

HISTORY HAPPENED HERE

ELK GROVE CITIZEN

Elk Grove in the 1950s, part 2

by Elizabeth Pinkerton

September 19, 2008

FIRST..... SPOTLIGHT ELK GROVE was a great success, and it truly was a tribute to the many volunteers whose hours and hours of work made the event a reality. The SES Hall sparkled with the Hollywood-New York theme, and the two large rooms were filled with booths that reflected the BEST of Elk Grove and the surrounding area! The opening was spectacular with the presentation of the Cosumnes Fire Department to commemorate and remember what happened on September 11 seven years ago. Great job!!! - President Dan Lawrence and the Elk Grove Community Foundation Board of Directors.

SECOND.....EGUSD continues with its preparations for the 50th celebration, and I had an opportunity to assist with the taping of the second part of the documentary that is being developed by teachers Joe Airoso and Shawn Sullivan (both EG grads), and Liz Graswich, Director of Communications. Participating in a group discussion and interview were these folks who were living in Elk Grove in the mid 1950s when the unification efforts began: Dave and Jane Morse, Theresa and Bob Fletcher, Bob and Olga Batey, Dorothy Hrepich, Lesley Ostman, Arnie and Iris Zimbelman, Dorothy Hofer, Anita Peters, Marielle Tsukamoto, Arlene Hein. You will hear more in the future about their involvement at the time and how the community viewed the efforts to unify the districts. I thank them all for taking the time to share their thoughts and experiences.

THIRD.....ARLENE HEIN is no doubt the best known person in the Elk Grove Unified School District. She is the administrative assistant to the superintendent, and what is indeed amazing is that she has been a key person in the offices of the five superintendents that have been at the helm of EGUSD. Yes, she was there when it all began, but she was not long out of high school at the time. She was an EG grad and secretary to the superintendent of the high school district at the time.

Arlene Hein has watched the district move forward from the days of 3,000 students in 1959 to today when we have more than 62,000. Surely, she is the Number One History person of EGUSD!

In reviewing Arlene's meticulous records of those early days last week, I found some interesting facts regarding the unification of the school district. Just to make sure we are all on the same page, this is what I found:

THE FACTS ABOUT UNIFICATION.....

1. The first study of unification in south Sacramento County took place in 1949. It was done by the Sacramento County Office of Education Local Service Committee. In addition to the districts that are in EGUSD today, a few other ones were included: Arno, Mokelumne, Prairie, Elder Creek, Edward Kelly, Pacific, and Wilson. (Edward Kelly, Elder Creek, and Pacific became part of Sacramento City district; Arno joined Herald and Colony to form Arcohe; Prairie was already part of Franklin, and so was Mokelumne. Wilson was included with Cosumnes River.)
2. In 1953 a second study of possible unification took place, and this one was under the California Department of Education along with Sacramento County Office of Education.
3. The result of these two studies was that an election was set up to find out if the residents wanted to unify their schools.

4. December 2, 1958 was the date of the election, and the polling places were at the schools – one each in the eight elementary districts: Cosumnes River, Dillard, Elk Grove, Florin, Franklin, Lee, Pleasant Grove-Reese, and Sierra Enterprise.
5. The question asked on the ballot was as follows:
Should the Elementary and High School districts within the exterior boundaries of the Elk Grove Union High School District, excluding therefrom all territory within the boundaries of the Elder Creek District, be unified?
6. I suspect that the reason that Elder Creek is specifically mentioned in the ballot language is because students from that area were attending Elk Grove Union High School – but under a different arrangement from that of the other districts.
7. The official results of the election was as follows:

Polling Place	YES	NO	TOTAL
1 – Cosumnes River	23	36	59
2 – Dillard	32	48	80
3 – Elk Grove	298	134	432
4 – Florin	60	157	217
5 – Franklin	44	78	122
6 – Lee	37	25	62
7 – Pleasant Grove-Reese	41	57	98
8 – Sierra Enterprise	49	30	79
Absentees	5	0	5
TOTALS	589	565	1,154

8. A second election took place on March 10, 1959 to elect the members of the Board of Education for the new district. They were as follows:

Elk Grove – Dr. Wyland Cripe and James Guttridge
Florin – Alfred Schopf
Franklin – E. Henry Kloss
Pleasant Grove-Reese – Robert Mackey
Sierra-Enterprise – Robert Walker
Dillard, Lee, Cosumnes River – Jake Schneider

The new Board members had a lot of work to do, and in viewing the records, it is amazing that they accomplished as much as they did in the short time they had until July 1, 1959 when the new district would begin. They had to hire a superintendent, set up a budget, decide what to do with the existing administrators, adjust staffing at the district schools, begin discussions regarding the equalization of salaries (high school teachers were paid more than elementary teachers), eliminate some positions, and begin tackling huge facilities issues with the overcrowding.

As I mentioned last week, none of this was known to me when I came to Elk Grove in 1962. I had an interview for a teaching position, and that is what brought me here in June of 1962. My interview was with Dr. William Shreck, assistant superintendent of the new district. It was very pleasant, friendly, and encouraging—and Tom and I felt very welcome. Then we walked across the street to meet with Raymond Case, the principal of Elk Grove Grammar School (the CCSD Building today) because there was an opening in the 7th grade there. After meeting with Mr. Case, we drove to Pleasant Grove-Reese to meet with Bob Fite, the principal, because he had an opening in the 5th grade.

Heading east on Main Street past Elk Grove-Florin Road there were houses on both sides of the road and a few business establishments past the A & W on the south side of the street – a fairly new library, justice court and post office. The Methodist Church was there where it is today, and the rest of the businesses were clustered around the railroad tracks. There were houses again on both sides of the road after we left the business area, and before we knew it we were in the country. We headed to Bradshaw, then to Bond and to Bader, and then, a right turn on Pleasant Grove Road.

The school was a fairly large one known as Pleasant Grove-Reese at that time because of the closing of the Reese School which had been on Bradshaw Road. But, of course, I did not know that at the time. What surprised me was the cemetery next to the school and cows in the field across the road. I had certainly seen many cows in Wisconsin, but it seemed strange to have them right there by the school—along with the cemetery.

To be continued.....

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