



James C. Nisbet Class of 2009

It was fortunate that the formative years at Oroville High School were guided largely by one man, James Chester Nisbet.

His personal strength combined with loving concern for OHS students helped to lay the groundwork, upon which was built a positive atmosphere for growth and learning. An attitude of family, promoted by Nisbet, permeated the campus and aided students in their later lives. He earned respect from students and co-workers alike.

Chet was an athlete. He taught that everyone should try to win, but whether in winning or losing, the game was to be played with good sportsmanship on both sides so everyone could be a winner. He taught those around him to conduct themselves during play and after the games ended with respect for opponents. He instructed that the true goal of competitions was sportsmanship.

The Nisbet family was one of the first to settle in this area after the Gold Rush. Chet's primary education years were spent inside the single room Oregon City Schoolhouse. He attended OHS where he participated in sports as well as drama productions. In 1909, he was a champion with the school's Northern California High School Athletic League basketball team.

Following his graduation in 1911, Chet studied for the next four years at the University of California at Berkeley. He graduated in 1915 with an A.B. and recognition in the Delta Phi Kappa Education Honors Society.

Immediately after college, Chet returned to Oroville and began professional teaching. Through the next 42 years, his career also included coaching in basketball and baseball, Principal (1930), and Superintendent (1955). There was a timeout for the United States Army where Chet was a First Lieutenant.

Chet's legacy continued at OHS into the 1960's when the abandoned Acker Basketball Tournament was reborn as the Nisbet Tourney, hosted each year in Oroville.

Some of his service off campus included: twice president of the Chamber of Commerce, Rotary Club man of the year in 1959, Boy Scouts committee member for 15 years, head of the Salvation Army in Oroville, and in 1941 Chet was appointed by the Governor of California as Captain of the California State Guard.

Chet was steadily on site each day while foregoing fanfare and self-promotion. Former student, Audrey Aiston, wrote: "At times he would get home late for dinner having driven someone home after missing the school bus. When students were in need of funds to continue their education, he often assisted by finding sponsors."

Nisbet's daughter, Gertrude Bartley, wrote of her father, "James C. Nisbet dedicated his life to the betterment of Oroville High School and the Oroville community. Although he had several opportunities to move to other positions with higher salaries, he was never tempted. The students of Oroville High were his "children" and the whole community his extended family. He never wavered in doing his best for them."