

Hueneme Pilot

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Solving the mystery of an old friend's disappearance

Where did my high school go?

By Julie McCampbell

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Oxnard High School was the place we spent away from our parents. It is where we made long-lasting friendships and had first-time teen experiences. It was the lead into our college years and provided lasting memories we would never forget.

I was from the Class of '84. Steven Stocks was our principal. It was the era of the bands of Queen, Elvis Costello and The Police. Their lyrics echoed through the hallways and in the quad at lunch. The B52s and Devo's music played at every dance.

In the '80s, we explored the alumni of the years before, and shared in their experience as a YellowJacket. We hoped the Classmates in the future, would share in our experience. The movies we watched were "Ferris Bueller's Day Off," "The Breakfast Club" and "Spinal Tap."

Classmates of the old OHS hold with them high school memories – good or bad. It was a place we spent most of our teen years, if you did not play hooky. Even those who thought the proms, the dances, the football games were uncool, we ended up going and having the best time rooting for the home team, laughing and hanging out with our best friends.

We all walked away with long-time memories. Our high school years started to shape us into who we are today. We had that "small-town feel" of a high school, even though there were hundreds in our graduating class.

Some of us were bused from all over Oxnard. I was bused from Silver Strand Beach. There was no Pacific High School back then. Channel Islands, Hueneme and Rio Mesa high schools were the closest to us.

Eventually, the old high school was closed and a new school built on Gonzales Road. After years of decay, erosion, fires and vandalism, much of the old school was demolished in 2008.

So many classmates have wondered, since the demolition took place in 2008, what would become of our high school property. I was among the curious, so I set out to find the answers.

In my quest, I came across Loren Peacock's Web site, "Oxnard High School – What Happened to our Hallowed Halls."

Peacock is a descendent of one of the original families here in Oxnard. His site contains a multitude of photographs of the demolition in 2008. He captured the demolition as it happened, and his site has the last pictures of the remaining buildings and structures of OHS.

I met with Loren, Glenna (Loren's wife and OHS classmate), and Mike Ramirez, development director of the Police Activities League and youth center supervisor since 2000. We met on a fall morning at the OHS Property.

Loren, Glenna and I shared our memories as we walked around the property. It was hard for us all to see the bare open area that now exists where so many memories had been made.

Ramirez directed me to Ralph Alamillo, Oxnard's project manager, regarding future plans for the property. He provided the answers to the questions that classmates and I were wanting answered.

"The insurance money from three previous fires that occurred on the property, help pay for the demolition, up to present date," he explained. "Measure O (a half-cent sales tax) will allow the city to continue with the future plans of the property in becoming a park. Measure O will provide assistance with many of the city's parks.

"The gym's reconstruction involves replacement of the floor, the doors, new bleachers, a new roof and windows," Alamillo explained.

However, the date for a presentation is on hold, pending a design consultant's completion of plans.

Alamillo said the preliminary plans for the 30-acre property call for a soccer field and baseball diamonds, a large stadium that holds a football field and track. At the southwest corner will be a small quad with a playground, near one of the remaining buildings next to the gym.

There will be two gym wings, which planners hope will be occupied by the PAL (this is still in discussion), two basketball courts and a skate park. will be on the west side of the property. Maintenance buildings will remain as of right now, and plenty of parking around the entire park complex is planned.

"The gym and gym wings and the stadium, are not in the designated flight path of Oxnard Airport," Alamillo explained. "Those structures we can keep and repair. We are able to maximize the space needed for the park. This allows the area for the soccer field, etc."

A primary reason for building the new Oxnard High School on West Gonzales Road was because of the hazard of the old school in the flight path of the airport. In addition, the old OHS buildings were decaying due to years of abandonment and fires.

Alamillo assured me that the property's soil and elements are all good. If any necessary construction is needed, the property will be assessed further. All plans are still in draft status and subject to changed on the design consultant's recommendations.

I asked about rumors that the Dallas Cowboys would be joining us again. "San Antonio has made them an offer they probably won't pass up, but you never know," Alamillo replied.

Seeing the pictures on Peacock's site, meeting with the PAL and meeting with Alamillo, I began to feel as if I were finding an old friend and reliving memories.

However, the plans were missing something important. I asked Alamillo about the possibility of a memorial, one that speaks to all of Oxnard High School's alumni.

Alamillo told me it was something that occurred to him during the demolition. "I even began to have my memories of this school and it's value to everyone," he said.

For more photos of the high school, visit Loren Peacock's Web site at http://pandgp.fortunecity.com/ohs/hshistory_long.html