

Russell Kloer Narrative

[The] first years of Buena were absolutely wonderful. Being a brand-new school, and being in the first and only 4-year graduating class at Buena, the Class of '65 had a level of school spirit that was so strong that it is still evident in our reunions, with an amazing number of classmates showing-up to connect again after over 50 years. Part of this was that there was still an innocence at the time, and it was cool to be in school. All the clubs and activities were supported because that's where all your friends were. For just one example: I belonged to the Key Club, and we organized a canned food drive to donate to the Salvation Army. Now that sounds pretty boring, but we were so enthusiastic about it, and received so much support, that we collected several large truck loads of canned goods to donate, and had a blast doing it. Everything we did became a party.

We also had excellent teams... Our basketball team in '64-'65 was one of the best in Southern California, and we had an "all-white" (shirts and tops) cheering section for games, and almost every student who went to the game would wear white to be part of it. This was even true for "away" games; we would have several buses loaded with parents and students travel to our games, even to games as far away as Santa Maria and L.A.

I was a yell leader for Buena.... This was not something I ever considered doing, but it started because of a conversation I had with a girl / classmate at lunch one day. There was a sheet for cheerleader sign-ups, and I was telling her about the school I went to—Sacramento H.S.—for a couple of months before my family moved to Ventura from Sacramento in '62. It was a very large school, and they had college-style male yell leaders in addition to cheerleaders. I said the yell leaders really helped get the crowd into it, because they did a different way of crowd-leading. Well, my friend said I should sign-up to be a yell leader. I had no intention to do anything of the kind, but she kept bugging me, so I finally got up and wrote my name on the list just to shut her up! I thought that would be the end of it, but by the end of the day, I had kids coming up to me to tell me they thought it was a great idea. It gained momentum quickly, and the school even made an adjustment to the voting so that I wasn't competing with the cheerleaders for a spot; it was just a simple "Yes / No" on the yell leader position. So I was elected, and it was a great experience (including a week-long summer cheerleading camp at Squaw Valley that we went to, where I was one of about 30 guys among 850 cheerleaders from all over the state... (What high school guy wouldn't enjoy that!))

I was a three-year varsity letterman on the track team, where I competed in the sprints, relays, and long jump. One of my teammates was Ray Seay, whom you knew, I'm sure, from his career as a teacher and coach at Buena. I know he still holds the 100 and 220 (yards in those days) records at Buena. We raced each other in the sprints, and ran the relays together. I could always beat Ray out to about 75 yards in the 100 and 220, but he had long legs that took more time to get unwound and up to speed, but once he hit high gear, he would always pass me before the tape. I can still see him running the curve; a beautiful sight. My consolation to never beating Ray in an individual race is that he still holds those records, so I was beaten by a great champion (and a great guy) whose times have never been broken. Our track team was ranked as the best track team in our division in the state, and we were undefeated in dual meets the entire time I was there. Tom Dullam was a pole vaulter on our team who broke the national high school record; I think he is in the HOF too.

At our 50th reunion, I gave Ray a relay baton from one of our last races at the State Meet that I had kept as a souvenir in my dresser drawer all these years. I told Ray when I gave it to

him that the anchor man is supposed to get the baton last; this hand-off just took 50 years to complete. He was delighted, and kept it in his shirt pocket all evening.

It was a transitional time, and the bubble of relative innocence was pierced by the assassination of JFK in November of '63. I heard the news from my art teacher that morning. But our high school days were charmed, and our class still feels the bonds we created during our time at Buena.

Thanks again for contacting me ... and please let me know how I can help you with your project. It's a great idea, since it seems many of the younger generation doesn't seem to think the past has any importance to them.

With my regards,
Russell Kloer / Buena High, Class of '65.
GO BULLDOGS!!