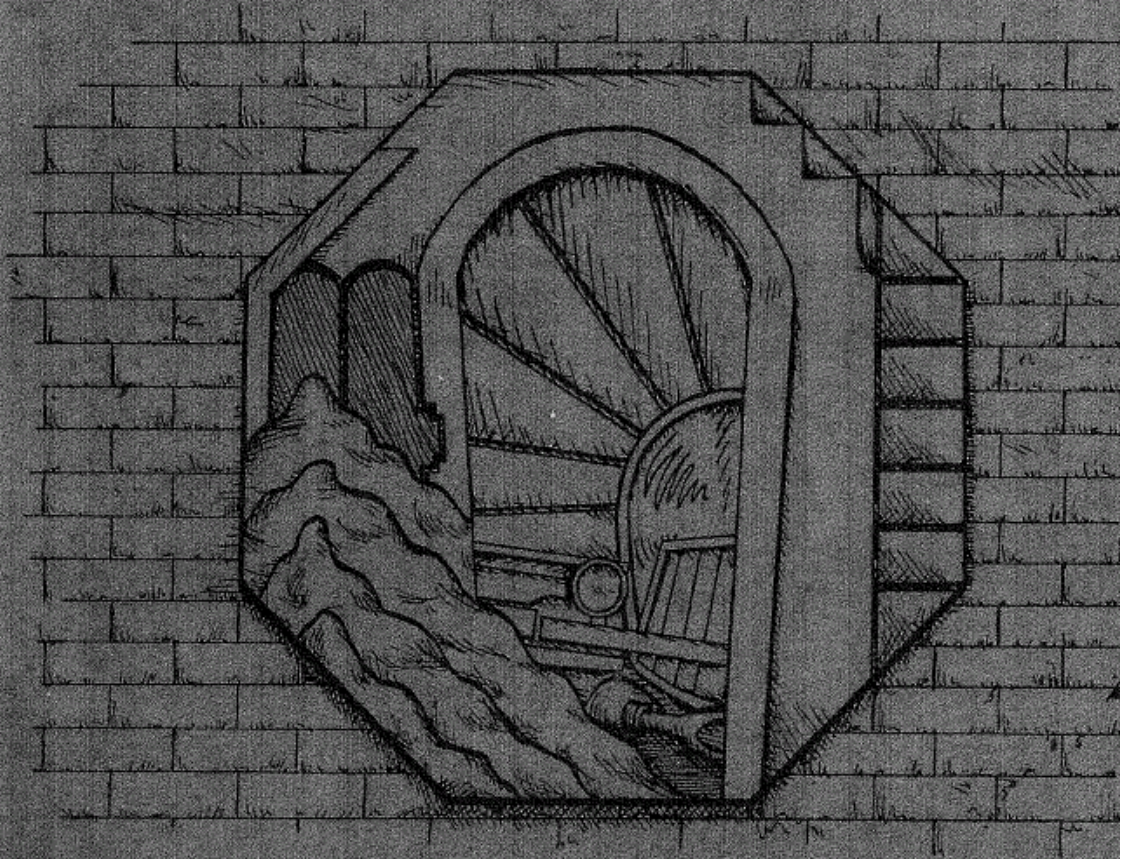


**THE ROAD TO...**



**EXCELLENCE**

# **A HISTORY OF THE ACALANES UNION HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**by Margaret Mahler**





## **A Tunnel Paves the Way**

The history of a school district, as any other history, is determined and affected by many things: local events, the opening of a bridge and a tunnel; world affairs, The San Francisco Exposition, World War II; people, Colonel H.M. Garrett, Matthew Howard Stanley, Joseph E. Lawrence, Melvin Jacobus, C.C. Morse; imponderables, the whims which cause people to favor one spot over another; economics, depressions, recessions, inflation.

Some things can be projected, foreseen. But others can come as an earthshaking surprise as did the fantastic surge of growth of central Contra Costa County.

On Sunday, June 17, 1934, a crowd gathered on Broadway, in Oakland, at the West Portal approach, to celebrate the beginning of construction of the Broadway Low Level Tunnel, later to be renamed the Caldecott Tunnel. It was a great occasion with the 159th Infantry Band, fireworks, bomb signals, a cross country footrace, "The Star Spangled Banner" performed by massed bands, many speeches, and two guests of honor: the Hon. Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and the Hon. Frank F. Merriam.

The tunnel was financed by government and state aid, the U.S. Government giving a P.W.A. grant of \$1,095,000, and the State of California giving \$700,000. There were to be two parallel tunnels having a total length of 3,168 feet each, a 22 foot roadway with four foot pedestrian sidewalk. Cost of the entire project was to be \$3,752,000. The job was estimated to take from 18 to 24 months, and an average of 900 men per month would be employed — a real boon for the depression afflicting Berkeley and Oakland.

The first cars started through the East Portal on opening day, December 5, 1937.

Before this time, those who wished to visit Contra Costa County had to drive through the frightening Contra Costa Tunnel, a scary wooden shaft which was opened in 1903. It was narrow; it was dark. Many feared being robbed. The "Old Tunnel" road still exists today, but the tunnel itself was blown up to prevent adventuresome spirits from being caught in a cave in.

Others preferred to drive the Fish Ranch Road, named after a 175 acre trout ranch, to Orinda, and that was a narrow, twisting road, or take the San Pablo Dam Road or Wild Cat Creek Road. The inconvenience and danger of all these approaches kept Orinda, Lafayette, Moraga and Walnut Creek small towns.

In oral tapes, transcribed by the Lafayette Historical Society, we can read the following comments: Mable Bowbeer, who moved to Lafayette in the 1920's remarked on what she felt were the major changes affecting Lafayette. They were the Caldecott Tunnel, East Bay Municipal Utility District (EBMUD), Acalanes High School, Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART), and incorporation. "I like it the way it used to be," she commented sadly.

Many people had summer homes in the area, but few who worked in the Bay Area would make the commute. The locals lived happily in their rural surroundings. McNeils (The Pioneer Store) provided them with groceries, Stark's was the meat market in Lafayette. Both were on Tunnel Road where you could make a U turn in the middle of the road with the only hazard being the raised dust. In 1936, Mt. Diablo Boulevard was still called Tunnel Road and ended where the Plaza is now. It was a dirt road. There were no cement sidewalks, but there was a boardwalk in front of the Pioneer Store. Lou Borghesani remembers these days in his oral history. He recalls with great nostalgia, as does Phyllis Petersen, the Horse Show. Apparently this was the biggest thing that ever happened in Lafayette, and all who remember it regret its demise. It was held on grounds which now begin at St. Mary's and Moraga Roads and extended up to Hamlin Road. It attracted riders and good time seekers from miles around. It was for amateurs — anyone with a horse got a ribbon — and there were picnics, dancing at the Town Hall, and parades through the streets of Lafayette. It finally ended in the midst of World War II in 1943.

In another oral tape, Dr. Clifford Fieler, the only doctor in Lafayette in 1937, recalls that there was no bank, no bus service, and very few stores. His house calls were \$2.00; office visits cost \$1.00. The last cattle run down Tunnel Road was in 1936. The population grew from 500 in the 1920's to 1,500 by the pre-war 30's. The metropolis we live in today was beyond anyone's wildest dreams.

But a few public spirited men were aware of the tremendous growth potential in the area. Colonel H.M. Garrett had moved with his wife to Happy Valley in Lafayette in the early 1920's when the population was about 500. He and his wife settled into a two story farm house on 100 acres, and he proceeded to design and build The Garrett Building, a Carmel-like brick structure on ML Diablo Boulevard. He offered to provide bricks to build the post office next door, but was turned down. His building is still standing and is now being refurbished by the Bedford Company. Colonel Garrett was responsible for starting the movement for the tunnel and for a high school district. He was also instrumental in the town's acquiring telephone service, a new library, and a water district. From his estate in Happy Valley he envisioned Lafayette as a second Carmel, a dream which never came true.

There were others who were concerned about the plight of some 180 high school students who in 1938 were either riding the Toonerville Trolley (The Sacramento Northern) to Mt. Diablo High School in Concord; or, if they lived in Orinda, were traveling over the hills in a school bus to Richmond High School in Richmond.

Phyllis Petersen, the "Girl Friday" of the Acalanes Union High School District, who served as secretary to the superintendent for 38 years, rode the Toonerville Trolley and remembers it as being lots of fun. "The train was bright yellow, the conductor's name was 'Nobby', and the school provided us with tickets. But it didn't wait for tardies. If you missed it, too bad!"

There were other drawbacks, too. The commute was very time consuming. It precluded youngsters being able to participate in after school activities or in performing many chores at home. Most important to real estate developers, the lack of a high school made property beyond the tunnel hard to sell.

So a group of citizens anxious to create a new school district began to circulate petitions and get signatures from people in Lafayette, Walnut Creek, Orinda, and Canyon. They were surprised and disappointed to find there was opposition, much of it came from people who had graduated from Mt. Diablo High, were loyal alumnae, and wanted their youngsters to be also. They felt they would be disloyal if they removed their progeny from the Diablo District.

Others were not at all enthusiastic about a bond issue or incurring any other form of debt. After all, this was the depression!

According to the Oakland Tribune of that time: "Growing agitation against the present school plans has been evident throughout the area, centering around the early secrecy of the board meetings, the refusal to admit the press, and granting the option of land and architects without preliminary opportunity for the public to express its wishes."

Through a lengthy appeal directed to Lafayette, Walnut Creek, and Orinda papers, trustees of the recently formed Board outlined every move since their official formation on September 1939. In a 1,000 word presentation of actions to date, the Board covered the "definite need" for the school, the months of work in bringing plans to their present status, the formation of the District (which nearly failed through legal entanglements that required a special legislative enable act), and the 17-1 approval of taxpayers when the District proposal came to a vote.

There were rumbles from Concord, as well. Mt. Diablo High School was ambivalent about losing over 100 enrollees. It was suffering growing pains. Because of increased enrollment, the high school was in need of added equipment, an auditorium, and more classrooms. So taxpayers would be faced with a bond issue of somewhere around \$250,000 which would increase their present tax rate of 59 cents to 65 cents on the dollar.

There was also an interesting difference of opinion regarding high school facilities. According to a Martinez paper, "Miss Bertha Romaine, principal of Mt. Diablo High School, stated that although five grammar school districts in the neighborhood of Walnut Creek favored a new high school for that area, Concord will continue to provide high school facilities for students of the new district for at least two and one half years. Construction and other problems will entail additional time, probably extending actual operation of the new school to 1942 (Acalanes High School opened in the fall of 1940S). Meanwhile the local high school housing problem remains one for serious consideration. The last check-up shows an enrollment of over 900 students. Approximately 200 students are enrolled here from the five districts affected by Thursday's vote, namely: Walnut Creek, Lafayette, Orinda, Canyon and Moraga."

And from the Walnut Courier Journal: "Undoubtedly there are many factors in favor of a new high school and the question is whether those factors will off-set the things against formation of a new district, chiefly increased taxes, which are formidable, particularly this year, and will arbitrarily be so in the years to come. Again the school (Mt. Diablo) has an enviable standing and record in the state, due to the efficient principal, Miss Bertha Romaine, and her most capable faculty, and it would be an impossible feat for a newly instituted school to come anywhere near this high standard. This is said without any disparagement against the staff, even though it were the best and the best costs money, but because the new school would be handicapped by lack of equipment and facilities which take years to accumulate." Not a very well written or encouraging editorial, and one which was proved wrong by commendations from the University of California soon after Acalanes produced its first graduation class.

### Acalanes High School Becomes a Reality

And other forces were at work. From the Walnut Courier: "Canvassers from the Walnut Creek P.T.A. will aid in circulating petitions calling for an election to decide upon the proposed establishment of a new high school district. The decision followed a special meeting of the executive board at which Melvin Jacobus, a supporter of the project clarified the issues. The volunteer chairmen and their zones:

Mrs. Wm. Mayhew, Walden; Mrs. Luman, Saranap; Mrs. J.C. Eshan and Mrs. Sam Kier, Walnut Heights; Mr. J.L. Ramelli, west side of Main Street and east; Mr. Lon Buck, Dewing Lane from Saranap through the Goodman tract; Mrs. M.E. Bigson, Castle Hill; Mrs. Escott Jones and Mrs. Norman Wilson, west side of Main Street to tracks; Mrs. Harry Lawrence and Mrs. E.C. O'Meara, Almond Court; Mrs. O.P. Erdahl and Mrs. E.S. Culver, Oakland Boulevard.

Petition blanks and explanatory pamphlets will be available at Bradley's, The Walnut Creek Pharmacy, and Wiget's Pharmacy for those who cannot get in touch with canvassers, it was announced.

The news marches on. From the Walnut Courier: January 23, 1939. "L.W. Barry of Orinda, and M.H. Stanley of Lafayette today formally presented Superintendent of Schools B.O. Wilson with petitions asking that he call an election in the Orinda, Moraga, Lafayette, Canyon and Walnut Creek elementary school districts on a proposal to form a high school district of those areas."

Walnut Courier, February 28, 1939:

*Voters of the five elementary school districts which compose the proposed Acalanes Union High School District voted overwhelmingly Tuesday to form the new district.*

*In all the elementary districts but one, Canyon, the favorable vote greatly outnumbered the vote against the district. Canyon voted 11 for and 10 against.*

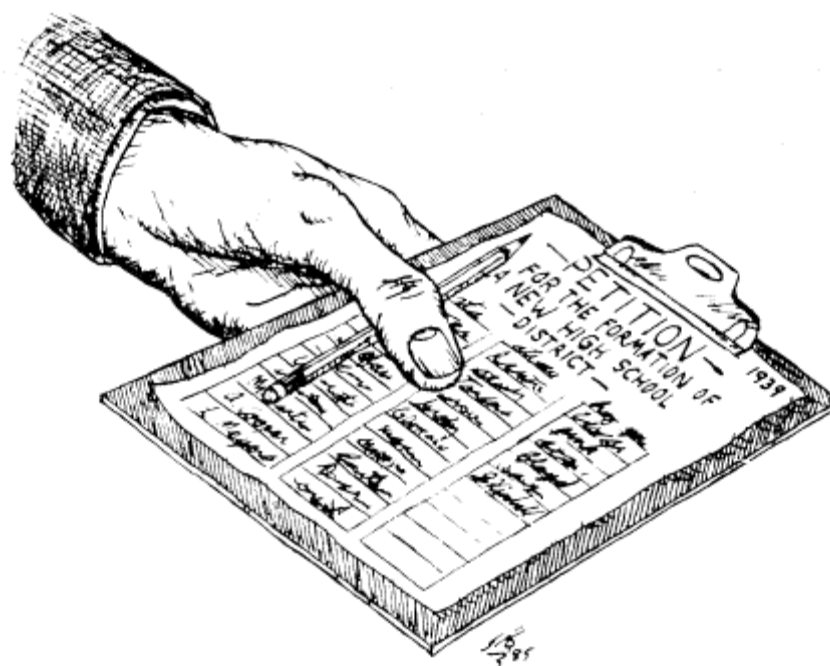
*The totals for all the five elementary districts follow: Walnut Creek-327 yes, 24 no; Lafayette-266 yes, 5 no; Orinda-169 yes, 7 no; Moraga-30 yes, 2 no; Canyon-11 yes, 10 no.*

The total vote of 851 was a very light percentage of the number of voters in the area. In Walnut Creek alone there were over 2,000.

So after an incredible amount of spade work, some dedicated gentlemen met on May 24, 1939, at 7:30 p.m. at the Lafayette Grammar School. Present were J. Lawrence of Walnut Creek, J.C. Branson of Walnut Creek, C.C. Morse of Canyon, Melvin S. Jacobus of Orinda; M.H. Stanley of Lafayette, and B.O. Wilson, County Superintendent of Schools, serving as temporary chairman. Mr. Lawrence was a former trustee of the Diablo District, former mayor of Walnut Creek, and a Walnut Creek business man. Mr. Jacobus was a CPA. M.H. Stanley owned a drug store in Lafayette. Mr. Morse was a newspaperman and Mr. Bronson was an engineer.

Millicent Hamburger, hired at the beginning of the second year of Acalanes, recalls being interviewed by Mr. Lawrence. 'He reached right over his meat counter and shook hands. 'We're really glad to have you at our school,' he said. He was such a nice man."

Margaret Nicholsen recalls being sent to the meat market, and to Mr. Stanley's drug store before she returned to Angels Camp to await her telegram of acceptance.



J.E. Lawrence was unanimously elected chairman of this first Board with M.M. Stanley elected as clerk. These gentlemen had all been voted in on Friday, May 6, 1939. They were chosen from a slate of ten for the five placed on the Board. According to the Walnut Kernel; "The success of the new high school depends upon the selection of the board of trustees which rests upon the shoulders of the voters. Facing the trustees is the serious problem of spending judiciously the taxpayers' money for the purchase of the site, engaging architects, contractors, and the selecting of the school faculty. Not only a serious job, but it will be a thankless one for which they will be panned plenty, yet the candidates are willing to assume this responsibility and take the flaying on the chin with their heads up, for which they are to be saluted. Tested experience, business acumen, the ability to judge the characters of the school teachers, the ability to push things through to completion and the consideration of the taxpayers' money are vital to the success of the school." Some mixed metaphors but very dramatic prose.

The purpose of their first meeting was to validate the organization of the district and to choose a name for the new district and high school. Their choice of name was discussed in a Sunday column of The Knave, which appeared in the Oakland Tribune March 3, 1940. The first item was entitled "Acalanes".

"Obviously a new school must be given a name. In Southwestern Contra Costa County where a union high school is planned — with bonds voted and bids called for — M.H. Stanley, clerk of the present board of trustees, recalling the Old Rancho Acalanes, offered the word as suggesting a Spanish land grant and thereby precipitated some argument and speculation. Modestly, Stanley explained, his proposal as no more than a tentative one, but the name has stuck. Moreover, after some research, it has gained favor. Stanley Warburton, principal-elect of Acalanes High, did some investigating into the background. From Dr. Kroeber, chairman of the University of California Department of Anthropology, and authority on the California Indian, he received a letter containing the statement, "I am delighted to know that one of the appropriate indigenous names is being preserved in the designation of your union High School. Acalanes, pronounced 'Ah-Kah-Lah Nays' it is agreed, was a better choice than that of Laguna de los Palos Col-orados, the name of another major Spanish grant in the area. Use of the name Acalanes by the high school cheering section is within the realms of plausibility, but '15 for Laguna de los Palos Colorados' would appear to offer some difficulty in enunciation." Kroeber's letter continues: "Acalanes is probably the Spanish name given to a Costonoan Indian village of the vicinity called Aklan. These coast Indians, now practically extinct, inhabited the San Francisco Bay Area as far inland as the Mount Diablo Range and southward to Point Sur below Monterey. Shell mounds in this area go back 3,000 or more years and are among the richest in California. These Indians held in high respect the eagle as one of the animals that explored land and created man after the waters receded, leaving the world. Rancho Acalanes was granted to Candelario Valencia, a soldier of the San Francisco company. Acalanes was thus one of the earliest grants. Valencia sold the land shortly afterward to William Alexander Leidesdorff, prominent ship master and San Francisco business man. He had the distinction of launching the first steamer that ever sailed on San Francisco Bay. In 1847, Leidesdorff sold Rancho Acalanes to Elam Brown, who together with Nathaniel Jones, established pioneer families in Lafayette."

\* \* \* \* \*

At the following two meetings, the Board discussed the nature of students in the district, types and sizes of high school plants, and favorable sites. Charles Bursch, Chief of the Division of School House Planning of the State Board of Education, and Stanley Warburton, Coordinator of Secondary Curriculum of the County, who was to become Acalanes' first principal, were also present.

At their meeting on August 2, the Board considered the following sites as prospective campuses:





Option 1 was an acreage on the main highway, Mt. Diablo Boulevard, 10 acres, owned by F.F. Porter. It was available for \$10,000.

Option 2 was the S.J. Silva property, 27.34 acres for \$10,000.

Option 3 was the Daley property at \$800 per acre.

Option 4 was the L.K. Knusen property, 61 acres for \$36,750.

On August 23, apparently another piece of property became available, the Option of Guy L. Putman, a portion of property known as Hunsaker Ranch, located in Rancho del Humbre, Contra Costa County, 22 acres for \$14,000. This site, located on the Reliez Road approximately one-quarter of a mile north of Mt. Diablo Boulevard between Lafayette and Walnut Creek, was to become the campus of Acalanes High School. Guy L. Putman, owner of the fields of tomatoes and weeds, was authorized to remove buildings on the property.

The Board had a difficult time selecting an architect from the scores of applicants who applied. "There are vast strides in school architecture in the past seven years, and we want the most modern and best equipped high school for this district," said J.E. Lawrence. They finally narrowed their choice to 15, then after great deliberation and study, selected Franklin and Kump, Jr., of Fresno and Bakersfield.

But this choice, according to Stanley, brought about considerable criticism, since many citizens felt the contract should go to a local firm. And the following headlines and article in the Walnut Courier probably added fuel to the flames:

### NEW HIGH SCHOOL TO BE SWANK

*A grass-centered entrance drive, with shelter for students dismounting from bus or automobile, a driveway all around the grounds, classrooms in separate buildings connected by a covered corridor — these are some of the things shown in the ground plans of Acalanes High School to be built next year.*

*The plans also show a baseball diamond, football stadium, girls' playing field, tennis courts, swimming pool, parking places.*

*The classrooms will be built so they can be extended to double the original size and keep within the general plan of the school grounds, according to Chairman Jos. E. Lawrence of the Board of Trustees.*

*Trustees of the new Acalanes High School District are earning their wages (?). They met three times in less than a week this month."*

After all the announcements came the big question: the price. What was all this going to cost? About what a four bedroom, three bath home in Orinda costs now. The headlines read:

### \$330,000 FOR NEW HIGH SCHOOL

*The cost of a modern California high school building ranges from \$800 to \$1,000 per pupil, the new Acalanes Board of Trustees was informed by State Educational authorities. For a building with a capacity for 500, the board decided a \$300,000 school house is adequate. The Board, at its last meeting, decided on a \$333,000 bond election October 17. The extra \$30,000 is to cover the cost of the ground, \$24,000, and incidentals."*

And contrary to Miss Romaine's prophecies, completion of three classroom units, a cafeteria, gymnasium-auditorium, administrative office, library, and shops was promised in time for classes begin in September of 19401

The Board was also deciding other important issues. Mrs. M.H. Stanely presentd a petition signed by 80 girls asking that they be allowed to wear regulation middies and skirts with any color tie they might care to wear. An early dress code!

Mothers, fearful that their children might be dependent on what they could buy at proposed off-school-grounds stores, appeared to petition that the school have ample lunch room facilities, the mothers also took steps to combat the establishment of small school stores in the new area. "Such stores prey upon the students' pennies and nickels and are otherwise a bad influence." The mothers insisted they would carry the fight to the planning commission if necessary to keep such stores away from the new high school. Here is where closed campuses started!

Parents of the first student body were most enthusiastic about any and all activities for the good of the school. Rather than be a traditional PTA they chose to call themselves a "Parents Cub." The first officers were Mrs. A.R. Reinke of Walnut Creek, president; Mrs. R.A. Whittaker of Lafayette, vice president; Mrs. G.M. Henrici of Orinda, recording secretary; Mrs. E. Sharon of Lafayette, corresponding secretary. Their good works were to include the sponsoring of school dances, scholarships, donations toward the landscaping of the library court, tree planting, and later on, during the war years, the selling of war stamps and bonds.

On March 17, 1939, an informal ground breaking ceremony on the school site was held at 2:30 p.m.

It was indeed an impressive ceremony with everyone represented, and I'm sure it was a proud moment for all the dedicated people who had worked so hard to bring a high school to the community.

The plant was in construction before the last notes of the massed bands had died away, as L.S. Peletz and Son rushed to have the school ready for classes on September 10, 1940. From all over California and beyond came applications from teachers interested in starting a new high school. Stanley Warburton was selected unanimously by the Board to be Acalanes' new principal. Some referred to him as "the school boy principal," but Lee Russell, Margaret Nicholson and Millicent Hamburger, all early members of his faculty, described him as creative, innovative, inspiring. He had previously served as coordinator of secondary education for the county. Prior to that, he had worked as supervisor of remedial reading in the county education department. He gained his teaching experience over a four year period at Citrus Union High School and Junior College in Azusa.

Born across the Bay in San Francisco, Warburton was graduated from Pomona College, received his Master of Arts from Claremont, and did further graduate work at Yale and Harvard. "I sincerely appreciate the opportunity of participating in the establishment of this school," he said. "There is every reason to believe Acalanes Union High School will develop into an outstanding educational institution of which this district can be proud." With his new secretary, Phyllis Petersen, he set up office in the Old Court House in Martinez, then moved his files and work to a garage in Lafayette.

On May 5, the first teachers at Acalanes High School were hired on a 12-month basis. They were Elmo Heard, Stanley Walgren, Henry Knight, Sara Woodyard, Margaret Nicholson and Lily Lahti. On May 10 the Board accepted Erwin Mattson, Martin Rauhut, Rose Ambrose, Marie Merkel, John Hopkins, and Katherine Titus. They all came with glowing recommendations and distinguished records. Rose Ambrose was a graduate of the University of California and had been teaching in San Francisco. She was Phi Beta Kappa and a member of Sigma Delta Pi. Henry Knight came with a Masters in Economics from Cal. Martin Rauhut, another Cal graduate, received highest honors in music. Elmo Heard came from Chico State, Lily Lahti and Stan Walgren both graduated from Cal. Stan had been teaching for Bertha Romaine at Mt. Diablo High, and Lily had been at Newport. Margaret Nicholson, after graduating from Pomona, had spent two years in Angels Camp. Erwin Mattson had been a boxing coach at Cal and had taught at St. Helena High School. Marie Merkel came straight from finishing her Masters in English at Mills College, and Sara Woodyard had been teaching at Manteca High School. Of the 13 teachers hired, nine had no phone. And there was no place to live. Most of the 13 boarded in Walnut Creek or Lafayette. Apartment houses, restaurants and condominiums were things of the future.

The plans for a new high school called for a single story frame and stucco type of construction. Reinforced concrete foundations with concrete slabs ensured protection against earthquake and termites. Light copper roofing was guaranteed assurance of weather proofing. But the roof leaked! A great deal was made of the bilateral lighting" which assured adequate illumination in keeping with latest findings of the Illuminating Engineering Society. According to Margaret Nicholson, two well known high schools were constructed that year: Acalanes and Carmel High School. Acalanes was the least expensive per square foot, Carmel the most expensive.

The starting of a new school, which District trustees were to do four more times, involves so much work it boggles the mind. Contracts for supplies, for furniture; student and teacher desks, teacher chairs, typing tables, library tables, dinette tables, metal stools, folding chairs, sets of bleachers — a far cry from Mark Thomas and his log.

Then came the problems of transportation — school buses, school bus stops, allowances for those too far from buses — and insurance, supplies, textbooks. There was no money for books for the library the first year. A young man who has since become famous for this work with the East Bay Regional Park District, William Penn Mott, was hired as landscape architect.

On September 10, 1940, the following article appeared in the Walnut Courier:

*Classes Begin At Acalanes High*

*Contra Costa County's ninth high school, Acalanes, was a reality today as classes began in the just completed model building near Lafayette.*

*Informal opening ceremonies were held yesterday after 383 students had registered. Five girls brought out the new school's flag, and four Boy Scouts raised it on a temporary staff. The students pledged allegiance and sang "America" and were then addressed by their principal, Stanley Warburton, who welcomed them and asked their cooperation while the moving in process is underway.*

*Separated alphabetically into groups, the students went to classrooms for 20 minutes and were then dismissed. A half day of school was held today!*

By Monday, papers announced the enrollment was up to 403 and growing. Roger Harding, of Walnut Creek, was elected Senior Class President, Francis Neilson was Vice President, Barbara Lawrence was Secretary-Treasurer, Marion Fitech and Clarence Stanley were yell leaders, and Daphne Coleman was Secretary of Entertainment.

The school chose its colors, royal blue and white and decided on their nickname, "The Don."

*From the Aklan, '50:*

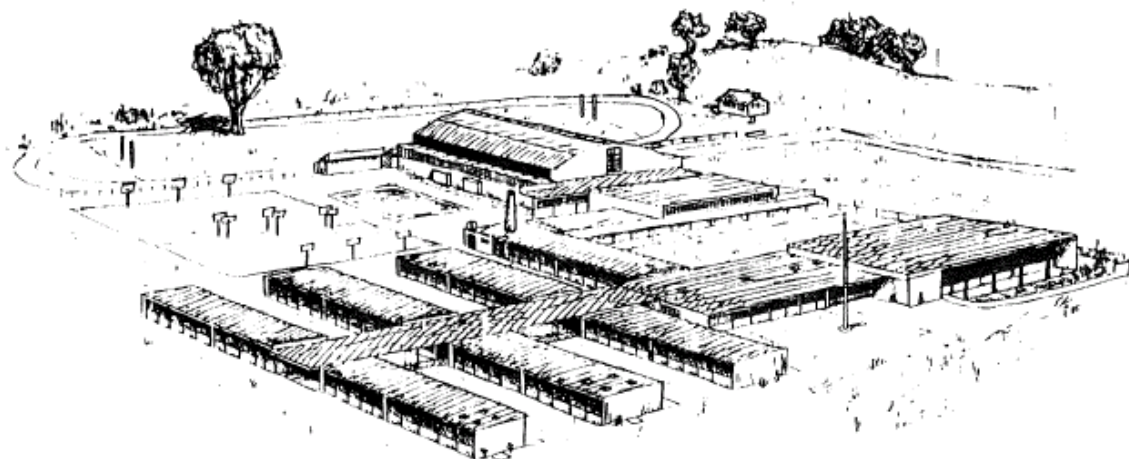
*Ten years ago, on May 11, 1940, in a fertile tomato patch, the construction of Acalanes was begun. Within 3 months the desires of a cooperative community and the magic of modern engineering has created a high school, still unfinished as to buildings, but completely furnished with eager students and hard working teachers. Looking back, conditions seemed pretty hectic: Public Speaking, English I and math were being taught in various sections of the gym bleachers; Coach Mattson trotted in from baseball to teach World History, Miss Nicholson would turn off the gas jets in the chem lab, run down to the gym and grab a basketball; French, Spanish, and Latin raised international havoc in the same class room. Every room and teacher served double and triple purposes.*

"We had to get along, we were a family", says Miss Nick, referring to that first faculty. "We worked seven days a week, but it was fun. It was our life."

Lee Russell, who joined the faculty the second year, recalls: "We had a great time! We did CARMEN! It was a fantastic time, the kids were great! Great kids! And the faculty was a great unit — competent, innovative, creative teachers! We'd work seven days a week. And Millicent (Hamburger) and Margaret (Nicholson) would go "dye" at four o'clock in the morninng." (They were working on fabrics for the dance programs).

The football team went into action, even though there was only one shower for the whole team, and they practiced on a dirt field.

The first yearbook, The Aklan, had 37 pages, but it carried pictures of Student Government; Girls League; Boys Federation; Drama Club and their plays, "Little Women" and "Once in a Life Time"; 33 band members in new blue and white capes; The Photography Club; The Stamp Club, checkers, typing, track and G.A.A. — all going on as activities; each with a faculty sponsor. And there were 48 commercial Aklan sponsors including Hagstrom's Foods, Hendrick's Piano, Diamond Supply, The Pioneer Store, and, of course, The Walnut Creek Meat Company. The yearbook was dedicated to Stanley Warburton.





As always in construction, there were headaches. Time limits in the final plans for construction called for completion of the academic building, library, office and cafeteria units on August 31, 1940, for completion of the gymnasium and shop no later than September 26, 1940, with the contractor subject to a penalty of \$100 per day for every day after the above dates.

All fall the Board struggled with completion contracts. Finally, on November 20, 1940, a notice of completion was filed, stating that the work contracted with Peletz for July 19 was actually completed on September 6. L.S. Peletz and Son were assessed a penalty fine of \$3,000.

And to add to construction blues, some local critics were referring to the first buildings as 'The Chicken Farm,' and "The Race Track." On the other hand, the Lafayette Sun reported:

*Three members of the British Building Mission visited Acalanes Union High School Monday to gain ideas for the rebuilding of schools in Great Britain. They were favorably impressed by what is widely regarded as one of the most modern schools yet developed. And again:*

*Bullock and Jones, now serving its 91st year as a leading men's furnishing store in San Francisco, is currently carrying a series of advertisements featuring San Francisco of tomorrow. In a recent issue of the San Francisco Chronicle, the store featured a picture of Acalanes High School as "The School House of the Future." That our school was chosen by the advertising men for use in the modern advertising of this old business speaks volumes for the ideas that have been built into our school.*

There is no mention of December 7, 1941, in the Board Minutes. There is no mention in any of the scrapbooks on loan from Phyllis Petersen. There is no mention in The Aklan, although Erwin Mattson is shown in the uniform of a Navy Lieutenant. And Lee Russell, who was 1A, was called up the following spring. Neither Margaret Nicholson nor Millicent Hamburger could remember Pearl Harbor Day, although they did remember picking tomatoes and working in the tomato cannery the following fall.

The yearbook of 1942 was dedicated to the Board of Trustees. The faculty, chosen from over 400 applicants and referred to by the yearbook as "understanding pals" had increased in number. In addition to Leland Russell and Millicent Hamburger, Betsy Pembroke, Mitch Monaco, Helen Williamson, Louise Darling, and Veronica Cowan had joined the ranks.

By the end of 1943, the yearbook dedication tells a different story. "As this eventful year draws to a close, we are impressed by the absence of many friends from our student body — friends who answered the call of duty and have pledged their lives to protect our nation's freedom, the halls and classrooms will grow more quiet as an ever-increasing number of these boys go to war. When they return, no one knows, but when that day comes, you may rest assured that the enemy will have been thrashed into oblivion and freedom will reign over the forces of evil. Some will not come back, but they and their more fortunate comrades will have earned the undying gratitude of free men the world over."

Over 65 students and graduates were in the service as well as five faculty members: Miss Veronica C. Cowan, Mr. John S. Hopkins, Mr. Erwin W. Mattson, Mr. Martin O. Rahqut, and Mr. Leland S. Russell.

In the Board minutes there is mention of the difficulties in securing supplies and equipment, diminishing quantities, war-time priorities. Joseph Lawrence's resignation was regretfully accepted by the Board. He had served as Mayor of Walnut Creek, as a school board member in the Diablo District, and as one of the guiding forces behind the formation of the Acalanes District. Because the Board elected to purchase the Lawrence property to enlarge the Acalanes campus, Mr. Lawrence could no longer serve on the Board.



Then, sadly, in December, 1943, the Board adjourned its meeting in respect to the memory of Ensign David Lawrence, USNR, killed in service. The Lawrence family donated \$600 for a scholarship in his memory.

Student activities were concerned with scrap drives, victory food surveys, victory gardens, war stamps and bonds, a victory dance in honor of boys in the service, and Junior Red Cross activities, making articles for the sick and wounded. The sophomores put on an "air raid" dance and for selling so many bonds, the school got "Acalanes" painted on three jeeps.

In 1943 the largest freshman class in the school's history enrolled: 74 girls and 84 boys. This brought the total school population to 490, and Mr. Warburton stated that enrollment had not yet reached its peak. It would increase daily! So Acalanes trustees voted unanimously to call a bond election of \$70,000. The funds were needed to construct and equip three additional units to house 11 classrooms, "...to relieve the present crowded condition and allow room for next year's growth. The growth of the portion of Contra Costa served by the new school is much more rapid than anyone realized. And little did they know what was coming!

In March, Stanley Warburton was granted a leave of absence to serve as a civilian advisor to the U.S. Army.

In 1945, The Board with deep and sincere regret, accepted his resignation as District Superintendent and Principal of Acalanes High School as of July 30. On August 7, Mr. Neil Parsons was elected the new superintendent and principal. A graduate of the College of the Pacific, Mr. Parsons had taught in Martinez and served as principal of the high school in Mendocino. He moved back to Martinez with his wife, Beth, and his two children, Joan and Norman. He was to serve as District Superintendent for 21 years!

On October 9, George White resigned as Vice Principal and Stan Walgren was appointed in his place. These men, Parsons and Walgren, together with Lee Russell and later Ross Reagan, were to guide Acalanes into an exciting future in the post-war world.

When the war ended, in 1946, there was a very brief lull; then started the horrendous land rush through the tunnel. Those who had been in the service craved their own houses, their own fenced back yards, complete with barbeque and swing set. Rentals were almost non-existent in the Bay Area, and prices were high. So housing tracts began — assembly line building — St. Mary's Estates, St. Mary's Orchards, Lafayette Valley Estates, all financed by GI or FHA loans. Private lots were selling for about \$3,000 per quarter acre. People bought, built, moved in and had children! The post war baby boom was on, and the Acalanes High School District had better be ready.

Enrollment had doubled in the five years from 1945 to 1950. Twenty-two teachers were added to the staff. Many of these 22 have had a strong influence on the quality of education: Anita Anderson, Ruth Fletcher; Shirley Frazier, later Dean of Girls at Acalanes; Bruce Handley, first Dean of Boys at Del Valle; Ed Lahey; Ross Reagan, retired superintendent of the District; Margaret Mahler, your humble author; Wilson Sanchez; Robert Stevens, retired Acalanes principal; Robert Thorn, Del Valle and Campolindo administrator; Henry Weiss; James Wilhelm, counselor at Campolindo; and Alex Winchester, retired Assistant Superintendent of Instruction.

The campus was becoming world famous with people coming from all over the country, even from abroad, to view the "modern high school." William Penn Mott had done a wonderful job of landscaping, and Manuel Velazquez surpassed himself as head gardener. Gone was the tomato patch. Instead there were green lawns, tree shaded patios, colorful borders of flowers.

The classroom windows looked out on all this. From the 1950 Aklan:

*Each year since that momentous first one has seen new development at Acalanes. Three times it has been necessary to add new buildings: classrooms, shops, lunchroom and library. The student body has grown from its initial 395 to 950; the faculty from 13 to 47. Happily this phenomenal growth has served only to intensify Acalanes' traditions of friendliness and outstanding achievements in all fields.*

In 1947 Lee Russell and Eve Delander started the new counseling service. Previously, according to the philosophy of Mr. Warburton, each teacher had been a counselor to his own students, but when the staff was small, one teacher frequently taught a student several subjects, saw him several times a day, and there was a great deal of interaction among the faculty. Now, with the larger school, this was impossible, and new counseling techniques were needed. The counseling staff grew to six, an innovative move for the District.

The ninth graders in 1950 had the largest enrollment in school history. The band had real uniforms. And they were to play at night on a lighted field! The Lafayette Lions Club, chartered at the 1940 Worlds Fair on Treasure Island, was eager to donate some sort of memorial to those Acalanes students lost in the war. Joseph Mortenson, their president, announced the interest of Orinda and Walnut Creek Lions as well. Erwin Mattson suggested to Lou Borghesoni that the Lions Club sell bonds in varying amounts to help finance the lights for the football field. The bonds sold to enthusiastic purchasers, most of whom donated whatever sum the bonds were worth when they came due. The Board approved the plans on December 4, 1946.

All this growth was bringing increasing prosperity to Lafayette, and prices were rising. In April of 1946, Mr. Parsons recommended that the teachers' salary committee request for a 15 percent raise be granted. At that time salaries ranged annually from \$2,545 to \$3,174, with extra for coaching or administrative duties.

On May 14, after a discussion of school finances, Mr. Parsons was asked to get information on procedures for a special election to Increase the tax limit. A resolution was made at the next Board meeting to increase the tax from 75 cents to \$1.25 per hundred dollars for a period of three years. The election, held on July 30, passed. 147 votes were cast — 115 for, 31 against, and 1 illegal vote.

Additional funds made it possible for the Board to then set up a new salary schedule for teachers ranging from \$2,640 to \$4,460.

On May 6, 1947, Dr. Alfred Christensen, of the Kump School Planning Survey, projected that the high school population would pass the 1,000 mark in 1952, 1500 in 1955, and would reach 2,500 in 1960. The Board discussed how many students should be accommodated at Acalanes, and Dr. Christensen's opinion was that enrollment should not exceed 1200. So discussion immediately moved to a plan for acquiring new sites.

### The Search for More Land Begins

Sites and schools cost money. A Bond Election was scheduled and held on October 21, 1947. The vote called for bonds to be issued and sold in the amount of \$540,000. The Purposes:

- a. Purchasing of school lots.
- b. Building or purchasing of school buildings.
- c. Making alterations or additions to the school building or buildings.
- d. Repairing, restoring or rebuilding damaged, injured buildings destroyed by fire or public calamity
- e. Supplying school buildings with furniture or necessary apparatus of a permanent nature.
- f. Permanent improvement of school grounds.

The vote passed 852 to 39. Neil Parsons was instructed to advise the Contra Costa Realty Board that our Board was interested in purchasing sites of 25-36 acres in the district.

On November 10, 1947, the Board expressed interest in two sites, a 34 acre site north of Walnut Creek city limits, and a site at Orinda Corners.

Obtaining enough land to build a high school campus is not easy, as the Board was to discover. The Orinda property, which belonged to EBMUD was available. The owner of the Walnut Creek property was not interested in selling. Meanwhile, Acalanes was still growing and acquiring a physics laboratory, chemistry laboratory, four classrooms, a dark room, storage room, toilets and appurtenant facilities.

At a special meeting on January 6, 1948, the Board approved plans and gave permission to proceed on plans for a shop unit containing a wood shop, a craft shop, a mechanical drawing room, a shop class room, and appurtenant facilities.

Meanwhile, the future Walnut Creek high school's campus was still undecided. A gentleman named Kazebeer owned a Walnut Creek site and did not wish to sell. If he did, he felt it was worth \$3,500 per acre. The Board decided to have the property appraised, make Kazebeer an offer on the strength of the appraisal, and if refused, take immediate steps for condemnation.

At a special meeting, the Kazebeers, Jr. and Sr., appeared to express their unwillingness to sell. They asked for time to find other property for the District. It was finally decided that the Board and the Kazebeers would give each other 60 days. Kazebeer would not sell his land to anyone else, and the Board would hold up on the condemnation proceedings.

Finally, in April, the Board abandoned consideration of the Kazebeer site and decided to take steps to acquire land south of Walnut Creek owned by a Mr. Taylor. The Board had the land appraised at \$3,000 per acre. Adjoining this property were additional parcels owned by J.T. Schroder, DeMicheli, and Marshall. Mr. Schroder felt his land was worth \$5,000 per acre. DeMicheli was asking \$42,000 for 26 acres — double the highest appraisal. The Board felt they should pay no more for his property than they did for the other parcels. If the cost was more, they would favor the court setting the price. The upshot was that four parcels of land, 26 acres, selling for \$91,675.98 were to become the site of the new Walnut Creek high school.

At the Board meeting on September 20, 1949, it was decided to go ahead with plans for the Walnut Creek high school immediately. Plans and specifications would be completed and approved by early September of 1950, and hopefully the new school would open in September of 1951, housing 9th grade students from Walnut Creek its first year.

Meanwhile the Board was still dickering for its Orinda site and trying to buy the EBMUD property. The Board was offering \$2,000 per acre for 28.75 acres. Mr. Wickman, of EBMUD thought they might accept \$4,000.

Mr. Parsons stated that the Board would pay no such price; newspapers were starting to make an issue of such a price, and the citizens felt the Board should not be forced to pay a high price for property from another public district!

With two high schools in the planning stages, another Bond Election was needed. As Neil Parsons was often to state, his life was made up of "Buildings, Buses and Bonds!" The election was scheduled for March 28 and passed with Yesses of 1278, and Noes of 436. Lots more people were getting to the polls.

And still prices rose! The Board expressed the feeling that bids for construction for the first units of the Walnut Creek plant were extremely high in light of the architect's estimates. Low bid came from Hass and Rothschild: \$646,997, slightly more than a four bedroom, three bath home in Orinda today.

The faculty's raised salary schedule had not solved all their economic problems. Webster Wilson and Bill Ross appeared before the Board to discuss the very real problem of making both ends meet on a teacher's salary. The Board expressed its understanding and concern and asked for more information from the salary committee.

On April 11, the Board voted to purchase its own buses and operate its own transportation system. With the ever increasing school population, and with willing customers from the elementary districts, it seemed like a good idea.

At a special meeting on May 1, 1950, preliminary plans for the Walnut Creek site were approved at a basic cost estimate of \$500,000. A bit more than the \$333,000 spent for Alcalanes. On May 9, Ross Reagan was named Administrative Assistant, beginning in August.

The Board was changing its personnel as well. Mr. Lawrence had resigned to be replaced by Dr. Ralph Hall. Now Melvin Jacobus' resignation was received with great regret. William B. Freeman was appointed to fill his unexpired term. So the Board roster was now Dr. Ralph Hall, M.H. Stanley, Carl Newbury, William Freeman, and William Chaddock.



Times were changing, too. At the September 12 meeting, the Board expressed itself as "not opposed to teachers smoking at school as long as it was not done in the presence of students and with discretion." And on October 23, the Board unanimously approved the name of the new high school: LAS LOMAS!

It was then moved by Freeman, and seconded by Hall that Neil Parsons be District Superintendent, that Stan Walgren be Principal of Acalanes and Leland Russell be Principal of Las Lomas High School.

No one worked harder at a new job than Lee Russell. "It was a challenge, and it was new. No other school started out as we did. How many places were willing to open a school a year at a time? It needed a lot of research. I started to write my Masters' Thesis on it. Later on, more schools started this way, but we were ploughing new ground. In 1950 I was Director of Guidance, I was Business Manager, and I was the Principal-Elect. It was a busy year."

According to Mr. Russell, Las Lomas was "way out." It was certainly not in the city. "It was lonesome," said Lee. "No buildings, a few farm houses, Frank Marshall's estate was south of the school, and across the street was the Art and Garden Center — Ted Counter's place." Ted Counter was a mayor of Walnut Creek.

Bob Pape, a former Las Lomas teacher, recalls Mr. Counter's respect and affection for Las Lomas. During a flood, right after the school opened, a great many of Mayor Counter's art objects and artifacts were threatened by the waters. Las Lomas students saved them. In gratitude, Counter donated a suit of armour to the school, in keeping with the school mascot, the Las Lomas Knight.

Las Lomas means "the little hills", and they did have to do considerable grading before construction could begin.

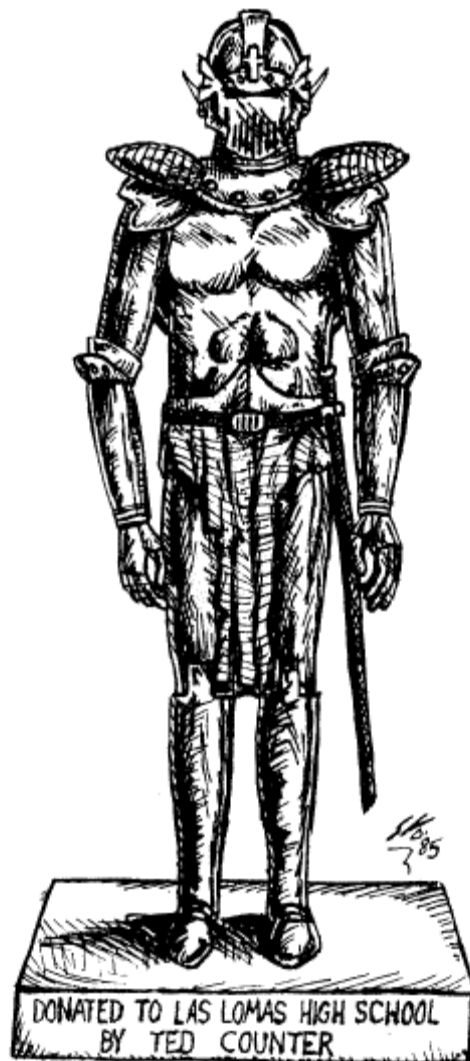
During the winter of 1950 progress was reported slow because of the rain. According to Mr. Parsons, "The rain held up grading and they are just now getting ready to pour the first concrete."

Lee Russell was busy interviewing. The Acalanes High School District was a favored one, and there were many applicants. "I was looking for creativity, people interested in education, in taking chances. It took a lot of time to find them." "They" were Ruth Malnik, English, counseling and Dean of Girls; Barbara Knighton, home economics and science; John Wells, industrial arts; Gordon Gibson, social studies, music and PE; Lillian Boz, Spanish and English; Kathryn Taylor, math; and Bob Rowe, social studies and science. Lee Russell still cannot praise his beginning faculty enough. "They were not ordinary teachers — they were outstanding!"

And they were busy! Kay Taylor, who was to become Dean of Girls and Assistant Principal, remembers, "We had every dance and activity to go to. And hall duty, noon duty, bus duty, brunch duty. It was frantic."

Meanwhile, at Acalanes the previous spring, Mr. Parsons submitted names for re-hiring. A number of the faculty had taught at Acalanes for three or more years, and now because of the increased enrollment, could qualify for tenure. So the following people received permanent status: Anita Anderson, John Annis, Florence Bassignan, Beatrice Bettencourt, Gerald Brown, Oscar Busch, Charles Eaton, Beverly Fisher, Ruth Fletcher, Millicent Hamburgber, Bruce Handley, Elmo Heard, Robert Lord, Ruth Malnik, Er-win Mattson, Margaret Nicholson, Josephine Ochoa, Betsy Pembroke, Helen Peterson, Vera Richardson, William Ross, Wilson Sanchez, Robert Stevens, David Stewert, Robert Thorn, Marie Wagner, Ruth Webb, and Alex Winchester. Quite a distinguished roll.

In April a special Board meeting was called to consider the progress of the building schedule at Las Lomas. Apparently Delp Johnson, Kump's architect, felt that neither the building superintendent nor the inspector were pushing the job, and slight errors had been made.



Site searching in the Orinda area was also running into difficulties. The EBMUD property at Orinda corners was out of the question — the price was too high. Dr. Hall and Mr. Newbury had been scouring the countryside and had found a possible site near Moraga, owned by the Moraga Land Company, later to be Utah Construction. They felt the company was receptive to offers and decided to pursue the matter further. A meeting was scheduled to look over the proposed site.

As always, money was tight. Mr. Freeman reported on some budget matters — that most of the money went for salaries. He felt two matters should be studied: reducing the number of small classes; cutting down the number of free periods for teachers. Neither of these measures would make him very popular with personneil Teachers at this time had one preparation period; the ratio of students to teachers was theoretically one to 24, but often worked out to be one to 28 or 30.

Bill Ross was appointed Director of Counseling to replace Lee Russell; David Stewert was appointed Dean of Boys at Acalanes to replace Stan Walgren who would be taking over as Principal to free Mr. Parsons for his expanding duties as Superintendent. All of these musical chairs was to take place on July 1, 1951.

The committee which viewed the Moraga site reported it could house a school for 1200 - 2000, and it was approximately 50 acres. But — Moraga Land Company wanted \$3,000 per acre. It was decided to have it appraised.

### Las Lomas Opens

On September 11, 1951, the second high school in the Acalanes District, Las Lomas, opened its doors to an enrollment of 145 freshmen on a closed campus. This class was to become famous, or infamous, depending on whether the source was students or faculty. They dedicated the first yearbok, El Cabellero, to themselves, and were in many ways "infants terrible" for four years.

There was an outdoor assembly at which Ted Zeller, an outstanding grammar school student, and William Freeman from the Board gave opening salutations. In the class Senior History they state: "One hundred and forty-six anxious and bewildered freshmen listening to the first speeches given at Las Lomas. October...school colors, nickname chosen, newspaper christened The Page'...December...Danny Van Gelder draws winning emblem for LL Knights...September, 54, with Ed Kinny at the helm, the class of '55 sails into the Senior Year taking over the Senior Hall and Rally Court Lawn...first Varsity football game...hats in all colors and sizes for Senior Hat Day...November...unusual socks for Senior Sock Day...other gala specialty days throughout the year: Coat Day, Dark Glasses Day, and Costume Day. December...Seniors' huge production of 'Arsenic and Old Lace' is tremendous success...June...the BIG month is finally ushered in, with a gorgeous Senior Ball and after party. Last minute plans are being made for the Baccalaureate June 12, Senior Breakfast June 15, and Commencement Exercises, June 19."

"This class has received much appreciated support from the parents during its four years at Las Lomas. For those of you who yet have years to complete as Knights and Ladies, we hope the ensuing years will be just as much of a pleasure."

"During the first four years of Las Lomas we have seen the completion of 34 classrooms, a metal and wood shop, gymnasium, locker rooms, multi-use room, stage, administration and counseling office and a library. Enrollment grew from 146 to 760 and is still climbing. Estimates indicate that as many as 1800 students may be attending this high school by 1960. Miramonte, the third high school in the district, is now under construction."

The beginning faculty and student body coped with unfinished construction, mud, construction noise, mud, dirt playing fields, mud, groaning bulldozers, mud, more dust and a sea of mud.

The Parents Club, Las Lomas Amigos, held their first meeting with over 150 parents present and planned a boardwalk outside the school on South Main so that students would not sink in the mire walk-Ing to school.

Haas and Rothschild, the construction company, had exceeded its completion date by 17 days when school opened, and when new bids went out for the next construction, Horstmeyer and Co. were awarded the contract. Bids were for classrooms, library and administration offices, and again in December bids would go out for six more classrooms, a cafeteria and a shop. Acalanes was still adding construction, and the Orinda high school was in the planning stages. So to continue the building program to accomodate all the growth, about \$1,500,000 was needed in bond money in the next five years.

Acalanes and Las Lomas were attracting hundreds of families. Some realtors actually advertised in the papers that their properties were in the Acalanes School District! Priorities for Capital Outlay were: Orinda site, next wing at Las Lomas, locker addition at Acalanes, and the grading of the field at Las Lomas.

In October the District purchased the Moraga site for the new Orinda school for \$125,000.

In the fall of '51 the Acalanes Education Association (AEA) was organized by the teachers in the District, its purpose to work for teachers and the schools. It was to prove invaluable in helping teachers to form salary committees, The Joint Committee, and other negotiating groups which worked with the District. At a special meeting on December 20, an interesting discussion was held to determine what would happen if Las Lomas were limited to 600, and Orinda readied for occupation sooner. Nothing ever came of this suggestion. It's interesting to speculate what might have happened to Las Lomas had this plan been implemented.

Meanwhile, Las Lomas was going great guns with a Student Council, House of Representatives, Council of Organizations, Music Department which had a band, mixed chorus, majorettes, an orchestra, Girls League, Junior Statesmen, Junior Red Cross, CSF, Girls Service, Photography, Chess, Electronics, Future Business Leaders, Future Homemakers - the list goes on and on!

In the first varsity football season, the team won three games. In 1956 there were seven straight wins and the Las Lomas Knights were called The Cinderella Team, Team of the Year, and Surprise Team of the Year. The yearbook was dedicated to them. The '57 yearbook was dedicated to the Parents' Club and community. And the Las Lomas code inspired its student body. L (loyalty) A (attitude) S (scholarship) L (leadership) O (obligation) M (maturity) A (appreciation) S (sportsmanship).

On January 12, 1952, the Board toured the plant at Las Lomas to determine if construction was indeed too slow and poorly done. There was a good deal of unpleasantness between them and Haas and Rothschild. The Board finally voted to accept the work, but to withhold funds to cover discrepancies.

On January 22, a public meeting was held in the library of Acalanes to consider plans for housing high school pupils in the future. I'm sure sometimes Mr. Stanley must have wondered what he helped get started! the citizens present, about 100 of them, voted to endorse the Board's plans to issue more bonds. A bond election in the amount of \$1,500,000 was moved. The election later passed 1383 to 201.

As the Orinda school was now very much in the planning stage, several architectural firms, including those of Jack Buchter and John Lyon Reid were considered. However, on July 15, Carl Newbury wrote a letter stating that he approved retention of Mr. Kump as architect on the Orinda site. Pacific Coast Builders were awarded the bid for construction of two units at Las Lomas, and Kump was retained as architect. On December 9, the Board authorized preliminary plans for the Orinda school. In planning it, the Board decided to think in terms of enrollment of 1800 rather than 1200 and to change from finger type units to square ones, each containing up to four classrooms.

Las Lomas, meanwhile, was very much in need of a swimming pool. The Acalanes pool had been built by the WPA. No such help was available now, and the Board met with Mrs. Wallis, Mr. Hansen, and Mr. Stoddard to regretfully announce that the budget could not afford it. They did decide, however, that if the community could raise part of the funds, the pool could be built sooner. This started a policy which was to be continued at two of the other schools. The agreement was that if other sources could furnish 50 percent of the money, the pool could be built right away.





A new teachers' salary schedule was approved in April of '53 with an overall increase of 8 percent. This meant a minimum of \$3,600 to a maximum of \$6,300. The Board requested the teachers be informed that (a) the Board feels the District has a superior staff which demonstrates fine morale, (b) that this increase sets no precedent, and the Board is making a supreme effort at this time, (c) The Board greatly appreciates the attitude of teachers in that no "demands were made on them for salary increases, (d) that the financial situation in this district is not the brightest, and the Board hopes that the teachers will be modest in their requests for facilities and equipment, keeping in mind that we do not want to lower educational standards.

On May 12 Mr. Parsons discussed the acquisition of another school site somewhere in the area south of Lafayette. In a bit of good news, Pacific Coast Builders completed construction at Las Lomas six weeks ahead of time and saved the budget \$7,000. And, oh yes, the Board voted themselves new chairs. Since they spend so much time in meetings, they felt they should at least be comfortable.

Las Lomas parents had already raised over \$18,000 for the pool, and plans were going ahead. Las Lomas was also to get tennis courts, and there were some nebulous plans to enlarge the gym. According to Bob Pape, they did an amazing thing. They just sliced the gym in two, made a space in the middle, filled it in, and added a stage at one end and ticket booths at the other. And then — and then they hung a huge curtain in the middle to turn it into a boys' and girls' gym. Which, of course, the kids gouged and scratched and wrote on." Great shades of Title IX!

In the fall Mr. Chaddock resigned from the Board and Alice McBride was appointed by B.O. Wilson to fill out the term. She was the FIRST WOMAN on the Board. The J.E. Lawrence family wrote thanking the Board for the funeral wreath, sent in memory of Mr. Lawrence, the Board's first Chairman. They also voted a letter of thanks to Dr. Beede, Acalanes High School Team doctor who donated years of time and service to young people.

Mr. Parsons cited EBMUD's estimate of population: 33,000 at present; 96,000 in 1970; 170,000 in 2000!

In December there was a provisional acceptance of the Orinda plant's preliminary plans - for \$507,000. And another election for a tax limit increase was set for May 21.

Las Lomas parents presented a check for \$18,000 toward their pool. They hoped to raise more at the Walnut Festival. Bids were opened for the pool on March 6. Paddock Pool's bid was accepted.

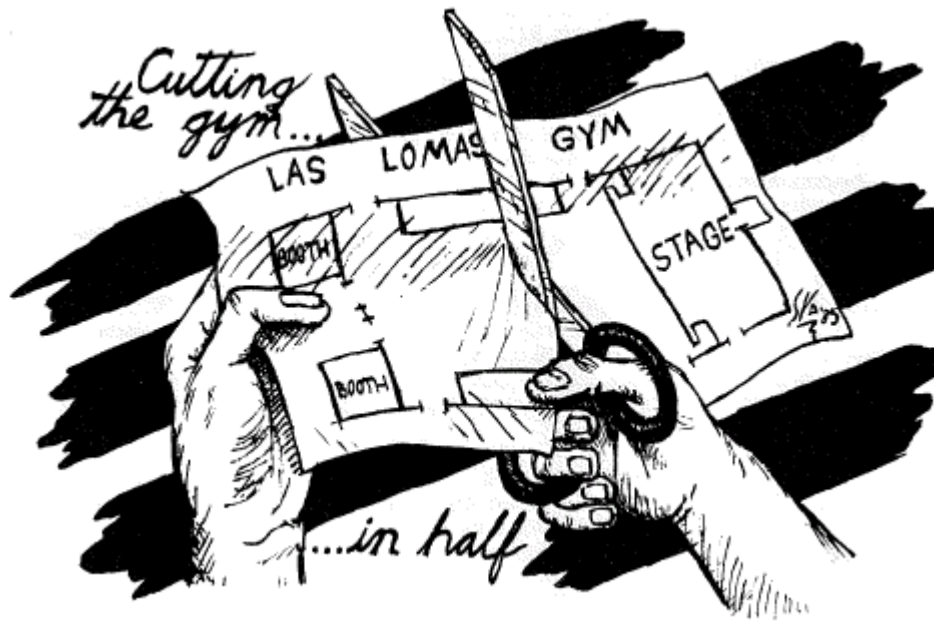
So on we move into 1954. The Board was notified that Pleasant Hill Road in front of Acalanes would become four lanes. The Board voted to raise graduation requirements from 200 units to 220. And this before Sputnik. The old bridge at Las Lomas was removed, and the Teachers' Salary Committee asked for \$300 in increments per year. They also asked that the maximum be raised to \$7,600.

The tax limit election passed — Yes, 2,859; No, 720. Alice McBride was duly elected to the Board. In July Dr. Ralph Hall became President, and Mrs. McBride became Clerk.

Mrs. Crouch, who lived in Hunsaker Canyon, requested that her 25 cents per day which she received in lieu of bus service be raised to 50 cents, the Board turned her down. In July, the Orinda school was officially named Miramonte, much to the disgust of a Mr. Maccarro who wrote in September suggesting the name be changed to Orinda High School.

Alas, the bids for the first units at Miramonte were 10 percent higher than the architect's estimate. Las Lomas' swimming pool, thanks to the efforts of the community, was completed and approved.

I'm sure the Board was not quite ready to panic, but in October Mr. Parsons was instructed to contact the Planning Commission to see if they could tell where the heavy population would be. Mr. Freeman expressed concern over Miramonte's building schedule. The school should be completed and ready to open by fall of '55.



## Mr. Parsons Gets an Office of His Own

The District was really growing, and Acalanes High School needed the space occupied by the Board Room and District Offices. So the Board began to discuss moving the District Office to a building of its own.

In November, a crucial decision was called for. Should the walnut trees on the Miramonte site be grafted to English or left as Black? The Board decided to allow them to grow "as is." The new site-use plans for Miramonte were examined: eight classrooms, a library, an administrative area, enclosed vestibules and covered walls. This architecture was a departure from the other two schools. This much construction was estimated to cost \$200,000.

Mr. James Lewis was hired as Principal at Miramonte, and the Board voted to adopt a policy of not hiring both husband and wife as regular employees of the District. This was later rescinded, much to the relief of Nancy and Fred Wisner, John and Dottie Wells, and Madeline and Ed Hewitson, all husband and wife teams in the District.

Board policy for the selection of library books was established as well as criteria for a strong defense and protection against pressure groups who seek to remove books from library shelves without valid reasons. I'm sure it was helpful to Bill Ross, when as Superintendent, he was contending with some strong pressure groups over the removal of Ms. Magazine from the library shelves at Las Comas in 1978.

Four sites were discussed for the District Office, but no action was taken. Kay Taylor was appointed acting Dean of Girls at Las Lomas to replace Mrs. Lavery who resigned. Bill Ross was appointed Dean of Boys at Miramonte, Vera Richardson was named Dean of Girls at Acalanes, and Lili Lahti moved into District management as Assistant Superintendent in Charge of Instruction and Curriculum. Alex Winchester became the new Director of Guidance at Acalanes.

The teachers' salary committee presented a request for shorter steps on the salary schedule, higher regular increments, and a free period for all teachers! It was decided to follow the Las Lomas plan of starting a school with just a freshman class, so Miramonte would open with ninth graders living in Orinda, Moraga and Canyon school districts.

The District chose a location for its new offices on the northern most tennis courts at Acalanes. Kump was authorized to draw up plans.

The search was still on for the next campus, preferably in Lafayette, but the Burton Orchard land, which the District was eyeing covetously, was appraised at \$5,000 to \$6,000 an acre — too expensive. By this time, "Bonds, Buses, and Buildings" were getting to be a real problem, perhaps too difficult for laymen to solve. There was a group at Stanford prepared to study problems concerning the size of schools, costs versus quality of education, sites, number of schools, transportation problems, et al. The Board voted to hire Dr. Odell of Stanford and awarded him a contract for \$6,000.

In order to acquire the Burton Orchard land, the Board went to the Allocation Board in Sacramento to enlist State Aid. They also decided to start immediate condemnation proceedings against the Utah Construction Company, formerly Moraga Land. Utah, not too happy with this, apparently tried to block the Board's application for the loan. Both Mr. Parsons and Mr. Freeman felt incorrect figures were used and the statements made were distorted. At least that's how the Board minutes state it.

During the summer of 1955, in August in fact, Miramonte's construction was reported complete. Bids for additions were already being made with the low bid from Pacific Coast Builders being accepted.

Board representatives and Utah Construction met informally on a Sunday in August and came to the following agreement:

The Utah Company will withdraw its opposition to the District's application for State Aid in acquiring a school site.

The District will hold in abeyance its condemnation suit.

The District and Utah Construction will accept the joint recommendation of Odell of Stanford and Bartholomew and Associates, planning experts employed by Utah, as to the best high school site in the Moraga area. If they cannot agree, a third expert shall be called in. If the same site is selected, each side shall select an appraiser, and they shall select one more. The majority vote of the appraisers shall determine price.

It's ironic — the good schools were bringing more and more people to the area, but land was getting too expensive for schools to afford.

The third high school opened in the Acalanes District in September of 1955. A wonderful book, *The History of Orinda* by Muir Sorrick, published by Friends of the Orinda Library, gives a marvelous background of the town supplying the students for the new school.

Two land grants formed the major part of Orinda. "Laguna de los Palos Colorados" was granted to Joaquin Moraga and his cousin, Juan Bernal. Victor and Juan Jose Castro received the grant of "El Sobrante".

Both families lived gracious and happy lives on their ranchos until squatters and other unscrupulous land operators caused them to lose not only their land, but in time their homes as well. Horace Carpentier, a lawyer, was the villain. He inveigled an agreement from them for one eighth of their land if he served as their attorney and prosecuted for them. And he ended up owning most of their land.

The Castros fared no better; and because once California came under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Government no grants were allowed to Mexicans, they sold their property to grocery merchants, Ward and Smith for \$800. From 1870 on, much of the land was parceled out for sale.

Orinda first appeared as "Orinda Park", a tract of land, on a map dated 1876. William Cameron owned 500 acres of this land, then purchased the remaining pieces from Miller and Lux, a land company. Later he was able to purchase the remaining acres, making his holdings a good deal of what is now Orinda proper. Interestingly, William was a cousin and good friend of Elam Brown, the pioneer settler in Lafayette. Now they were neighbors.

Cameron later lost most of his money, his wife, and a great deal of his property. He sold most of his land to Edward Dubois, who in turn sold to Jose and Miguel de Laveaga, the family largely responsible for the development of modern Orinda.

Angus Grant and James Williamson bought the Moraga Rancho from Horace Carpentier in 1889 and formed the Moraga Land Association. The first subdivision opened to the public was called Glorietta. But development did not occur as hoped for. In 1899 Grant and Williamson gave up their holdings and departed for Los Angeles, taking a financial loss. And guess who bought the land at public auction? Horace Carpentier was once again owner of the Laguna do los Palos Colorados, except for the few lots the Moraga Land Company had sold. He paid \$450,000, approximately what he had sold it for. He held the land in absentee ownership until 1909 when James Irvine acquired it for \$1,000,000. A nice profit for Horace. Thus began the Moraga Company.

Orinda, of course, was influenced by the building of the railroad, the boring of the tunnel, the construction of a bridge, and finally the building of BART. Many who originally built summer homes, once the tunnel was in, moved out to live permanently. The Orinda Country Club, built in 1924-25 by E. I. de Laveaga, drew homeowners. Warren Harrold, one of those who worked to bring a high school beyond the tunnel, was the first real estate agent to actually live in Orinda. Mason McDuffie had an office in the village in the 1930's.

So, the Village grew, the Corners became The Crossroads, and eventually a cloverleaf, and a third high school opened in the Acalanes District in September of 1955. From The Miranda of 1965: "What was Miramonte like 10 years ago? It would hardly be recognized by the students of today. There were no lawns and only two walkways — there was no Memorial Circle, library building or cafeteria. In fact, C-2, the present yearbook and journalism room was the office, and the darkroom of today used to be the library! Its meager beginning of eight shelves of books has grown, in 10 years time, to a total of 11,210 volumes. And all year, while students studied, there was the constant noise of construction, as more and more of Miramonte took shape.

"At Miramonte in 1955, one looked over his surroundings and saw no houses at all — it was a beautiful setting. Each morning the fog gradually burned away, just as it does now, exposing the green, rolling hills of Moraga. A well-worn deer trail led through the orchard, and one often saw the deer as they made their way across the campus. The very first year, there was a threat to build a VA hospital in the orchard, but it was almost 10 years before the fruit trees were replaced by today's condominiums."

"What were the students like in 1955 and how many were there? They were all freshmen, of course, and there was a grand total of 176 that first year. There was a special closeness among the class; everyone shared in this new experience. There were problems, but everyone had the same challenging opportunity to be a 'pioneer' in a brand new school. They were the 'tradition' setters — they originated many of the Miramonte customs that we take for granted today."

"Student government had its beginnings in the Student Commission, a 15 member group. The Miramonte colors, green and white, were chosen by the Student Commission that year, and were accepted by a vote of the student body. The Matador mascot, too, was chosen and approved at that time. The first 10 Miramonte clubs were organized in 1955, and now, after 10 years, Miramonte has 25 active clubs. The first class of 176 was graduated four years later, grown to 203 members. This year, in 1965, we have a total of 1,310 students in the school, and the Senior Class has grown to 412 members."

That first year, there was a faculty of 11. Reminiscing, Mr. Lewis, Miramonte's first Principal, recalled the school looked rather unfinished the first day. The furniture was missing from some of the rooms and he himself had to set out the trash cans.

From the Miranda of 1958: "The Crossroads, modern, wide awake, was once part of a 'sleepy little bend in the road.' Since then they have changed considerably. As 'City Folk' migrated from crowded Oakland, San Francisco and Berkeley, the outlying areas grew. New highways were constructed, supermarkets opened, and the Moraga-Onnda area became almost suburban. Still, during hot summer days the area seems almost like the sleepy town it grew from." A nice comment. One wonders what one could say today. Almost urban?

The football team played only Las Lomas and Acalanes, and since there was no football field, the team practiced on a bulldozed meadow 40 yards wide and 250 yards long. Several people suggested the team mascot should be a gopher since so many were digging holes in the dirt where the boys played.

Miramonte's seal contains a lamp of learning, an open book, a microscope, a palette and brushes. And the school motto — "Ad Astra Per Aspera: To the stars through difficulties.

Today, almost 30 years later, Miramonte has graduated thousands, and sent many on to prestigious universities and fine careers. The school has received many commendations from colleges and universities and continues to educate the youth of Orinda in a manner which makes citizens very proud.

There was another special Bond Election held on November 22 for \$3,250,000. It passed, 3,467 to 327. Apparently the citizens of the community were overwhelmingly proud of their district and willing to support it.

Bids were made on the District Building, and a \$57,700 bid was accepted.

\* \* \* \* \*

Las Lomas, meanwhile, was looking for a way to furnish lights for their football field. The Parents' Club discovered that the lights from the Oakland Ball Park, where the old Oakland team, the Oaks, used to play, were available and authorized their purchase from Brick Laws. So there would soon be night





games in Walnut Creek. The Board agreed to provide bleachers and fencing. And the kids proceeded to provide winning teams. In 1956 there were seven straight wins!

The financial aspects of the Building Program were reviewed at the end of the year. The District found itself able to finish needed projects at Acalanes and Las Lomas, build Miramonte to accommodate 925 pupils in 1958, and start a new high school in 1958 at a cost not to exceed \$900,000 with bond funds in sight and \$250,000 each year for the next two years from tax monies.

## Stanford Consultants Urge Building of More Schools

The Stanford Consultants had also come forth with their studies. According to them, the District could expect to have almost 10,000 students! They felt a fourth high school should open by Fall of '58 and the next school by 1960. The fourth school should be built to ease the load on Acalanes and Las Lomas, and the fifth school should be in the upper Moraga area. They recommended both sites be acquired soon, and felt that ultimately the District would need seven sites, possibly eight! There would be a joint report coming soon from Bartholomew and Stanford on where the site in upper Moraga should be. They asked that an architect be appointed as soon as possible.

In early spring of 1956 John Lyon Reid was retained by the District as architect for the fourth school, ending a long association with Mssrs. Kump.

Recently, our enrollment has begun to decline. In regard to the enrollment projection so dramatically in error, I suppose the Stanford Consultants expected the great land boom to continue, as indeed it has, but who could guess that homes would become prohibitively expensive for young, growing families? Who could project the insane land and housing prices and the constantly mounting taxes? Orinda, Lafayette, Moraga and Walnut Creek are practically built up, and older couples, their children long gone, reside in many of the homes. Resales cost almost as much as a high school used to. Should Dr. Odell have seen this coming? Neil Parsons? All the astute business men on the Board? M.H. Stanley, the only original Board member still on the Board must have really marvelled at the high school district he had helped to start.

When the Acalanes Education Association(AEA) made its presentation for a change in salary status, in 1956, it met with an unfavorable response from the Board, who felt teachers should be paid on the basis of ability and that their presentation sounded like propaganda instead of facts!

Later the Board and AEA seemed to work out the differences since an AEA delegate was asked to attend the second Board meeting each month and \$4,000 was added to the salary scale.

In March, Mr. Reid, the new architect, showed pictures of four sites in the general area under consideration. Two were difficult to develop for schools. He also discussed sites in Tice Valley. There is no further mention in Board minutes of the Burton Orchards property. It went on to be the Burton Valley area. In April the Board was told of two possible sites in Tice Valley — one a rather flat area about one-half mile south of the entry to the Dollar property, and on the west side of the creek, the other to the west of the entrance to the property. Mr. Parsons was asked to contact the owner of this property and hold a preliminary discussion.

In May the Board received the following letter:

### SPECIAL MEETING OF THE ACALANES UNION HIGH SCHOOL BOARD OF TRUSTEES

May 1, 1956

A special meeting of the Acalanes Union High School District Board of Trustees was called to order at 2:17 p.m. in St. Mark's Square, Venice, Italy.

Present:

Signori Carlos Newburio

Signore Nina Newburio Signori

Gilliamo Frimano Signore Eliza

Frimano

The agenda of the meeting was submitted by the Superintendent by proxy, but before it could be discussed, the regular Acalanes board refreshment period was indulged in.

Immediately thereafter, the agenda submitted by the Superintendent was dropped into the Grand Canal, and the meeting proceeded on its, er, I mean by ear.

A change order was submitted by the architect calling for converting classroom wing six into a natatorium — it being cheaper to do this than to repair all the leaks in the roof. After a dissertation by Signore Newburio on now our kids are sheltered too much anyway and kept too dry, the motion was passed by common consent.

At this point the regular Acalanes Board refreshment period was again enjoyed.

The question was raised of increasing the height of the shower heads in the boys gym from 4'0" to 4'9". After considerable debate, it was agreed to raise the shower heads to 8'6", for while we never had any boys that high, it was reasoned that these schools must last for many, many years, and who knows, maybe some day we'll have a boy that tall.

At this point the regular Acalanes refreshment period was enjoyed.

The members then joined in a rendition of "Funiculi, Funicula." Signori Frimano proposed a toast to more pigeons, Signori Newburio moved all salaries be tripled.

At this point the regular...well, I think the regular refreshment period was observed; in fact, twice. Grand Canal, St. Mark's Square, Northern Italy, and the NATO.

Motion was made and carried to hell with Acalanes District, and to hell with the minutes.

Viva Duce! Viva Garibaldil and Hi, gang.

Signore and Signori Frimano  
Signore and Signori Newburio

Mr. Freeman, back from his study group in Venice, reported in May that he had met with members of the Dollar Company. "They were most courteous, and while they said they had plans to sell the property, they said further they would consider the two sites and try to come up with some sort of answer soon."

At the May 13 meeting, Mr. Stanley announced he would be retiring from the Board, after giving 20 or more years of service to the District. His fellow educators had named the Lafayette Intermediate School after him. At his retirement party, his fellow board members presented him with a book of press clippings recording the growth of the District over the past 17 years. The following words were appended to the book:

*"The pages preceding represent the culmination of efforts beginning in 1939 that have seen the Acalanes High School itself mature into a system of public secondary education second to none."*

*"And now the work so laboriously engaged in to complete Acalanes High has turned to working out the building of seven, possibly eight high schools of similar caliber. First, Las Lomas, then Miramonte, and in the future, Tice Valley, Burton Morgaga, and thence on again and still again."*

*"Like Topsy, the Acalanes High School District continues to 'just grow.' Whatever the growth or the accomplishments — the future of the Acalanes High School District is ever brighter and sounder because of the efforts and the sound trusteeship you, Howard, have provided for tomorrow's development."*

Your fellow trustees

Carl Newbury  
Ralph Hall  
Bill Freeman  
Alice McBride  
Will Hall  
and Neil M. Parsons  
and Phil Petersen

Four of his five children had attended Acalanes High School, Clarence graduating in the first class. Mr. Stanley was indeed the "father of Acalanes High School District."

There was some discussion, at the May Board meeting, of the Government plan to condemn land across from Miramonte for a VA Hospital, but apparently this never came to pass, and the land remained vacant until Miramonte Gardens was built.

Since there was to be a new architect for the proposed Lafayette site, Mr. Kump asked to be released from certain contracts, but shocked the Board by billing them for prior professional services to the tune of over \$8,000! The Board felt they had no moral obligation to pay these bills. At a special meeting on June 7, an agreement was reached between Kump and the Board and Reid took over as official architect.

Building costs were sky rocketing: 15 percent in six months 30 percent in the past year. Delp Johnson, Kump architect at Miramonte raised his estimate of cost for the multi-use room at Miramonte from \$227,500 to \$293,500.

With costs soaring, the District was eager to secure a site for the next school and start to build while they could still afford it. The Board was interested in both the sites in Tice Valley and had filed condemnation proceedings on one. The Dollar representatives and Mr. Reid's firm met to see if they might come up with another site besides the one on which condemnation had been filed. Reid had a total cost development of \$193,771 for a total 43.5 acres on site two as opposed to \$244,070 on a three level preparation of site one with 47.52 acres. The days of available level acreage were gone.

The Dollars were most cooperative. Stanley Dollar, Jr. felt an offer should come from the Board rather than a condemnation. He wanted the Board to put a value on the land. The Board appraisal was \$2,750 an acre. Other appraisals followed — in October the two sites were appraised for \$213,400 for 49 acres, \$219,600 for the 47-acre piece. In November another appraisal was made for \$176,000 for the inside site, and \$146,000 for the site along the road.

## Condemnation Procedures Again?

Meanwhile, as always, the other schools were growing. In September, site utilization plans at Las Lomas were approved: the cafeteria would be extended, the library would be enlarged, and they would add two classrooms and a music building.

Alice McBride was elected Board President and W.C. Hall, a new Board member, became Clerk. This was for the year 1956-57. Mr. Freeman was presented with a Block A blanket for his six years of service.

On November 26, the Dollars were scheduled to appear to discuss negotiations for their property. Stanley Dollar, Jr. and Ollie Meek appeared at four o'clock and were offered \$176,000 for the valley site, which the District preferred, or \$90,000 for the hill site. Each site, developed, would cost the District \$400,000. Mr. Dollar said he wanted to talk the matter over with his father. He added that he knew the condemnation case was coming in January, and everyone involved wanted to get the matter settled before then.

But apparently it wasn't. According to the Board minutes, there was no answer from Dollar interests in December. Construction plans were postponed in February since still there had been no word. Finally, in February, the Dollar Company, quoted the board a price which was out of reason. The Board decided to continue condemnation proceedings.

Meanwhile the search was on for land for the fifth and sixth high school. The Board appraiser, Gillis, reported on sites in Moraga. A site near the Rheem Shopping Center could be graded to give 30.36 acres at a cost of \$222,000. Improvements would cost \$247,000. The Stanford Committee was instructed to ask for a price on both sites. And the condemnation trial for Tice Valley was set for April 23.

But all's well that ends well. After many more false starts and negotiations, the outer Tice Valley site was purchased, the warrant signed on September 24, for \$175,000.

The District enrollment in September was 3,123, Carl Newbury resigned from the Board and was presented with a World Globe and thanked by all Board members. William Lee was appointed to take his place.

Plans for site utilization at Tice Valley were discussed in November. There were to be three levels and playing fields on two levels in order to fit into the configuration of the land.

Education was becoming increasingly expensive. Another tax election was called to raise the rate from \$1.75 per hundred to \$2.25, the election to be held February 25th.

In January the Board agreed unanimously to purchase the school site at Rheem from the Preston Management Company for \$310,000.

Land matters certainly took up a great deal of discussion time, but at the January meeting, the Board also considered moving to a seven period day, offering semester courses, considering grouping, and starting accelerated programs. The Board also decided to try the final examination schedule as proposed.

On February 25, for the first time in District history, a tax election failed to carry! There were 2,763 Yesses, 3,770 Noes.

The cost of the Tice Valley school was presented by Mr. Gillis who appeared before the Board to explain the working drawing for the first units of construction. The total cost was \$1,310,000. The architect was authorized to submit the plans to the Division of Architecture. Bill Ross was appointed Principal-Elect at Tice Valley, and the school was named. DEL VALLE!

Ordinarily this next item would not be an important piece of business, but in light of later developments, it is significant. On April 14, a special meeting was called in order to award the bid for grading to be done at the Tice Valley site. The low bid of Arvil Jones, \$145,832 was accepted. And here Mr. Jones's troubles began. By September he was having great trouble with rock on the Del Vails excavations. As early as July he had encountered large boulders while grading the site, and he wanted compensation and an extension of time for the delay and complications this had caused. Mr. Banwell, Reid's architect in charge, reported that the job had been running behind schedule before the boulders were giving trouble, but suggested that Jones be given consideration.

By August, Mr. Jones was asking a unit cost for extra work which he had done since encountering the boulders. Mr. Banwell felt the estimate was totally out of reason. At the next meeting a letter was read from Mr. Hemmings, of the District Attorney's office, regarding a claim from Arvil Jones. Mr. Hemmings stated that after reading and examining the contract documents, he could see no basis on which Mr. Jones could be awarded extra monies.

In October, attorneys for Arvil Jones wrote a letter to the Board asking to meet with representatives of the District, the architect, Mr. Hemmings and the contractor in order to arrive at an equitable and fair settlement to the grading problem encountered by Mr. Jones. Reid, principal architect, appeared worried about the contract date for construction because of Mr. Jones' difficulties with rock. By November it appeared there was as much as 45,000 cubic yard of rock to be disposed of. Mr. Jones was putting in a claim of \$100,000 for a total change order cost of \$123,000.

And finally, on November 2, Mr. Banwell told the District that Jones had warned he would pull all his men off the job and close it down. According to Mr. Banwell, "The District may, after 10 days notice to the contractor, take over the job and complete it, stopping all future payments to the contractor." And sure enough they did. Bill Ross, Del Valle's first Principal, remembers going over to watch the grading progress. They were finally drilling holes and dynamiting, but there was still a lot of rock.

Jones ended up claiming additional expenses of \$268,414.80 over and above contract price. He also claimed a time extension of 155 days. The claim was denied. And the saga ends with Jones asking settlement from the District on grounds that:

- (a) four bidders told him they had not figured on basis of rock present
- time for job was not sufficient to remove
- rock specifications did not include blasting
- the soil report was incorrect



The upshot of this was that the Board advertised for bids to complete the work; Jones sued the Board, and Del Valle was completed on time. And there's still a lot of rock in Tice Valley!

The school itself occupied a beautiful and delightful setting. Originally it was a part of a Saklan village, traced back to about 1500 AD. Indian relics and artifacts have been excavated by the University of California. It is possible that there was a large or main village where the creeks of Las Trampas, Tice and San Ramon merged to form Walnut Creek. It is now buried under Main Street in Walnut Creek. The high school property was originally part of a land grant of five leagues granted to Jose and Mariano Romero. When the U.S. Government took over California the Romeros petitioned to confirm their claim, but it was denied. The property came into the hands of James Tice in 1835, and then in 1858 it belonged to Andrew Jackson Tice.

The Orinda Sun, in 1963, wrote in an article called "The Old Days of Contra Costa County" that cattle thieves, friends of A.J. Tice, escaped, and missing cattle were found on Tice's ranch. He was forcibly taken to the courthouse in Martinez. Tice sued for false arrest and after two years of litigation was awarded \$1.00 in damages.

In 1869 the land passed to Joseph Naphtaly. He named Saranap after his wife, Sarah.

In 1920 the R. Stanley Dollars purchased the property to raise horses and purebred Herefords. They built the Dollar Mansion, a showplace for many years.

According to Bill Ross, when Del Valle was in the planning stage, the rumor was that Sunstream Homes was going to build a huge housing development in Tice Valley. There were to be family homes, thousands of them.

Tice Valley then had a two lane, asphalt country road leading to the school. There was no shopping center, no Rossmoor. There were no other homes in the valley itself except the Dollar ranch house and the Mansion. There were peacocks, which the Dollars kept as "watch birds," and green rolling hills. The high school was actually in the middle of an operating ranch, with cattle roaming the hills and cowboys riding herd.

## Dynamite Del Valle Opens

Bill Ross was Principal-Elect the year before the school was completed, and he spent his time planning the school, working with the architect, hiring personnel, ordering supplies and setting up organizations. His first faculty were: Evelyn Bachelor, general business and home economics; Jerry Bellon, general science and P.E.; Iris Cavagnaro, English and Latin; Robert Ehrlich, world history and library; Amerlie Holmstrom, Spanish and French; Sharon Foster, English and P.E.; Bruce Handley, Dean of Boys and math; Jack Howard, arts and crafts; Dona Riley, Dean of Girls and history; Kenneth Tisdell, music and math. All this is recorded in the yearbook, Troiana, for which Bill Ross was faculty advisor and photographer that first year. In the next several years Bill added some familiar and distinguished names: Walt Hoy, Gene Oliver, Joe Anthony, and Jack LaSalle.

Four years later, in 1963, the Troiana was dedicated to the first graduating class. "From this nucleus of three buildings, 160 students and 11 teachers has grown an imposing campus, an enrollment of 1100 and a 60 member faculty."

The first classes of '62 and '63 held a reunion which was enthusiastically attended by members from all over the country. They all saw those first years as a tremendous opportunity for leadership and involvement, and a marvelous chance to work together with the faculty.

In 1963 the following letter appeared and was reprinted in The Troiana:

*To Our New Neighbors at Del Valle:*

*As you are aware, some unusual and interesting development is being planned on the Dollar Ranch. This will be the finest and most unique retirement village in the United States.*

*Please do not be alarmed at the word 'Retirement'. Our first Leisure World in Seal Beach is full of retirees, but there's not one 'old fogey' in the bunch. You'll find them over here cheering on the Del Valle teams, inviting you to participate in Little Theater and other fascinating things we have planned.*

*We hope that you will have fun watching this fascinating new community take shape, and that you will accept us in our desire to be good neighbors."*



Thus began Rossmoor, and the shopping centers, the golf courses, the four lane parkways, the retirement community.

At the board meeting on February 19, 1959, thanks to Sputnik, the district increased the daily schedule to a seven period day, and students were urged to take extra classes.

Now that four high schools were in operation, there was serious talk about unifying the districts. The board came out as being strongly opposed. William Lee, President of the Board, issued the following statement on March 2:

"We strongly believe this area is blessed with one of the finest educational systems in the state, kindergarden through high school, and hesitate to risk these positive advantages for a complete shake-up through unification. We urge that further improvement be sought first through continued close cooperation and coordination among the districts, as has been so successful in the past.

We suggest that, with an open mind, total unification be examined periodically, and that we and our successors remain alert for any future local opportunity to apply any advantages it may bring to our community."

This, of course, was only the beginning of many discussions and dialogues which are still continuing over the unification issue.

There was another salary adjustment in the spring of '59, with a minimum base of \$5,000 and a maximum of \$8,850.

Dr. Max Appleby was employed as Assistant Superintendent in June, 1959. Las Lomas was fully accredited until 1964, and enrollment figures now read: Acalanes, 1340; Las Lomas, 1243; Miramonte, 1006; Del Valle, 158.

The District was indeed growing. It was too large for a District Christmas Party and it was discontinued in 1959.

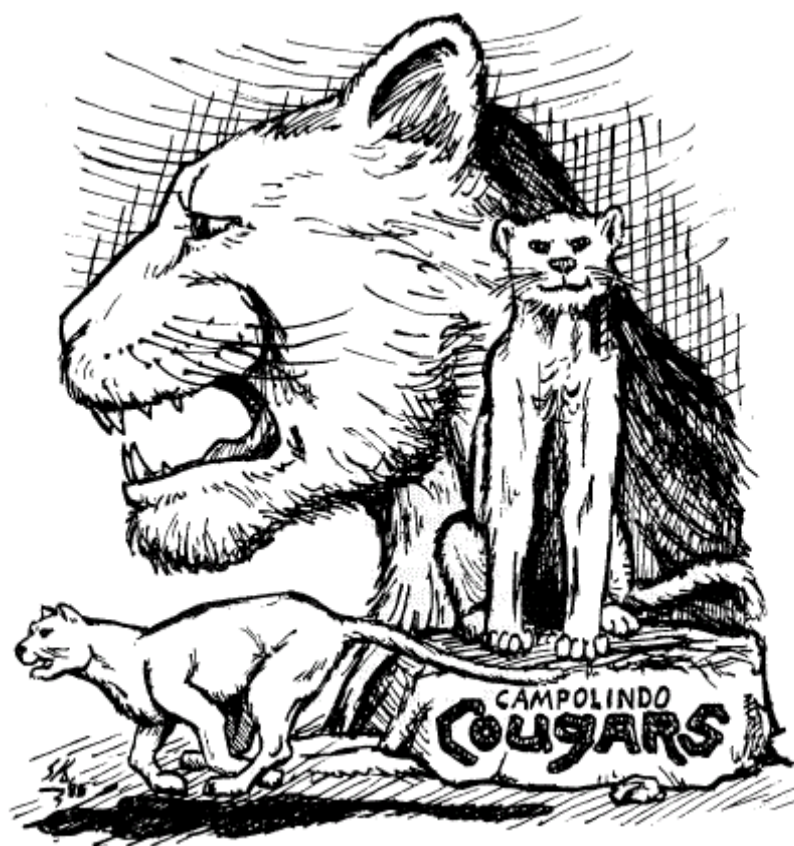
It is interesting that a Flag Raising Ceremony, including the Pledge of Allegiance by student representatives, was passed by the Board in October of 1959. "The Ceremony shall be held at each school of the district each morning." For a time, the National Anthem was played each morning over the loudspeaker, and every class participated in the ceremony. This practice was discontinued in the late 60's when most schools returned to a token ceremony by student representatives.

The first summer school was approved for 1960 and was held at Acalanes High School with Gordon Gibson as Principal and Joe Anthony as Assistant. It was an immediate success, and enrollment swelled to 2,000 before Proposition 13 put an end to it.

Miramonte's pool was completed in time for summer use, and dedicated April 3. As with the other high schools, the parents raised half the funds. Del Valle's parents were already starting their pool campaign. They sold 25,000 chocolate candy bars to finance their share. Bob Smith, one of the parents, used his bulldozer to excavate.

And what was to be the last high school was in the planning stages. As always, there were problems acquiring the land. No site had been purchased by February of 1959 and construction plans had to be postponed. Finally, in March, the site near the Rheem Theatre was acquired from the Preston Management Company. There were 30.36 acres which could be graded at a cost of \$222,000. Improvements would cost another \$247,000.

So the last high school site in the district cost over \$500,000! The Moraga high school was in the making. On April 17, Alex Winchester was named Principal. In other moves, Lee Russell was appointed Assistant Superintendent of Education for the district; Ed Leach became Principal at Las Lomas; Burke Farola became Dean of Boys, and Merrill Callow, Head Counselor at Las Lomas. Bill Teutschel became Director of Adult Education.



The Rheem school almost got stopped in its tracks when on June 26, an Orinda group, headed by Mrs. Bowles and Mr. Mueller appeared before the Board with the suggestion that they postpone the Rheem school for several years and enlarge Miramonte to accomodate 1,800.

The philosophy of the board had always been to keep schools at a maximum of 1,200, if possible, and that was their answer to the committee, assuring them that thus far this plan had worked very well.

Both Mr. Ross and Mr. Russell spoke of how well Del Valle and Las Lomas had operated, starting the way they had.

The Board also pointed out that they had borrowed funds from the State which required that the school be in operation within five years from the time the funds are borrowed. They thanked the parents but, repeated that they were not convinced they should change their plans. According to Alex Winchester, who was at the meeting, several other parents spoke up in favor of the new high school, because they knew Alex and the faculty he had hired.

## Campolindo — Del Valle's Twin

The last of the high schools was named CAMPOLINDO (beautiful fields or countryside). Alex Winchester had wanted it called Los Cerros, (little hills) because of the rolling hills and valley.

The school was really out in the country in 1962 when it opened. It stood on what had once been a lake, Laguna de los Colorados, a part of another Spanish land grant. The Rheem Theater was already there, Clark's Market, Charles' Drugs, and Neldam's Bakery. On the corner, where Lucky's is now, was the Rheem Country Club, a nine hole golf course and swimming pool, owned by the Carrols, who also called it The Carrol Ranch.

Campolindo opened its doors with 170 students, 11 faculty members, and Alex Winchester as Principal. Faculty members were Madeline DeKlotz, English and Girls' P.E.; Jim Nelson, world history and geography and Dean of Boys; Heloise Corr, algebra and Dean of Girls; Hugh Molina, English and Spanish; Lydia Williamson, French, German and English; Niels Waidtlow, Boys' P.E., biology and general science; Wally Steele, chorus, orchestra, band, general science, and dance band; Karen Becker, art, home economics; Bill Reavis, algebra, geometry, and typing; George Hunrick, world history and geography; and Suzanne Burrows, librarian.

Alex Winchester had been appointed a half year in advance so he could get Campolindo ready. He hired the faculty, ordered \$10,000 worth of books for the new library, conferred with the architects, ordered supplies, and spent enough time at "Coffees" to know almost every parent in his student body. He worked with both a parent and student steering committee so that when school opened, all activities were ready to go. The kids had chosen their school colors, red and blue. (Mr. Winchester was over-ruled again — he had wanted black and gold), their school mascot, a Cougar, and set up their student government. Mr. Winchester and Mr. Steele built a Music Department the kids were really proud of, one that went on to become tops in the State.

The plant was the same as the Del Valle buildings. By utilizing the same architectural plans a great deal of money was saved. But grading the site was really expensive. They had to notch the hillside to hold the buildings. It was still rural in 1962. They had an unsolicited cattle drive right across the school grounds and onto the football field. The cattle had come down from a walnut orchard and Sanders Ranch. Some of the kids, who were genuine "cow pokes" rounded up the cows to the tremendous enjoyment of faculty and students.

Since Campolindo opened in the 60's, one of the hardest things to do, according to Alex, was to build tradition. A lot was going on in Berkeley, and Campolindo, as well as the other high schools, was affected. It was the end of the dress code, the end of closed campus, the beginning of a time of change and discontent. Vietnam exerted a tremendous influence. Speakers and pamphlets spread onto the campus to add to the unrest.

But that was later. According to the 1963 yearbook, The Campanero, there was lots of school spirit. "1963 brought our Science-Art building; junior varsity competition; 'Swingin' High,' our first musical; Clem Kadiddlehopper Day; the slave sale and the Sophomore class.

"Our Junior year saw varsity sports; our first Junior Prom, 'The Crystal Ball'; and the school play, 'Deadly Earnest.' Finally our Senior Year began. From 180 we grew to 1,000 students. A Senior Lawn and special Senior events singled out upper class rights. The Senior Ball and Overnight cried 'We're almost through!' And through it all we gained an education." "Four years ago Campolindo was just a name. Today it stands for spirit, learning, and all the things the high school years have meant to each of us." This year's Seniors have watched the school grow and have grown with it. They were the first! In appreciation of the work they have done for the school, The Campanero staff dedicates this yearbook to...the class of 1966 and to the faculty and staff who have worked closely with them."

Today Rheem Valley is fast developing into another town. As more condominiums go up, and the hills fill up with houses, the beautiful countryside is disappearing. Rheem Shopping Center is filled with stores, and there's a four lane highway. And one of the more recent Campanero's was done with a computer theme — a 1982 Computer Printout.

The Stanford Survey still saw enrollment as growing, and predicted a student population of 9,500 by 1968.

They recommended the purchase of the EBMUD site, known as Bear Creek, in 1962. There were preliminary plans, appraisals, visits from the Planning Commission, and incidentally some protests from parents in northern Orinda who felt that the location, near Briones Dam was dangerous. During the years from '62 to '66 negotiations took place, and the final purchase was made in 1966 for \$350,000. Building plans were drawn, and we were ready to go. Bear Creek was, of course, never built on. The enrollment began to decline by 1970, and apart from its use as an "Animal Farm" the campus was never developed. It was sold to Joe Duffel in 1983.

One more school, Del Oro, was begun on the edge of the Del Valle campus. In 1965 the State decreed that districts must have some form of continuation school for drop-outs. As a separate high school, Del Oro is basically funded by the State. Under the guidance first of Ken Bailey, now of Bill Teutschel, students receive regular but often individualized instruction, personal counseling, and are involved in unique work projects and contracts. Students are referred from their regular schools through a District Admissions Committee. Enrollment varies, but averages about 90. Bill is very proud of Del Oro's graduation record.

In 1966, after 21 years in the District. Neil M. Parsons retired. Two hundred and fifty people gathered at the Claremont Hotel in Berkeley: old school friends, present and former faculty members from the five schools, old and new members of the Board, educational colleagues, personal friends and family: his son, Norman; his daughter, Joan; and his wife, Beth.

He was presented with a scrapbook, made by his secretary for those 21 years, Phyllis Petersen. In addition, he received a camera to photograph the many countries they planned to visit, and silver goblets to toast the retirement.

When the District called for applications for his replacement, the qualifications were: someone 38 to 52, married, holder of a General Administrative Credential, with a minimum of five years experience. The new Board Chairman, Glenn Allen, Jr., announced the new appointment. Ross Reagan was Superintendent of Schools.

So — all the schools were in session. Acalanes was famed far and wide for its educational development, and all the communities had benefited immeasurably from the campuses, their faculties and their facilities. And then, things began to level off. Enrollment did not continue to escalate the way the

Stanford Survey had predicted. Homes were becoming so expensive that young families could not afford them. And in 1972 the schools were hit with the State Revenue Limit. Funds dropped sharply, and taxpayers in the District were becoming unwilling to pay the escalating demands on them. District enrollment peaked at around 7,000 and then began its ever accelerating slide. Proposition 13 further increased the limit of funds for supplies and salaries, and the schools were really hurting.

Three superintendents weathered the storm: Ross Reagan from 1966 to 1977; Owen Corbin from 1977 to 1979; Bill Ross from 1979 to 1982 when Dr. Walter Hale assumed the superintendency.

Phyllis Peterson, whose name was almost synonymous with the Acalanes District, retired in 1977 after 37 years as District Secretary. Her memories and scrapbooks have provided much of the material for this history, and she has influenced countless teachers, classified people and high school students over the years. She's "Ms. Acalanes"! Two hundred or more people gathered at Boundary Oaks at her retirement party to testify to that! Now, high on a hill in Rossmoor, she remembers Upper Happy Valley from the days when she went to grammar school in Lafayette, and the whole city of Lafayette when it was a neighborhood.

## The Perils of Proposition 13

After Proposition 13, by the summer of 1978, Mr. Corbin had instituted a Revenue, Resource, Research Committee (RC3) to explore possibilities of donations from the community to revive the sports program which had virtually been eliminated since funds were not available.

School buses, long an expected service of the District, were reduced to transporting special students only. From the Board Minutes of July 19, 1978: "Now, therefore, be it resolved that the Acalanes High School District reduce transportation services, retaining only those services needed to transport Special Education students.

Board members facing these traumatic times were Don Galloway, President; Dorothy D'Ambrogia, Clerk; Ian B. Johnston, Donald E. Manuel, Lloyd J. Torchio, and Mary Egan, student member.

Another committee, Facility Advisory Community Team (FACT), was set up to discuss the issue of school closure. Enrollment had dropped to 6,585 by September of 1978, and FACT reported the District could be housed in four high schools.

As always, parents in the District were doing everything in their power to help. They always have. Alex Winchester remembers a time when he received a call from a bank in Walnut Creek asking him to come in to discuss a school matter. When he arrived, he was told that an anonymous parent wished to donate an indoor-outdoor track to Campolindo! All Mr. Winchester had to do was come up with a figure — and after much research he did — about \$70,000! Campolindo received the money and built their track!

So during these trying times, parents were working very hard for the schools. In September of 1978, \$4,088 was contributed by parents for a mass "paint in at Acalanes High School. The parents contributed both the paint and the elbow grease.

The R3C Committee, with spokesman Dr. Bruce Bachman, continued to work for funds to restore items that were cut. The Committee worked with such groups as parents' clubs, and the American Association of University Women to set up volunteer areas.

The FACT Committee, concerned with the possibility of school closure, had worked during the summer to come up with criteria upon which to evaluate a school.

At the board meeting on February 28, 1979, the Committee recommended the closure of Del Valle High School in the fall of 1979.

The least considered criteria were costs and values; highest concerns were for the students, the demographics and the quality of education. At the meeting the Board members tried to field questions from a very concerned public. So many were present, the meeting was held in the Acalanes High School library. The following are answers to some questions asked:



The estimated cost to maintain a school in closed condition is \$150,000. The net saving next year toward reducing the budget deficit is estimated at \$400,000. The board will consider the economics of school closure. Appraisals are being made on all sites. The board is not contemplating selling a site. The Bear Creek site was appraised a few years ago at \$127,000. This would not bail the District out of its problems.

In answer to "Why close in 1979?", Board members replied that the District should not gamble with its education on "ifs" and "ands" and "mights"; it must do what is best now. If there are changes, those who want unification will have to make them. The budget is at least \$400,000 short; the District cannot go in the red. An additional 24 teachers would have to go, making a total of 44.

Dr. Johnston, longest acting member of the Board gave a different perspective. "The real problem is in Sacramento. It is a matter of the State deciding how it intends to finance the education of its children. Until there is an alternative method enacted, the entire school system is in tremendous chaos."

His statement reinforced something the AEA had stated in January. "Teachers are being asked to cannibalize to feed themselves. The staff has been on a salary freeze this year. Local legislators should be urged for assistance."

There were two more highly charged and emotional meetings where the public stated their views. Then, on March 14, Dorothy D'Ambrogia reread her statement on school closure.

"I see a no-win situation if a school is not closed...Since I will be attacked regardless of what I do, since I feel there are serious ifs unknown and legal questions with the issue of unification, I am able to base my decision on education as opposed to politics. I sincerely feel my responsibility is to the quality of education offered our students next September, and hopefully in the years to come. Regretfully she voted to close Del Valle.

Don Manuel read his statement and voted for the closure of Las Lomas. Lloyd Torchio voted in favor of closing Del Valle. Dr. Johnston stated, "The central location of Las Lomas to me is a predominant deciding factor, and I would vote to close Del Valle."

Mr. Don Galloway voted to keep Del Valle open.

Johnston/Torchio moved and seconded a roll call vote that the Board accept the recommendation of the FACT Committee and close Del Valle High School at the end of this academic year in June 1979.

ROLL CALL VOTE:

Ayes — Dorothy D'Ambrogia, Lloyd Torchio, Ian Johnston

Nays — Donald E. Manuel and Don Galloway.

MOTION CARRIED.

The Board adjourned to Executive Session at 8:35 p.m. The large group of parents, faculty, and students were strangely quiet. There were no cheers from Las Lomas advocates, but there were some sobs from Del Valle. A beautiful school would be closed. Years of tradition, loyalties, fine records and achievements were over. The Acalanes Union High School District had lost a fine school.

At following March and April meetings, Bill Ross resigned as Assistant Superintendent and asked to be reassigned as a teacher. The Board stated, "All five members of the Board really regret having to move on this reassignment. Mr. Ross has done a tremendous job over the years in the position of Assistant Superintendent of Personnel.

Joe Anthony was appointed to the position of Assistant Superintendent, and Gene Ballock, Principal of Del Valle, was transferred to Las Lomas. Members of the staff at Del Valle were reassigned and reemployed at the other high schools.

There was to be one more surprise in the school year. On July 10, Owen Corbin resigned and Bill Ross was asked to take over as Superintendent on an acting basis. Three months later his appointment was confirmed. It had been quite a year!

It has been the best of times and the worst of times, but through it all, faculty, parents, students and community have kept the same philosophy as that of the five businessmen who sat down together in the Lafayette Grammar School in 1939 to plan a new high school district. Their goals were high, and the Board, administration, and faculties have never faltered from those goals. Always it was the students who came first. As they did. As they do. As they will continue to do. For with them rests the future, and it is in good hands.



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Phyllis Petersen's scrapbooks courtesy of Lafayette Historical Society.

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Oral Tapes - Taken and transcribed by the Lafayette Historical Society.

Taped Talks by Micky Myers and Lou Borghesani at Lafayette Historical Society's Potluck April 12, 1977

Speech by Oliver Hamlin III at Lafayette Historical Society's Potluck Dinner April 27, 1982

Personal interviews with the following:

Phyllis Peterson  
Margaret Nicholzen  
Millicent Hamburger  
Leland Russell  
John Sanford  
Bill Ross

Bob Pape  
Alex Winchester  
Joe Anthony  
Jack LaSalle  
Walter Hale

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**Graphics by Scott Kimball  
Las Lomas Class of 1984**