A BRIEF HISTORY OF EARLY YEARS OF CRESCENTA VALLEY HIGH SCHOOL

by William C. Thomas, former Principal of CVHS, October 2005

BACKGROUND OF EARLY CAMPUS AND BUILDINGS

The Glendale Union High School Board of Education purchased the site at 2929 Community Avenue for a high school in 1927. La Crescenta Elementary School has been on an adjacent site since 1890. . The original site for Clark JHS was developed some time in the early 1930s. Men working with the Works Project Administration (the WPA was a part of the recovery effort from the Depression, hiring men to work on public projects such as schools) with picks, shovels and wheelbarrows terraced the sloping, rocky site into flat pads for the school and fields.

In 1931-32 the first 10 classroom building for the La Crescenta Junior High School was constructed on a site just west of the present industrial arts building. This building was torn down in 1960-61, during the first year of the high school. Additional buildings were built on the site as the junior high school grew.

Mr. Lloyd Horney was on the WPA crew which leveled the fields and then signed on as the first custodian of the junior high school and continued on the site as the Head Custodian at the new high school. Lloyd not only demonstrated outstanding leadership of the custodial crew but also had a great relationship with the students. Upon his retirement the students raised the money and presented Lloyd and his wife with a trip to Hawaii.

From the mid 1940's and through the 1950's the Crescenta Valley area of the Glendale Unified School District had significant student growth. Many homes were built in the post-war period and most were occupied by young families. ("Pregnant Flats" was the term frequently used to refer to the valley by those facing the problem of housing the rapidly growing student population.) New elementary schools were being built and it became evident that there was a need for more housing for the junior high school students and also a high school in the valley. During this period senior high school students from the area were bussed to Glendale and Hoover High schools with the large majority attending Glendale High.

The decision to convert the Community Avenue Clark JHS site to a three year high school and to build two new junior high schools to house the students presently on this campus was made by the GUSD Board of Education sometime prior to 1954. The CVHS plot plan was adopted during 1954, calling for construction of a 24 classroom building which included an administrative wing, an industrial arts building, an auditorium and music wing, 2 gymnasiums, and a cafeteria.

In 1955 the classroom building (the three story building formerly housing the administrative offices), the industrial arts building, and the cafeteria were constructed. These buildings were planned and built to high school standards. As they were completed they were put into use by the junior high school to house their growing student population. Some ingenuity was used in the process of changing the junior high school facilities for future high school use. An independent two room WPA built building on the quad which had been the junior high school wood and metal shops was converted into very adequate biology and chemistry labs. The small junior high auditorium was consolidated into the new industrial arts building and became a fine wood shop.

A later bond issue provided funds for the construction of the auditorium and music wing and the two gymnasiums. These buildings were under construction but not completed in September, 1960, as the new high

school began. They were occupied as they were completed during the first year of the high school operation. The staff showed great patience and adaptability as they waited for these facilities to be completed.

Unfortunately, these facilities were planned before there was anyone with a specific vested interest in the new high school. The original bids for construction came in considerably over the estimated cost (the estimated costs were figured before the bond issue and this was a period of high inflation). With the choice of not building one of the buildings or redrawing the plans the decision was made to instruct the architects to redraw the plans to meet the funds available. While there was some significant community pressure to have a large auditorium there was no such voice for the other facilities and the result was a "Girls" Gym satisfactory for dance and some other activities of the time but totally unusable for the competitive sports that later became a significant part of the girls program, the "Boys" Gym that was considerably under the standards for a high school, and very small instrumental and choral music rooms.

As the girls' competitive sports program emerged, the size of the CV gyms created a significant scheduling and facility problem. A check of all the schools in the league showed that the smaller of the two gyms at each of these schools were larger that the CV large gym. The CV coaches found themselves in a position where both boys and girls teams needed the large gym for practice and competition, while the schools with which they were competing had two very adequate facilities for their practice and games. With Title IX demanding comparable facilities for the boys and the girls coupled with the CIF regulations specifying practice times the problems of facility scheduling required lots of give and take on the part of the coaching staffs and athletes. The Foothill League was very understanding of our problem and authorized our teams to practice the same amount of time each day as the other schools but not restricted to the regular P.E. period. This helped but forced our teams to frequently wait for practice until the gym was available.

The small campus site created some additional problems in the athletic area. CVHS was the only school in the league that could not play baseball on their own campus and had to travel for both practice and games. The Dunsmore Park field was very adequate for practice but time was lost in travel and transportation costs added to the expense of the program. Stengel Field was an excellent facility for our home baseball games but again required transportation costs. The basketball program developed rapidly and soon we were unable to handle the crowds for home games. Glendale College provided a fine site but again it was not like playing "at home".

The girls' P.E. program tried golf and archery but had to abandon each of these sports due to the somewhat testy notes that came from the adjacent La Crescenta elementary school Principal along with golf balls and arrows that had landed on their playground. Only the skill of our coaching staff and the cooperation of parents and athletes allowed for the development of a quality athletic program under these very difficult circumstances.

The limited campus space also created a significant problem related to student parking. A high school growing to 2400 students without a student parking lot put extreme strain and inconvenience on those living in the neighborhood. Every effort was made to keep peace with the neighbors - a student cabinet position of "Director of Community Relations" was even established - but living close to a high school with no on- campus parking for students created frustration for the neighbors and time-consuming problems for the school administration.

While there were many limitations and difficulties inherent in a high school facility converted from a junior high school, an adaptable and committed faculty coupled with a strong, enthusiastic student body resulted in the development of a respected high school with high standards of student achievement and spirit.

Many people, both employees of the district and involved citizens, were instrumental in the early development of the valley schools in general and Crescenta Valley in particular. While it is not possible to name all these people a good example of outstanding service would be the MacDonald family.

Rory Q. MacDonald, a pioneer in the Crescenta Valley, served as a Board of Education member during the early period of development of the valley schools.

He served on the Crescenta elementary district (1927-31), Glendale Union High School District (1931-32, before consolidation), Glendale School District (1932-33, after consolidation but prior to unification), and the Glendale Junior College District (1929-32).

Mr. MacDonald and his family have been significant contributors to our schools over the years. In recognition of his long service to the valley schools the MacDonald Auditorium on the campus is named in his honor. Laura (wife) was a frequent attender of concerts, plays, and performances in the auditorium during the early years of the high school. Scott (Son) represented the valley well as an 18 year member of the Glendale Unified Board of Education, Jean (Mrs. Gordon, a daughter-in-law) was the founding president of the CV Parent Teacher Association, and Tim (a grandson) was the first Senior Class President. Tim has continued giving strong leadership and service to the class and the school over the years. Many other MacDonald kids were active, productive students.

EARLY PLANNING FOR THE HIGH SCHOOL

The announcement of the opening of the position of Principal of Crescenta Valley High School was published September 18, 1959 and on December 18 William C. Thomas was designated as "Supervisor of New Equipment and Standards for the new school" from 2/1/60 to 6/30/60 and Principal of Crescenta Valley from 9/1/60 to 6/30/61. This assignment was later amended to include the summer period. Seven months was a very short time to complete the tasks required in creating a new high school.

William Thomas was a Glendale native, having attended Doran Street (R.D. White) elementary school, Wilson JHS, and Glendale High School. After high school and four years in the service he attended Occidental College and began teaching mathematics at Roosevelt JHS in September, 1949. He was then appointed as Vice Principal at Wilson Junior High. Two years later he became Principal at Wilson and served in this position for three years before assuming the high school duties.

In February, 1960 Mr. Thomas was relieved of his position at Wilson JHS and began the task of getting the new high school organized and into operation. This included the selection of faculty, development of administrative policy and operations, the scheduling of the new sophomore class. Also included in his job description was the dividing up of all the equipment at the present Clark Junior High between the high school and the two new junior high schools and ordering the additional equipment needed for the three schools.

Early in the spring Mr. Thomas was given authorization to begin hiring faculty for the high school. Inasmuch as most of the students would have been going to the two other district high schools it was necessary to hire most of our staff from these schools. Notice of vacancies with application forms for positions at the new school were placed in the boxes of each teacher at the two high schools. With the excitement of a new high school a large number of highly qualified teachers applied for the new school. Mr. Thomas credits the opportunity of selecting a faculty from this rich field of experienced teachers as instrumental in developing a highly respected academic program.

Miss Shirley Nute, a music teacher at Glendale High School, was selected to be on the new faculty and inasmuch as we would have a limited music program the first year music assignment would also include teaching girls' physical education. Her response to the principal when asked if she could teach p.e. - "I'll buy a pair of tennies and give it a try" - was typical of the spirit of the new faculty as it was being assembled. Each new teacher had to wear a number of hats and from a large pool of strong applicants it was possible to select a very high caliber faculty of excellent teachers with a wide variety of skills.

As the teachers were selected and given their assignments they enthusiastically volunteered to help with the organization of the new school and this faculty input was of great value as the pieces began falling into place.

STUDENT ACTIVITIES

During this period of organization of the high school there were a great many areas demanding attention. One of the very critical areas was the development of an active, working student activity program that would be in place when the high school first opened in September. There had been significant resistance to participating in the "new" high school on the part of many parents and students. In addition to strong loyalties developed toward Glendale and Hoover high schools through older brothers and sisters, there was great concern expressed that as the school was going to be opening with only a sophomore class CV would be lacking in activities associated with a full high school. It was vital that a significant student body organization with an active student council and a reasonably full activity and athletic program be in place and ready for the new class as they commenced their high school experience.

On December 15, 1959 Mr. Tedford Andrews, a teacher and coach at Glendale High School, was named vice principal-elect of the new Crescenta Valley High School, starting September 1, 1960. Ted brought experience in the area of high school student activities and athletics and even though he was not "officially" on the job, worked closely with Mr. Thomas in these areas during the spring and summer of 1960.

It was fortunate that all of the students who would be making up the sophomore class of the new high school were on the Clark JHS campus and good communications with the student leaders was readily available. It was decided to use the Clark student body officers as an advisory planning group for the new high school. These very capable student leaders worked diligently and with considerable skill - meeting frequently with Mr. Thomas and Mr. Andrews - as the student organization began to fall into place. As teachers were selected for the new faculty, they were encouraged to participate in the planning and decision making.

A major decision which had to be made early was the selection of the school nickname and colors. With only several months in which to bid and order uniforms for the athletic teams and the drill team there was a need for an early decision on the school colors. A local sporting goods dealer made up some banners in various uniform colors and these were displayed in a showcase at Clark. The student advisory group also took nominations for the school nickname with "Falcons" and "Highlanders" being the final names on which to vote. The ninth graders at Clark, soon to be the sophomore class, selected the colors and nickname by vote. We were now the Crescenta Valley Falcons and our colors were Columbia Blue and Navy Blue.

Student body officers for the first semester starting in September were elected in the spring by the Clark ninth grade students who would comprise the first class at the high school. Jim Kenagy was elected as the first ASB President. Writing of the student body constitution, using the Glendale High School constitution as a model, was begun.

FACULTY

Mrs. Marjorie Pape and Miss Shirley Nute, coming to the new school from Glendale High School, were to be the girls' PE faculty. They put in countless hours conducting try-outs for the Drill Team, acquiring uniforms, and conducting practices so that we would have a going organization of 60 girls ready for the first football game in the fall.

Gary Hess and Tod Thompson, both from Glendale High School, were hired as teachers and given the job of coach and assistant coach for our football teams. The organization of this program required the overcoming of many obstacles. The track / football field on the campus was not completed and unavailable for use, the boys' gym and locker rooms were still under construction, and the large amount of equipment needed for a football program had to be ordered.

During the end of May, 1960, Gary and Tod met with all potential football players at Crescenta Valley County Park and, using blocking bags and equipment supplied by GHS, held practice. They continued using the park for practice during the summer and when school started in the fall, the 62 students reporting for football were bussed daily to Two Strike Park for practice. The top 36 players played junior varsity and the remainder made up the "B" team.

When school opened in September there would be a student body organization with elected officers in place, equipment and coaches to field teams in all major areas, and a complete activity program planned. This came about through the excellent participation of the student leaders from Clark JHS coupled with skilled leadership from Mr. Andrews and a large number of future faculty members who willingly volunteered their time and talents during this formative period.

OPENING OF THE HIGH SCHOOL - SEPTEMBER, 1960

In the Spring of 1960 it became more and more evident that the two new junior high schools under construction would possibly not be completed in time for the opening of school in the fall and Mr. Thomas was directed by the Superintendent to develop plans to accommodate all of the students (the 536 sophomores of the new high school and the student bodies of the two new junior high schools) on the high school campus should this situation actually materialize. In early May any hope of having the junior high school plants available for the opening of school in the fall was abandoned and serious planning for the housing of three schools on one campus commenced.

Inasmuch as the students and staff from Clark Junior High had already been divided and assigned either to the new Clark or to the new Rosemont JHS it was decided to leave this division in place and to operate the two schools as separate units even though they would be on the former Clark JHS site. The tenth grade students would become the sophomore class of the new Crescenta Valley High School and would operate independently from the two junior high schools. Thus we had the equivalent of the proverbial three ring circus - Clark Junior high school in the morning, Rosemont Junior High School in the afternoon, and the sophomore class of the new high school operating on an all day schedule.

Since this was a temporary arrangement very little in the way of building alterations or construction was needed. One classroom was converted to a counseling and attendance office area for the junior high schools and some old office space which was formerly used by Clark Junior High before the addition of the 1955 classroom building was made available for the administrative and clerical offices for the junior high schools.

Bob Pedrick, coming from Home School was appointed principal of Clark and Bob Karbe, former vice principal at Hoover, was appointed principal of Rosemont. Bill Thomas was principal of the high school and designated "in charge" of the operation. He quickly acquired the title of "Chaos Coordinator" and had appropriate memo pads and stationery printed with this title. With excellent leadership from the two Bobs and their staffs coupled with great coping skills on the part of the faculties of the three schools a reasonably well organized educational program was conducted. That there was some certainty to moving to the two new schools during the Christmas break contributed significantly to the ability of the staffs to endure something less than ideal teaching conditions. Had the schools been forced to operate under these conditions any longer there probably would have

been significant morale problems. Everyone parted friends but no one regretted the dissolution of the three school operation.

The high school administrative staff consisted of Bill Thomas as principal, Ted Andrews and Willa Hoyt Budd, coming from Clark Junior High School, as vice principals, Bob Murtha and Marjorie Pape as advisors. Don Fisher (GHS) and Kay Edwards (Clark) were the counselors and there was a teaching staff of 27, many from Glendale High, a few from Hoover and one from Wilson Junior High School.

Crescenta Valley High School officially opened on September 10, 1960. An enthusiastic new sophomore class found a campus with a great deal of building construction underway - the two gyms as well as the auditorium and music wing were in their final stages of construction and unavailable for use - and two junior high schools sharing the campus.

THE FIRST THREE YEARS

ACADEMICS

Inasmuch as CV was joining an established unified district there was a curriculum in place, a course of study and approved textbook lists available for each course. With experienced teachers coming from the other two high schools in the district there was very little additional planning needed in the area of the educational program.

The assignment of teachers to the classes to be taught presented some minor difficulties as it was necessary for many of the staff to teach some classes outside their major area of study. This situation was minimized by the fact that versatility was a factor in considering teachers for the new high school faculty. There was no question regarding of competence of the teachers as they taught the various courses.

With significant help from the junior high school counselors, the students had been scheduled into their classes. Textbooks had been ordered during the summer and were ready for the students on the first day of school. Teachers were officially on duty several days before the opening of school but most of them had put in a great deal of time during the summer in the preparation of their rooms and completing all of the necessary tasks so that school could open "at full speed" on the first day of classes.

Early in the summer temporary clerical personnel were made available to complete the significant task of dividing up the Clark JHS library books between the two new junior high schools and the high school, then ordering and cataloging the necessary books to provide an adequate library for the high school. A special budget was provided to add volumes during the first three years for the high school to "grow" the library. The fact that all new acquisitions to the library were current and tailored to the curriculum provided a very useful library for the students.

A very competent clerical staff had been appointed during the summer. Lucille Shannon, with experience as a secretary at Clark JHS became the principal's secretary and head of the clerical staff. Mabel Flugel, as counseling office secretary and registrar, developed excellent student recording systems. Louise Higgins was the attendance clerk and proved to be not only a competent record keeper but a friend and advisor to the students. Wilma Handley was receptionist and telephone operator. All of these women assumed a variety of duties necessary to the operation of the one year high school

STUDENT BODY ACTIVITIES

Shirley Nute accepted the assignment of Class Advisor for the class of '63 and demonstrated great skill in leading the students in the development of school spirit and many fine traditions. When Mr. Thomas found he was to be a new high school principal he talked to a number of administrators who had started a school "from scratch". One common theme that principals who had "grown" a school - starting with just a sophomore class - echoed was that we would really be glad to see that first class graduate. They reflected that as these students were "top dogs" in the ninth grade and then continue to be the oldest group all the way through high school and became very difficult and somewhat obnoxious students. Thanks to the leadership of Miss Nute, Mr. Andrews and the fine teaching staff this fear never materialized. The Class of '63 became an outstanding group of students and the staff that was there for these first three years possessed fond memories of a truly outstanding bunch of kids.

While building a strong academic program was the number one priority it was also important to have an effective activity program. The ASB organization provided a full slate of dances, assemblies and other activities commonly associated with a high school. The primary goal was to develop a sound activity program which would help maintain student interest and participation in the academic program. The students were successful in developing a strong extra-curricular program with ingenuity, one that was not just a copy of what other schools were doing.

ATHLETICS

With only a tenth grade class it was decided to play a full schedule of the major sports competing with junior varsity teams of the Foothill League schools and other schools as they could be scheduled. This created an interesting situation. A typical junior varsity game normally draws only a handful of parents and friends of the team members. Realizing that CV had strong student, parent, and community support, Mr. Thomas contacted the principals of each school on the schedule to let them know that they should expect that CV would have a sizable crowd. Despite this communication the reaction of the visiting coaches, administrators and fans was one of total disbelief as they looked at the CV spectators - often in excess of 2000 with a full drill team, band and song and yell leaders and compared this with the 20 or so people occupying the bleachers on their side of the field.

Gary Hess, coming from Glendale High School, was the first football coach with Todd Thompson and Ted Tiffney as assistants. Mr. Hess - typical of all the coaches involved with establishing the traditions and standards of the athletic program - did an excellent job of teaching both the skills of football and establishing the high standards that has been a hallmark of the CV athletes. The sophomore team, competing with teams generally made up of older students, finished the first season with a record of 3 wins and 3 losses, including a 34 to 0 win over Glendale High School..

Following the football season basketball became the sport and again, playing junior varsity teams where we again stunned the visiting fans by the huge crowds supporting out team. Coached by Ed Goorjian with Don Duncan assisting, the team ended up with a 7 win and 9 loss record and gained valuable experience for the years to come. Discipline and team unity were the hallmarks of our basketball team and it was a pleasure to watch this highly successful program develop over the years.

Other sports played the first year were track and cross country with John Barnes as coach and baseball, coached by Gary Hess. The baseball team, again playing a junior varsity schedule, had 10 wins and 3 losses for the season.

For the second year of the high school the decision was made to join the Foothill League (Glendale, Hoover, Burbank, Burroughs, Muir, Pasadena and Alhambra) and to play a full varsity schedule. Lacking any seniors

would put our teams at a distinct disadvantage but our coaches felt that the competition was important and that they could compete respectably.

While CV was obviously handicapped by not having a senior class we finished the football season with a respectable record of two wins, 6 losses and one tie and were never really "blown out" of any game. The experience gained in this competition put CV well or the way to becoming an athletic power.

The high point of the season was the game with Hoover. With most of our coaches and teachers coming from Glendale High School and the majority of students having older siblings attending or alumni of Glendale there was a natural healthy rivalry between CV and Hoover. On the day of the game a big pep rally was held in the auditorium. The Hoover Yell Leaders had asked to participate as they had something to show our students. They appeared with the golden helmet trophy and explained that the Hoover student body had purchased this as a trophy to be kept by the winner of the game each year. They also commented that since CV had no seniors of course Hoover would have it for this particular year but perhaps some time in the future, after CV became a "real" high school, they might have a chance to win it.

Mr. Thomas remembers the game and the aftermath as follows:

> "CV started out playing very competitively and soon moved the ball down the field on a sustained drive. My wife and I were sitting with a large group of faculty and the feeling was 'wouldn't it be funny if we scored first and really scared Hoover'. We did score first and then the feeling among the faculty was 'Gee, maybe we could be ahead at the half'. No one really thought we could win but when the game was over we had won by a score of 27-13, winning rather easily as it turned out. The Hoover student body was in shock to be beaten by a team made up of only sophomores and juniors."

While this experience was not a very happy one for Hoover it was a big boost in the CV program, contributing to excellent student body spirit. That night a number of boys become young men as they realized that they could successfully compete on the varsity level. It was a great time for the school and a significant step toward maturity.

CONCLUSION

With an exceptionally well-qualified, adaptable faculty, strong support from the community and the participation of a fine group of students an effective, respected high school was born.

Willam C. Thomas
2005