

A SKETCH OF TAM HIGH

Tam is an old, unique and impressive school. It is old in time and old in traditions, and it is unique and impressive because the student body, the faculty and the community have always joined together to make it that way.

It was August of 1908 that the first group of 64 students piled off the train called the "Special" to attend the new Tamalpais High School. The students were from Mill Valley and Sausalito, and they were happy they no longer had to take the long trip to San Rafael to go to high school. They were met on the hillside by Mr. Wood (the Duke), who was to be principal at Tam for 36 years. He met them in a temporary, single, windowless, canvas topped, wooden building containing four rooms and four doors. With Mr. Wood on that first day were the three teachers who were to staff the school: Miss Keyser, the first teacher hired at Tam and later the head of the English department for many years, and Miss Pack and Miss Kurlandsik. Mr. Wood greeted that first Tam student body and admonished them then, as he was to do often to other classes, "you young people play the game square."

Though those first students came mainly from Mill Valley and Sausalito, by 1921 Tam's attendance area was enlarged to include Belvedere-Tiburon, Corte Madera, Ross and San Anselmo-Fairfax. Most of the students rode the Northwestern Pacific's "Special" electric train, a third railer, which ended its daily journey by backing into an area down near the present boys' gym to discharge the student passengers.

The students attended classes in rooms and buildings which were truly uniquely theirs, for the plans for most of those early buildings and the equipment and furniture they used were designed and made in the various school shops by students and their instructors. Mr. Wood believed strongly that students should learn by doing. Incidentally, the mechanical drawing department, in addition to designing many of the buildings we now use, also drew the plans

for the Mill Valley Community Church.

The first permanent building was the main wing of our present Wood Hall, and the students and faculty were no doubt very happy to move out of the "Shack" or "Fort Sumpter" as the first temporary building was called. In 1910 the students and their instructors designed and built the first wing of the present commercial building and the arches at our front entrance. It's really not hard to understand how the students and faculty in those days were so involved in the construction of so many of the buildings which we are using even today. The course offerings in the shop department then included: bricklaying, cement work, carpentry, electricity and they even had ten forges for blacksmithing.

As the enrollment of the school continued to grow, the need for more space and buildings increased. The first gym, a simple affair, was located in the upper court. This first gym was paid for by the students and constructed by the wood working classes. The present boys' gym was built in 1923 and served as both the boys' and girls' gym for many, many years. That building was named George Gustafson Gymnasium in 1971 to honor "Gus" who retired at that time after many successful years at Tam.

When the largest classroom building on our campus was built in 1924, Mr. Wood named it Keyser Hall honoring Tam's first teacher, Miss Keyser. Woodruff Hall, the present Math Building, was named for Mrs. Margaret Woodruff, the head of the social studies department and the founder of the Honor T Society. The name Band Box was given to the music room by Mr. Binns, one of the custodians. Benefield Hall, near Mead, honors Clidden Benefield, head of the boys' P.E. department and athletic director.

Mead Theater was built in 1937 by the students and the W.P.A., a federal agency formed in the 30's to provide employment to the unemployed during the depression. It was named for Mr. Earnest Mead, a member of the school board from 1920 to 1942. A creek ran down the slope where the theater is now situated.

That old creek bed angles down through our campus and is under the newest building, the student union.

In 1957 the girls' gym was dedicated to Miss Ruby Scott, one of the most beloved and respected teachers. She taught mainly Latin, but also French and Greek in room 17 for 43 years. Throughout that time she commuted daily from Berkeley where she lived. The daily trip required taking an electric train from her home to the ferry slip, a ferry ride to San Francisco, transferring to another ferry to Sausalito and then a train ride to Tam High. Twice a day for 43 years Miss Scott made that trip.

One of the newer buildings on campus, the science building, was named for Ray Palmer who was head of the science department from 1927 to 1959. He was instrumental in developing a strong science program at Tam. Mr. Wood's home was located where Palmer Hall is now situated. That small clump of four redwoods growing between Palmer and Keyser were planted by Mr. Wood on the birth of each of his four daughters.

For a long period of time there was a large cafeteria on campus. The food was prepared and sold by the homemaking classes which were very popular then. The cafeteria was located in the area presently occupied by the administrative and counseling offices in lower Wood. In the 20's, room 1, the Little Theater, was the sewing room and the faculty lunch room.

Much of the present athletic fields are composed of mud dredged up from Richardson Bay, some of it in 1957. The present pool, built in 1958, replaced the one built on marsh land near the boys' gym. That first pool was financed by the students in the early 1920's, but after many years of use, the weight of the pool and water caused it to sink and eventually be condemned.

It's hard today to realize that the main highway north from San Francisco through Marin County, the present freeway 101, at one time passed through the center of our campus between the boys' gym and the other buildings. At one

time, Mr. Wood contemplated building a pedestrian bridge over the highway for the students to use going and coming to and from the gym. It's not so hard, however, to believe that at one time our campus was known and appreciated throughout the Bay Area as a garden showcase. Although we can hardly claim that distinction now, the outlines of those once beautiful gardens are still with us. The main lawn in the front of school was first planted by Mr. Wood in 1924, but only after getting the assurance that it would be taken care of by the student body. Up until the 60's that assurance was upheld with a student enforced "no walking on the lawn" rule.

Another interesting aspect of our campus is "Myrtle," the statue in the pond in the Orange Court. Myrtle was a creation of the W.P.A. in 1937. In 1960 that fountain in the Orange Court was dedicated as the Jean Compton Fountain. Jean Compton was stricken by polio while a student at Tam and paralyzed from the neck down. Following her graduation from Tam she lived a life of community service until she passed away on January 1, 1972.

In 1957 a group of students and friends dedicated a memorial garden on the hillside south of the commercial building to Miss Pearl Smith, an Oral English teacher at Tam for 30 years. The Senior Bench, the Junior Wall across the path from the bench, the Sophomore Tree (the magnificent silver spruce on the front lawn and the Freshman Court (where portables 123 and 124 are temporarily located), all appeared as time went on.

The clock on the tower was a memorial conceived by the class of 1946 to honor the Tam alumni who had lost their lives in World War II. A plaque at the base of the tower lists the names of those servicemen. Some of the funds for the clock were raised by students; the school carpenter helped by framing the numbers out of copper.

Up until the 50's what is now the library was really two large rooms. One, the present Mountain Room, was the entire library at that time. The main room

of today's library was a large multi-purpose room used as a study hall but having a stage which could be used for assemblies, meetings, etc., at other times.

If you had been a female student at Tam in 1923 you would have been asked to vote on the option of wearing uniforms to school. Uniforms won out and girls dressed for school in white middies with blue collars, large blue ties and pleated skirts.

The athletic Hall of Fame found in the boys' gym was started by Mr. Hanretty when he was athletic director, and it gives you a chance to see some of the students who've been very successful in sports at Tam. The old Pais which go back through the years give you the same views of the past, but on a larger scale. The Pai itself was so named from the last letters of Tamalpais and was printed for many years by students in the school print shop. For most of the colorful history of Tam, the Pai has recorded the life and times of a school rich in history and student involvement. I imagine that much more was left unsaid about Tam than what was captured in those pages of past Pais. The same applies to what has been written here.

A whole new era of the Tam Story started with the opening of Drake High in 1951. The student body was split as well as the faculty. Another split occurred in 1958 with the opening of Redwood. The campus remains much the same. The faculty is really quite stable in contrast to most schools in this very mobile time. Thus the ingredients for a true educational community are still present at Tam. As in the past, the students, the faculty and the community are part of the same effort.

Miss Vera Stump, a foreign language teacher and head of that department for many years, wrote a book in 1961 from which most of the sketch has been drawn. The Tamalpais Story is in our library and the epilogue has something to say to all of us here at Tam.

Yes, Tamalpais is old -- half a century old -- and therefore priceless. It is a remarkable place in spirit and in reality; a school rich in history, in tradition and in pride. If cherished it will be here for future generations of "young people," if neglected, it will be gone forever -- no district could afford today to duplicate such a campus, and only time can create the things of the spirit; affection, loyalty, dignity and worth.

A postscript is necessary at this point. The newest and perhaps most long awaited building on our campus is the Mary Baker Student Union. Mary Baker spent most of her life in or about Tam High. First as a student, then as a girls' physical education teacher, head of the girls' P.E. department, dean of girls and, finally assistant principal -- a total of 40 years of sincere affection and dedication to our school. Mary Baker exemplifies the best that Tam has to offer the community.

Compiled by Cy Beattie
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EPILOGUE TO A SKETCH OF TAM HIGH

There is more Tam history behind "Untermann Lake", the pond and waterfall at the base of the redwoods next to Palmer Hall, the science building. Dennis Untermann taught landscaping and power mechanics at Tam. He was looking for a project on campus where he could put some of his landscaping experience to good use. So, he made contact with Mr. Bennett, the science department chairman, and they agreed that that department could readily utilize the land next to Palmer Hall as an area for living biological specimens.

A group of freshmen students under Dennis Untermann's direction proceeded to build the pond and waterfall. Unfortunately, vandalism over a weekend necessitated building the chain link fence to protect the project.

The plan is to landscape the area with plants native to the slope of Mt. Tam and to stock the pond with fish and plant life. All of that plant and animal life will make up a living area for biological study.

So the same combination of student and staff talents which has been responsible for so much of what is good about our campus once again added an asset to our school which is both beautiful and functional.

"Untermann Lake" is a present day example of what has happened frequently throughout the development of our school.