

II. GENESIS OF AN IDEA

A junior college in the South County area? The idea was long in the making. It grew out of several developments which emerged in the years following 1945 and began to jell about 1960. The state government took the initiative, while local school officials and citizens groups paved the way. Public support followed, but only after an initial defeat at the polls.

Actually, the community college idea was broached in 1945 when the legislature created a state commission to survey local needs for higher education. The commission reported that the East Bay area had no junior college but needed one. At the local level, a survey commission comprised of school officials and prominent citizens from Alameda and Contra Costa counties also studied the issue. This group was told by Hayward representatives that it would be "unwise to establish, at this time, a complete junior college." The same spokesmen said, however, that a junior college program should be set up for vocational training. The view of the local commission, as reflected in its report issued in June, 1948, was that the area did need a junior college, and that one should be established for Alameda County. The local electorate voted down the proposal, however, in a special election held in December, 1948 - a defeat attributed to poor timing (i.e., following so closely upon a general election), small turnout (only 11 percent of the electorate), campaign domination by school officials, and opposition by the Oakland Tribune.

Over the next decade, the South County area underwent significant change, with urban and industrial development, especially in San Leandro and Hayward, growing apace. County government established an administrative office in Hayward to serve the growing population. The mainline highway (Route 17) became a freeway. School districts expanded elementary and secondary plants to keep up with an expanding population. And finally, school districts in the area began to send post-secondary students - at district expense - to the new junior colleges in Oakland (1954) and San Mateo (where the college had been established since the early 1920's).

This pinch on the pocketbook probably had a great deal to do with stimulating a change in the direction of public thinking: the tide began to turn. When the State Department of Education issued a feasibility study in 1956 supporting the idea of a junior college in the South County area, public reaction was mixed. Such local groups as school officials, Parent and Teacher Associations, League of Women Voters and Dads' Clubs advocated the college idea. Other community leaders and some city officials were opposed to it, on the grounds that South County still lacked the population



E. J. "Jay" Chinn



L. Arthur Van Etten

and industry to provide adequate tax support for a college. Meanwhile, a newspaper report focused public attention on the fact that South County was the only area in the state with a population of over 50,000 not having its own junior college.

The turning point came in 1959. The Alameda County School Superintendent and local school officials voiced concern about the growing expense of supporting students at junior colleges in other districts. The Hayward Union High School District taxpayers alone, for example, were financing over 1300 such students. This cost created considerable concern, and was reinforced when the state legislature authorized a new state college to be built in Hayward - stipulating that the new institution would operate as a two-year, upper division institution only, until a new junior college was established - a move by state officials to prod local school officials. By September of the year, the governing boards of both the Hayward Union High and the San Leandro Unified School Districts, in separate moves, had decided to consider establishing a junior college district.

Mobilizing for Action

It was a year, however, before support began to really develop behind the idea. In January 1960, after both the Hayward and San Leandro School Districts had asked the State Department of Education to update its earlier (1956) feasibility study, the San Leandro district created a citizens committee to study the matter, appointing local insurance agent E. J. "Jay" Chinn as its chairman. Chinn, long prominent in local school affairs, took immediate action to get the study underway.

The Hayward district soon followed suit, with L. Arthur Van Etten, a sanitation district inspector, emerging as an active leader of this group. Other citizens played equally important roles in the effort, among them Winifred Crew, who headed the San Leandro Board of Education - a long-time advocate

of the junior college idea, and Robert Coate, businessman and former member of the Hayward High School District board. Active also were Rock LaFleche, Alameda County Superintendent of Schools, and Hugh Price, chief of the State Department of Education's Junior College Bureau.

The *San Leandro Morning News* and the *Hayward Daily Review* kept their communities abreast of developments, and interest in the issue grew, with public debate on the college idea sporadic but intense as various local officials and citizens' groups brought their views forward and focused public awareness on the question.

The debate split on a couple of issues, with proponents arguing that the community had an obligation to provide its youth with better preparation for occupational careers and personal development, and opponents insisting that the tax burden would be too great for the community to bear. Proponents argued, on this question, that the cost of sending youths out-of-district was already too expensive and that students were handicapped by the distance they had to travel out of the district and by overcrowded conditions at the out-of-district schools. Local provincialism further complicated the public debate as various groups argued on behalf of their communities as the best site for the proposed college.

By the end of summer, the question was still undecided. Chambers of Commerce in Hayward and San Leandro had become supporters of the proposal, bringing with their endorsement the support of many business organizations of other communities as well. School districts throughout the South County area, however, remained indecisive or divided, and despite active promotional activity of many interested civic groups, the range of views among many other important community organizations remained vague to mixed.

Then the tide turned. In September, 1960, the Hayward and San Leandro School districts each decided to 'go it alone' and press for their own junior college. A month later, they joined forces to form a joint junior college district, agreeing on an allocation of trustees (five for Hayward and two for San Leandro), and setting September 1961 as a target date for opening the new college. The action was quickly approved by the State Department of Education and the County Superintendent of Schools set January, 1961 as the election date for public approval.



Rock LaFleche

Campaign

The election campaign for the proposed junior college in the autumn of 1960 was a well-organized affair. E. J. "Jay" Chinn and L. Arthur Van Etten were co-chairmen. A citizens' committee headed by local banker A. J. Oliveira, and lawyer-politician, now judge John Puccio, assumed responsibility for raising the necessary campaign funds. It soon became clear that the year-long public debate had educated the community well on the issue, and business organizations, labor unions, neighborhood associations, service clubs and other community groups quickly lined up in support.

Nor was there lack of levity and good will in the campaign. E. J. "Jay" Chinn, addressing a campaign dinner, told his audience on one occasion that five school districts supported the proposed institution. When L. Arthur Van Etten corrected him and said there were eight. Chinn retorted - "That shows how fast they are growing; three more while we've been sitting here!"

As the campaign drew to a close, practically every civic organization supported the junior college proposition. A selling point was the proponents' contention that the tax rate for the independent junior college district would be held at only thirty-five cents, just a slight increase in cost over the existing thirty-cent rate already assessed to send students to out-of-district junior colleges. Another persuasive argument was the position of the state college system: Hayward State would operate as a two-year upper division institution until the establishment of a new junior college in the area. The election in January, 1961 was a foregone conclusion as voters approved the proposed junior college district by a six to one vote (19,606 to 3,078).

South County Junior College

Rock LaFleche became the "guardian" of the new district, "christened" at ceremonies presided over by Alameda County's district attorney as the South County Junior College District (SCJCD). "The Rock" appointed several members to a development committee, among them Hugh Price of the State Department of Education, Hayward State College President Fred Harclerod, representatives from the Hayward Union High School District and several nearby junior college districts, including Cabrillo, Contra Costa, Foothill, Oakland and San Mateo. This committee was later to play a valuable advisory role to the governing board of the new college district.



Fred F. Harclerod



FIRST BOARD. SCJC Trustees were at work immediately after their election to develop the junior college as rapidly as possible. From left, they are William A. Tenney, Area 7; Frederick Timothy Sullivan, Area 6; L. Arthur Van Etten, Area 4; Charles W. Stone, Area 1 and President of the Board; Robert L. Coate, Area 3; E. J. "Jay" Chinn, Area 2; and Edward A. Martins, Area 5. Taken for a brochure prepared by the Alameda County School Department, this photograph is one of the first ever taken of the Board of Trustees, which met in the Alameda County Board of Education Room in the County School Department Offices on West Winton Avenue, Hayward, from May 15, 1961 to August 22, 1961.

Election of a board of trustees for the district was the next step to be taken. A low-key affair, the candidates campaigned by seeking endorsements from neighborhood groups, homeowners' associations, civic and service clubs, and professional organizations. Several community groups even campaigned for slates of candidates, and one of these, the Citizens' Advisory Committee of Castro Valley Elementary School, succeeded in having six of its seven candidates elected to the Board. But the "campaign" was still a less than vigorous one for most candidates. The *San Leandro Morning News*, two weeks before the April, 1961 election, commented on the slow pace of the affair and complained that of 48 candidates, less than half of them had issued public statements or made personal appearances. Turn-out was light with about 18,000 of 103,000 registered voters electing the first slate of seven trustees to govern the new college district.

The Board

They were a diverse group. Charles Stone of San Leandro (Area 1) was an executive in a construction materials firm and a long-time member of the San Leandro school district board. Robert Coate of Castro Valley (Area 3) was an investment counselor; Edward Martins of Hayward (Area 5) was an attorney, partner in a local law firm and former member of the Hayward elementary school district board. Mt. Eden's Frederick Sullivan (Area 6) was secretary-treasurer of a local printing specialists' union and William Tenney of Hayward (Area 7) was a supply inspector for the U.S. Navy and former member of the La Vista school district board. Co-Chairmen E. J. "Jay" Chinn and L. Arthur Van Etten represented San Leandro (Area 2) and San Lorenzo (Area 4), respectively.

They were an interesting profile of the community. Each had been a front runner in his area. Only one (Tenney) had had a serious challenger. Each had been actively involved in community affairs, in civic, professional, and political organizations. All had shown paramount interest in youth. Most had previously served on local school district boards. And as time was to demonstrate they all generally shared a viewpoint that reflected the conservative character of the junior college community they served and represented.

Off and Running

The new board wasted little time in organizing the district and establishing the college. The committee organized by Rock LaFleche and the staff of LaFleche's office briefed the new trustees. They met May 15 to get organized, electing Charles Stone president, and William Tenney secretary, officially adopting the designated legal name for the district. By the end of the month they had completed arrangements for the initial physical plant for the college, leasing a seven and one-half acre lot adjacent to Pacific High School in San Leandro for \$5,000 a year, and contracting with the Oakland School District to purchase sixteen portable classrooms at a total price of \$225 for the lot. Contrary to committee



OLD CAMPUS. A view of the San Leandro campus, showing parking areas with Pacific High School in the right background.

advice, they decided not to take a year for planning but to open the college in the Autumn of 1961. Budget for the first year was the immediate task of the new trustees. With initial expenses for district operations covered through June 30 by a grant from the state emergency fund administered by the county superintendent's office, the board hammered out a budget for the first school year by August 8th. They had to wrestle with many problems to stay within, or try to stay within, the tax rate of thirty-five cents per \$100 assessed property value they had promised the voters.

It was a challenging task. The board had to reckon with the fact that revenues would not be sufficient. The county tax collector had included, in his original estimate of the property tax assessment the unsecured roll (personal property) - which was prohibited by law for the first year of college operations, reducing the district's potential returns from this source. They resolved this dilemma by increasing the tax levy to 43.5 cents, and reducing estimated expenditures by \$25,000. The Board's split vote in approving this final action reflected its difficulty in reconciling campaign promises with the reality of funding a quality education program.

Selecting a President

The Board also moved fast in selecting a superintendent-president for the district. After investigating fourteen candidates, they chose Reed L. Buffington to be their new chief executive officer. Dr. Buffington was a graduate of the University of Chicago (Bachelor's and Master of Arts degrees) and Stanford University (Doctorate of Education). He had taught at both the junior college and university levels. From Illinois, he first came to California in 1950 where he rose

From Dean of Instruction at Diablo Valley College to Assistant Superintendent of the Contra Costa Junior College District by the time of his selection to the top job at the then South County Junior College.

The Board's selection of Buffington was undoubtedly influenced by his strong commitment to quality education, his belief in lay over professional control of college policy and his willingness to open the college that autumn. When asked by a newspaper reporter what his chief objective was, Buffington replied, "Quality! The thing I would want instructors to be known for, and the thing I would stand for, would be quality in everything we do ... I think the Board and I saw eye to eye on a quality education program."



Reed L. Buffington

Dr. Buffington took office immediately (July 1, 1961) and assumed direct responsibility for setting up college operations. Housed in temporary quarters in the Alameda County Schools Building, he first gave attention to the selection of college personnel. For his top aides, he appointed Peter Barthelme, formerly the Chief Accountant at Contra Costa Junior College District, to be business manager; Jack Marsh of the University of California's Extension Division to be Director of Curriculum and Instruction; and Jack Fishbaugh, a San Jose high school principal to be Director of Student Personnel.

Staff was then recruited to assist in the considerable workload of setting up the college. The Board made its first appointment in selecting Phyllis Bausch as its secretary. Thereafter, Dr. Buffington assumed responsibility for the recruitment of clerical, technical and maintenance employees with approval of the Board. Helen Burke was hired as secretary to the Superintendent-President. Irene Moe was employed as Senior Clerk. These two made up the clerical staff of the President's office. Irene Moe was a familiar figure in local circles as the long-time secretary to the San Leandro School District Board and a PTA leader. Dan Bokuvka was the first accountant, Wayne Williams Administrative Assistant to the superintendent with duties including public information tasks. Marjorie Mader and Marion McSweeney were the Library Clerks; Helen Tallent served with the Business Manager as Stenographer, and Frances (Sue) Wood served as Receptionist. Janet Yakubik (now Covington) was a clerk-typist later responsible for much of the instructional materials production that was needed to support learning in the classrooms. Henry Van Brederode was Bookstore Manager.

The first custodians were Clarence Silva and Antone Silva, long-time and popular campus figures. Lyle Thomas was the maintenance man. As support staff was recruited, Reed Buffington inaugurated his (still) standing policy of hiring staff only when actually needed, keeping administrative costs at basic levels and avoiding the building of staff "empires".

Faculty recruitment presented its own difficulties. The Board's problem was to find qualified faculty members quickly at a time when most teachers had already signed annual contracts, and still select highly qualified teachers in keeping with its commitment to quality education. A faculty screening committee was appointed to help them, with the Superintendent-President making the final choices.



Antone "Tony" Silva

The committee, comprised of Dale Tillery of the University of California and Alan Livingston of the Oakland Unified School District, did a remarkable job in this assignment. As Dale Tillery recalled years later, the two men interviewed over 500 applicants in a very brief period and selected well-qualified teachers "with interesting backgrounds," and much to contribute to the new institution.



THE FIRST STUDENTS. Wilfred "Bill" Desrosiers, Jr., at left, greets Phil Perneter of Livermore who was among the first students to register for classes. Perneter had spent the previous night in his car on campus so that he would be among the first in line on Registration Day.

By mid-summer, the Board began officially appointing these faculty members. First on the list were Wilfred Desrosiers as counselor and psychology instructor, and Robert Whalen in economics and political science. Other pioneer faculty members who signed up that summer and gained tenure at the college included Laurence Berlowitz, Channing Briggs, John Brunn, Marie Busby, Kathleen Conneely James Davis, Leo Dodson, John Dooley, (librarian), William Doyle, Paul Earls, Truman Fisher, Michael Furay, Woodrow Hansen, Milton Harriman, Edward Hart (who became Director of Athletics), Wayne Harter, Fred Hirsch, Bert Jamison and Tad Kelley. Others were Rose Lawrence, Harold Lubin, Norman Nelson, Harold Palmer, Emily Pletta, David Roach, Howard Sanborn, George Sage, Vivian Sutchter, Martin Tacher and Vittorio Valenza. A profile of these



FIRST STAFF. Pictured above are the original employees of the South County Joint Junior College District, all of whom were on the staff when Chabot College opened in 1961. Front row: Dr. Vittorio Valenza, George Sage, Mrs. Janet Covington, Mrs. Emily Pletta, Mrs. Marie Busby, Miss Kathleen Conneely, and Dr. Reed L. Buffington. Standing (from left): Wayne Williams, Leo Dodson, Dr. Edward A. Hart, [r., John Brunn, L. Jack Fishbaugh, Truman Fisher, Harold Lubin. James Davis, Dr. Tad Kelley, Peter A. Barthelme, Harold O. Palmer, Bert P. Jamison, Robert Whalen, Fred Hirsch, and David Roach.



OLD GLORY. The flag pole became a familiar sight on the San Leandro Campus. In this early photograph, both flags are seen whipping in the breeze which blew as students in the foreground played catch with a football. The grass also served as a convenient place for students to rest and chat between classes. Later, the area in the foreground was paved to provide sorely needed parking facilities.

pioneer teachers reveals a diversity of personal and professional backgrounds, a combination of academic education and practical experience, and a wide range of ideological persuasions, a variety in faculty complexion which has become a hallmark of the Chabot teaching family.

During these same summer months, the college crew worked at a hectic pace to prepare the campus for the autumn opening. Reed Buffington, his top aides and immediate staff, worked 14 to 16 hours a day, seven days a week to keep up with the administrative load. By July, huge cranes hoisted the portable buildings from delivery trucks and placed them at the college site where their reconstruction was completed. Erection of the 30-foot flagpole (which currently adorns the Hayward campus) in the center of the first campus quadrangle marked the completion of the physical plant.

Chabot (then South County Junior) College opened its doors for registration on September 11, 1961. On hand to greet the students were the small administrative staff and a faculty of 26 instructors, three counselors and a librarian. Some 300 to 500 students were expected to enroll; instead, 1,163 students signed up for classes. It was a good beginning, and the college had become a reality.