, Wahroonga, when it opened 12 years ago. The principal, Brother Adams, says David has been an excellent, above-average pupil.

David already in his short life has amassed some impressive "firsts".

He was the first aborigine boy at St. Edmund's. He is believed to be the first blind boy from a N.S.W. school to go to London for the physiotherapy course under the Royal Institute for the Blind. He is the first blind aborigine to pass the Leaving Certificate in N.S.W.

Details of his success, and of his education, were sent to the Royal Institute for the Blind in England, and in March he was accepted as a pupil for the course in physiotherapy.

He is due to leave Australia about October on the sea voyage to England.

David is pleased with his success in face of adversity but is shy and reluctant to talk about it.

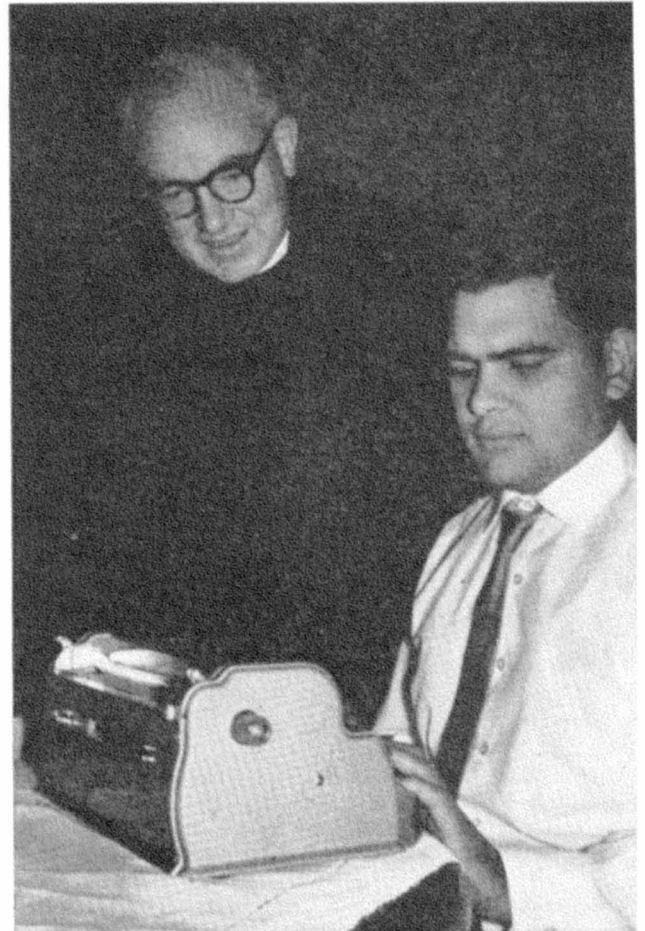
"I'm looking forward to going to London," he said.

"I don't know how I'll like the cold weather, but I suppose I'll get used to it."

David, the youngest of a big family, had a grim start to his life. But through sheer hard work, and with great help and care from his educators, his fellow pupils both blind and sighted, and from outside friends, he has already won fine achievement.

Living with his family in Alice Springs in the Northern Territory in 1949, David suffered an attack of conjunctivitis in both eyes.

He was flown to Darwin for treatment, and at one stage it was thought he would have to have his eyes removed.



The Principal of St. Edmund's, Brother Adams, advises David Kerin on the use of the Braille Machine

In Darwin, Father Flynn, who used to be an eye specialist, arranged for him to go to Melbourne and then to Sydney, where he came under the care of the Dominican nuns of St. Lucy's, Homebush.

After two years there, when he was six, David went to St. Edmund's, and has stayed there ever since.

He got straight into a study of braille which he had mastered by the time he was 10.

Braille is a system of writing, using abbreviations and contractions not unlike shorthand, by which blind people can read any text, book or even music. A machine like a typewriter punches indentations on a hard paper, and by passing his fingers over the raised punchmarks, a blind person can read.