



Historic Bakersfield & Kern County, California

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Bakersfield City School District's Male Teaching Staff 1933-2012

by Gilbert P. Gia

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Superintendent of Schools John Compton recalled the year 1933 when Bakersfield City School District at 1920 K Street had 198 teachers under contract. Fifteen were male, which was about 8% of his teaching force. During WWII the percentage became even less when male teachers entered military service. With war's end, and the GI Bill, ex-teachers enrolled in schools of higher learning and trained for employment in better-paying fields.

The city's school district knew that faculties were stronger if made up of both men and women, but to attract more males after the war it had to improve the salary schedule. In 1951 it did just that, and in 1953 90 male teachers were in the system. Fifteen were single, 75 married, and the average age was 32. Following is information about those whose roots were in Kern County.

Philip A. Niederaur was born in Bakersfield, received his AB from San Jose State College, taught P.E. at Emerson Junior High and in 1940 was the first principal of newly-built Mt.

Vernon School. In 1945 he was principal of Emerson School, and at the time of Compton's 1953 report Niederaur had served 17 years with BCSD.

Glenn H. Heimforth graduated from Kern County Union High School and attended Bakersfield Junior College and Fresno State College. He started teaching for BCSD in 6th at McKinley School, was supervisor of visual aids, and later principal of Hawthorne School. After service with the US Marines he was appointed principal of both Lowell School and the district's Hospital School for physically handicapped children.

John Twadell graduated from Bakersfield High, attended BJC and Fresno State, and received an AB from Santa Barbara State College. He taught at Emerson and Washington and in 1953 was employed as supervisor of child welfare and attendance.

Frank J. Schmandle was born in Taft, where he attended local schools. He received his AB from Santa Barbara State, taught social studies at Golden State Junior High, and in 1953 was a counselor at Sierra Junior High.

Charles A. Holden graduated from Taft High and received his AB at Santa Barbara State and his MA at Stanford. He taught at Washington and Lincoln schools, was supervisor of child welfare and attendance, and principal of Lincoln School and Union Avenue School. Holden became principal of Sierra Junior High when it was built in 1952. By then he had 17 years of service with the district.

Three men who were recent hires were George C. Palmer at Castro Lane School, and Joe Lee Lewis, who was an instrumental music teacher. Both had attended Washington

Junior High and East Bakersfield High School. In 1952 they received their ABs from San Francisco State and Santa Barbara State. Ray Jacobus attended Withington Junior High, BHS and after service in WWII attended San Jose State on the GI Bill. He joined BCSD in 1952 and in 1953 taught PE at Sierra Junior High.

Forrest C. Gardenhire had risen through the ranks and in 1953 was principal of Lincoln Junior High. Other local teachers included George Hanley, principal of Pioneer Drive; Wayne Carter, Emerson; John Croson, Washington; James Headly, Lincoln; Elmer Hawkins, Washington; Floyd Johnson, principal of Casa Loma; Thomas Davis, Roosevelt; Robert Gundry, Sierra; George Harper, Emerson; Don Pruett, Franklin; George Stevenson, Potomac; James Stewart, Hawthorne; Frederick Valentich, Golden State; Evron Barber, Wayside; Richard Rutherford, Horace Mann; Sherlo Shively, Golden State; Thomas Papas, Sierra; and Bryon Apperson, Department of special Services.

In 1953, 16,400 children were enrolled in Bakersfield City School District, and the count was expected to reach 20,000 by 1956. At the time of Compton's article, about 540 certificated teachers were on the payroll,¹ and he expressed hope that by 1956 20% of his teaching staff would be men.

How has that worked out? In October 2012 BCSD had 32 elementary schools, six middle schools, two junior highs, and a children's center at Rafer Johnson School. The district's certificated staff of 1,563 serves about 29,000 students. Male teachers make up 16% of staff.

¹ Bakersfield Californian, Apr 30, 1954, p 23

Compton's goal of attracting "enthusiastic young men of good character who want to associate with the important and growing business of educating boys and girls for successful living, good character and zealous American citizenship" is apparently making some progress.

- Adapted Sep 24, 2012 from the Bakersfield Californian of Dec 31, 1953 by Gil Gia for Kern Division, CalRTA.

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