



# The Bakersfield College Archives Newsletter

## Archive Articles

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Coach Boris Alexander, Charles Gilton, and James Byas. (Left to Right)

## 1936 LeMoyne College v. BJC: First Interracial Debate

Story by Jerry Ludeke

The date is February 22, 1936. A headline in *The Bakersfield Californian* announces: “FAMED LEMOYNE DEBATERS HERE: Noted Negro Forensic Team Will Meet J.C. Stars in Match This Evening.” The next day’s paper reports: “Big Throng Hears LeMoyne Debaters. An interested audience heard the non-decision debate between Bakersfield Junior College speakers and the LeMoyne College Negro debate team in the junior college lecture hall Saturday night.” The topic was “Resolved: That Congress should have the power by two-thirds majority to override decisions of the Supreme Court declaring legislation passed by Congress unconstitutional.”

LeMoyne College (LeMoyne-Owen since 1968) is in the rich tradition of “private, church-related colleges that have historically served Black students.” Located in Memphis, Tennessee, its roots go back to 1862. Over the years LeMoyne, as well as Bakersfield Junior College, has been known for its strong debate teams.

Dr. Elton Weaver III, Ph.D., an Assistant Professor of History at LeMoyne-Owen, is currently writing a history of the LeMoyne debate program and contacted Bakersfield College to confirm the match held here. A search did indeed confirm the match with mention in the *Raconteur*, *The Renegade Rip*, and *The Bakersfield Californian*.

According to Dr. Weaver, “throughout the 1930s and 40s, Coach Boris Alexander arranged for African-American debaters to participate in interracial debating tours to promote good race relations between black and white college students. During the height of American Apartheid—legalized racial segregation, Professor Alexander christened his pre-Civil Rights intercollegiate and interracial tours experiments in ‘interracial Goodwill.’ ” One tour took them to the South Pacific and Australia.

We know from newspaper reports that the LeMoyne team debated in Los

See **DEBATE**, page 2

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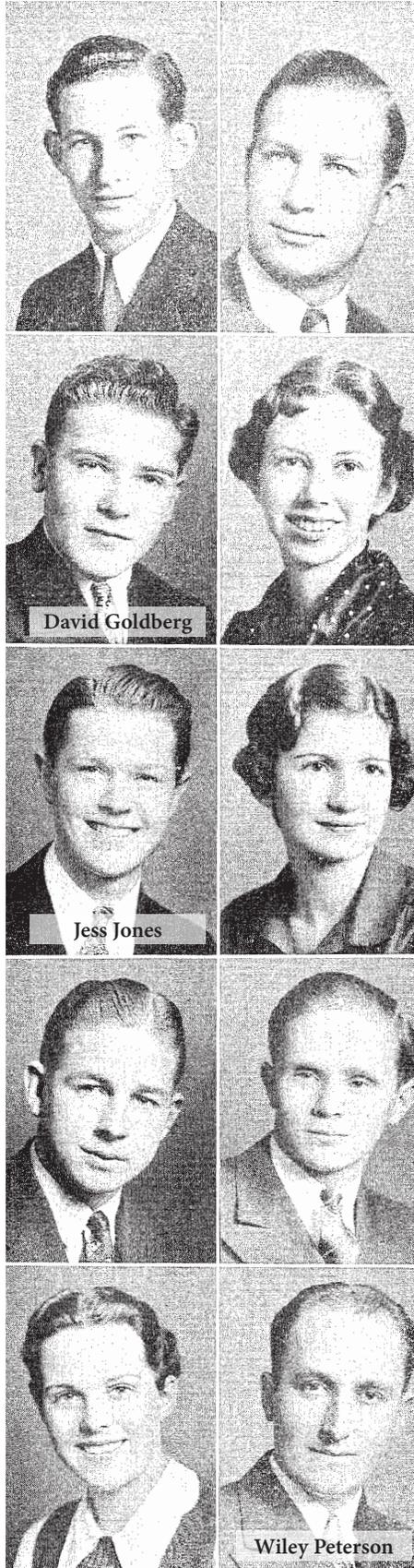
## DEBATE, continued

Angeles colleges the days before and at UC Berkeley the day after they debated in Bakersfield. In the 1936 LeMoyne College Debate Log, Coach Alexander wrote: "Feb 22. Bakersfield Junior College is one of the best debating schools in California, its representatives being in the habit of winning all its debates . . . At Bakersfield we were entertained in the house of Dr. and Mrs. George A. Landis, whose hospitality extended into Sunday afternoon."

Actually the correct spelling of their hosts' name is Handis. Dr. George Handis was a well-known and admired medical doctor. His wife, Lena Handis, was the first black woman employed as a social worker in Kern County and was a sought after speaker in the community. Mrs. Handis was selected to be the moderator of the debate between BJC and LeMoyne. It is interesting to note that the two LeMoyne debaters, Charles W. Gilton and James S. Byas, were sons of prominent black doctors.

In answering an inquiry about Boris Alexander, Dr. Weaver wrote: "Yes, Coach Alexander was definitely white. He sincerely loved LeMoyne College and strove to help every black student he came in contact with. . . . He was a Russian immigrant who had escaped Russia a few years after Lenin's Bolshevik take over ... [He] always taught LeMoyne students that, "The mind is the greatest weapon.' "

Dr. Weaver also wrote: "In my opinion, LeMoyne and Bakersfield's positive interracial interaction illustrates both colleges' willingness to contribute to racial equality." Bakersfield Junior College at the time was under Miss Grace Bird's enlightened leadership. ☺



L to R, top to bottom (last names):  
Chenoweth, Freeland, Goldberg, Hancock,  
Jones, Nichols, Shafer, Townsend, Wachob,  
and Peterson.

# Papal Audience With Pope Paul VI, July 28, 1965

By Joseph Huszti, Bakersfield  
College Choir Director, 1959-1966

The 1965 Bakersfield College Choir was afforded a private audience with His Eminence, Pope Paul VI at his summer residence in Castel Gandolfo, Italy. The family of choir member Cathy Clark made these arrangements before the choir left for Europe. At some point, Cathy was given the choice of receiving a private audience herself, or having the entire choir sing. She chose for the choir to sing. In addition, a supporter had given me \$1000 to use if there were any emergency situations involved.

The choir had left on their 45-day European Tour on June 22, 1965. By the time we reached Rome, we had been on the road for over a month. As their conductor, I was instructed to report to the American College of Cardinals in Rome to receive instructions for the audience with the Pope on July 28th.

Once in Rome, I kept the appointment, but was told that there was "no need for instructions" because the choir would be seated in a large assembly room with eight thousand others. And further more, it was most unlikely we would be singing, as no American choir had sung for a papal audience since 1953. And most certainly, I would not be meeting Pope Paul. Yet, because we were receiving

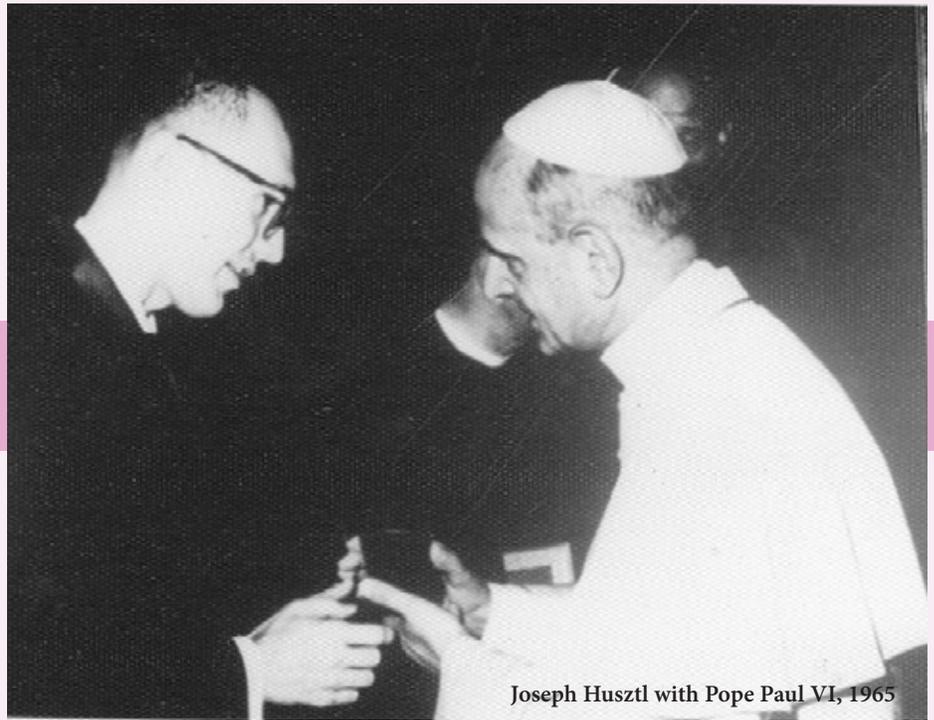
contradictory information from home, we decided to dress in formal concert uniform, just in case.

Meanwhile, our coach was out of commission and being repaired. Therefore, most of the emergency \$1000 was needed to hire some very rough buses for the trip to Castel Gandolfo.

The next morning we traveled up into the mountains in searing hot, humid weather. During the drive, I was again concerned for the lack of background preparation. Where were we to stand or sit? Who would give us instructions how to proceed? What would be the decorum for "the audience?" Who was "in charge?"

The choir was ushered into the large, rectangular assembly hall by the Swiss Guard and shown to our assigned area at the back wall of the auditorium. After a short time, an official had the choir follow him to the front of the assembly hall. Dignitaries already occupied these prime seats. They were told to leave and the choir was instructed to sit in the very front! While we were sorting this out, a great roar and shouting and clapping occurred as Pope Paul entered from the back of the hall seated upon a chair carried by aides in cranberry brocade uniforms. The shouts of "papa" and "viva il papa" rang out. Clapping. Stomping. Shouting. The roar of the crowd was almost deafening. Hundreds were straining to touch the Pope. Needless to say, this emotional scene surprised me, and I am sure our students were shocked as well. But the greatest "shock" was yet to come!

After an address and blessings delivered in several languages (French, Italian, German, Spanish and English)



Joseph Husztl with Pope Paul VI, 1965

by His Eminence, the choir was asked to sing. We performed "O Magnum Mysterium" by Tomás Luis de Victoria.

Following the selection, I was escorted up to His Eminence as he stepped down from his position on the platform. A red pillow was placed on my foot as the Pope extended his ring-hand. Of course, I shook his proffered hand, unaware protocol dictated that I kneel on the pillow and kiss his ring. The papal staff must have been chagrined, but the Pope did not indicate any surprise or rebuke.

Pope Paul extended his personal thanks to me with kind, gentle words in perfect English. I am certain I said "thank you" and a few words. I was presented with an Ecumenical Medal in a red leather box. I do not remember his exact words, but I do remember the sensation of calmness, spirituality and strength of the man. I returned to the choir in a state of awe. The choir was asked to perform several selections during the Pope's private audience with several

other guests. I observed that each person knelt on the red pillow and kissed the ring. To this present day, I hope I did not embarrass our nation or school!

Following the ceremony, I was asked what the Pope said to me, but I could not remember! I do know that fifty years later it remains one of the highlights of my entire career. I am indebted to Jim Clark's family, who arranged for the audience, to each member of this extraordinary group of singers and to Bakersfield College and to the parents who made this remarkable event possible. ☺

A reunion of the Choir from this award winning trip will be led by Joe Huszti in a Bakersfield performance soon. Watch for the announcement.



# The Eisteddfod

by Dan Sniffin

It was a dream that few in our community shared or supported. Who were we to think that we could compete at the international level against amateurs and professionals in the most prestigious music festival in the world? After all we were just kids from the small community of Bakersfield, California, which was known mostly for its country music.

The International Eisteddfod Music Festival is held in Llangollen, a small market village of 3,000 situated on the banks of the River Dee in North Wales. Almost overnight the population swells to nearly 100,000 enthusiastic visitors who are accommodated in residents' homes that dot the picturesque landscape of this beautiful lush vale. This tradition, which started in 1947, continues today. The locals believe that by hosting competitors they are making their personal

contribution to fostering international friendship.

In 1955, Luciano Pavarotti, the acclaimed Italian tenor competed here as an amateur. Another famous tenor, Placido Domingo, made his professional debut here in 1968. And in 1953 the Oberkirchen Children's Choir brought to this village and the world their song, "The Happy Wanderer." Guest artists have included soprano, Joan Sutherland, in 1955; cellist, Mstislav Rostropovich in 1965; and flutist, James Galway, in 1996. These are just a few of the many thousands of competitors and guest artists who have become part of the history of the Eisteddfod.

In 1965 the Bakersfield College choir entered this competition along with fifteen of the world's best mixed choirs from eleven countries. The grand prize was a twenty-five pound solid bronze statue of a winged lion with a

harp, the symbol of Wales, plus a cash award of £450 sterling. After two years of work and considerable personal sacrifices we were now poised to take our chance at making history.

Our train from London had just arrived in Chirk, Wales, where we were then divided into smaller groups for the next five nights. Laurel and I stayed with the Fowlkes family in Rhos village (Rhoslluerchrugog) just a few miles away from the center of activity.

The seeds of this trip started in the spring of 1963 when Joe Huszti, the twenty-nine-year-old musical director of the Bakersfield College choir, opened an invitation to audition for the Eisteddfod competition. Within months after sending them our audition tape we received our acceptance to compete. The only thing that stood in our way was the \$54,000.00 needed to pay for our six-week, ten-country tour.

Lack of money and support delayed our plans to compete in the 1964 festival. But when the community understood how determined we were to fulfill our dream and the effort we were making to see that it happened, the private and corporate sectors of the Bakersfield community helped us reach our financial goal.

Our first week in Europe was spent in Ireland and England. Many of us ended up with severe colds or stomach flu due to the long flight, lack of sleep, jet lag, and especially the change in climate. This is how we entered the competition. Even Mr. Huszti was skeptical that we would finish any higher than fifth or sixth place. He also felt that singing second on the program of fifteen choirs put us at a big disadvantage as everyone would be compared to us.

The competition was held in a canvas auditorium shaped like a cross. Hundreds of flower arrangements were freshened each morning before the competitors arrived. Daily crowds of 40,000 jammed the grounds. 10,000 attended our Friday performance.

Contestants were required to sing three songs. The first two songs, "Tenebrae Factae Sunt" (Tomas Luis de Victoria, 1535-1611) and "In Pride of May" (Thomas Weelkes, 1575-1623) were performed by all mixed-choirs. The third song was a song of choice, but had to be an original composition by a composer of the choir's native country. Mr. Huszti's selection was "Christ is Arisen" (Lenel). Our first two songs went beautifully although Mr. Huszti felt that our last song went the best. Many of us disagreed because we had tried too hard and went slightly sharp in pitch, probably due to a rush of adrenaline.

We listened to the many choirs that followed and anxiously endured the adjudicator's comments before our scores were read. One adjudicator, Sir Thomas Armstrong, said, "They at once thrilled us and engaged our sympathy." Another adjudicator said that the choir "gave the feeling that behind the sound of their music was the sound of a human heart." When scores were announced we added them up in our heads: song one, eighty-nine points; song two, eighty-nine points; and song three, eighty-five points! Excitement rushed through the crowd. But for whom?

"Did we win? Did we win?" one of the girls screamed in confusion.

To confirm the scores we

had to go outside to read the results board. We were even more confused as the numbers were listed across: "1-2;" then below it, "2-15," etc. No one understood. Finally it was explained to us that the "1-2" meant that the first place choir sang second on the program. The second-place choir, the Mariakören singers from Västerås, Sweden, sang fifteenth.

The final tally of points showed that we had won the grand prize by a single point.

BBC television suddenly converged on us. They wanted an interview with Mr. Huszti. We were instant celebrities. Children asked us for autographs and asked questions like, "Does the stagecoach still go from California to Arizona?" or "How many pennies does it take to make a quarter?" Photographers were everywhere and when it was learned that Laurel and I were on our honeymoon with fifty-two others our photo appeared on the front page of *Western Mail*, the national newspaper of Wales.

This was an enormous accomplishment. We were the first choir in the Western Hemisphere to win this prized award. It produced worldwide recognition for the community of Bakersfield and for each of us. Many additional honors were bestowed on us in the days that followed. As a result of winning this coveted trophy we were invited to sing in a private audience for Pope Paul VI. We were also invited to perform for the President of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson, in the Rose Garden of the White House.

Other than the wonderful memories of the 1965

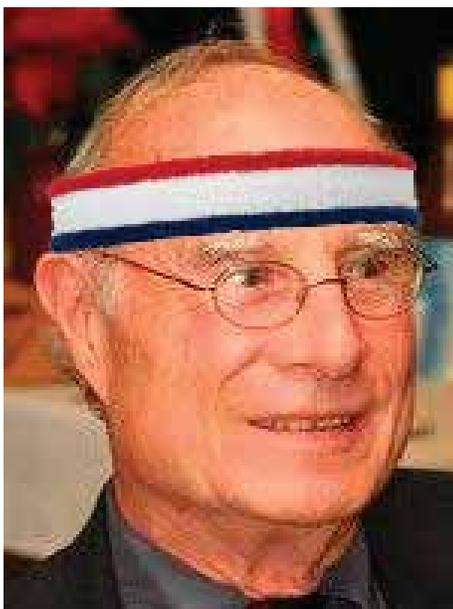
Bakersfield College Choir the only physical evidence of this accomplishment is the trophy itself, with its inscribed quotation by T. Gwynn Jones: "Blessed is a world that sings. Gentle are its songs."

Today the winner of the mixed-choir competition is referred to as the "Choir of the World." On that day in Wales that's what we were. ☺



## Volunteer

Roxanne Starbuck is our newest volunteer! She has undertaken the job of developing a computer framework for organizing, filing, identifying, and recording photographs in our large collection. This is a huge project and we are grateful for both her expertise and interest. For forty years Roxanne served as a Library Services Specialist at Cal State Bakersfield so she brings a wealth of experience to the task. An alumna of BC, Roxanne participated in BC theater productions in 1968-69 before finishing a degree at the University of Redlands. She enjoys playing the flute recreationally, traveling, and attending the theater. Her grandmother, Katheryn Underwood, worked at the BC book store. ☺



“Fit,” a snappy little word. One that can be said with crisp assurance when people ask us if we exercise and are in shape, “You bet, I’m fit!” Stops all questions and replies. Evokes approving smiles and knowing nods. Today, especially in the senior discount stage of life, it’s not enough to be merely healthy, sleep well, keep up with current events, stream movies, eat low fatish foods...one must be fit. Not throw a fit or be a good fit, but be fit. Otherwise, suffer the slings and arrows of being unfit, the humiliating, disdainful stares reserved for those who wear clothes with wine stains.

So how do we know if we’re fit? Is this an existential situation when we choose, make a leap of faith like deciding to eat or not to eat a second wedge of pecan pie? No, being fit is clear, can be quantified, counted, and monitored like brushing our teeth after each meal. Simply put, to be fit is to do 10,000 steps a day at a minimum, to be uber fit we must exceed this, maybe 20,000 steps a day. A clear goal, scientifically established, absolutely Newtonian in its truth. One that cannot be fudged

# TO BE OR NOT TO BE... *Fit!*

By Dr. Jack Hernandez

or evaded. Add to this a time factor of at least 150 minutes of stepping per day and all is known about being fit.

Of course there are different kinds of steps—the dawdle, the saunter, the stride, the lope, the goose step—but absent any scientific date on their relation to being fit, I assume that whatever our step, except for being out of step, we need at least 10,000 a day. But how to keep track of our steps? Ah, that is the question. Well, older technology like a pedometer might work, but that’s like using a flip phone. Instead we can use the latest step technology, the Fitbit, a wristband that can synch your data to your smart phone, allow you to keep detailed records, set goals, and share your information with friends and family. Not only that, it can calculate the distance stepped, calories burned, even diet and sleep data, including the number of lustful dreams. In short, to be fit is to get digital and connected.

Life changing, that’s what 10,000 steps a day are say some with the fervor of religious converts, and Fitbit is their sacred text on the journey to be fit. During the day every step counts, as I note in the morning as I walk from my car to Starbucks for coffee and a chocolate chip scone, when I walk from my car to Sequoia Sandwich Co., where I write, for coffee and an oatmeal-raisin cookie, and at night when I walk to the kitchen for a second glass of wine. Walk, walk, walk, count, count, count. Even compete, yes, compete with friends for

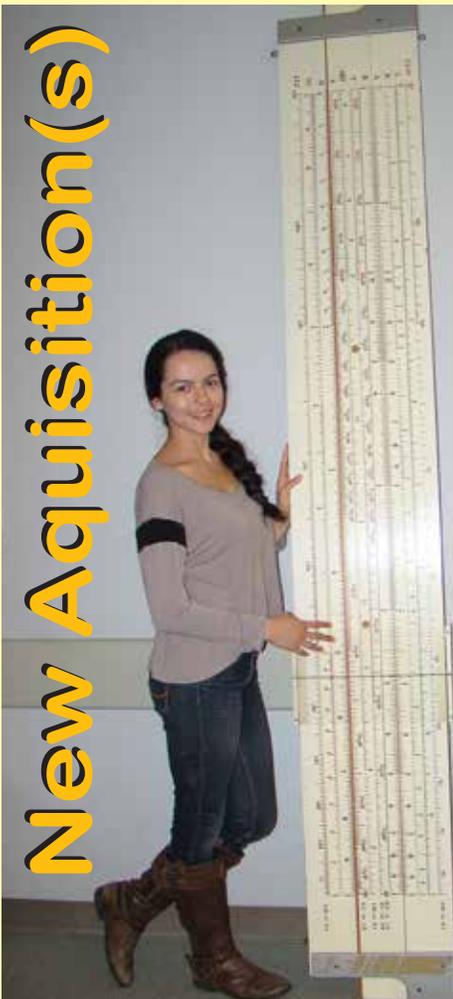
the daily laurel of the most steps, and whoever loses buys the winner a toasted kale and tofu sandwich at the Vigorous Veggie Café. Gluten free, too.

Fit. Yes, I’m getting there, feeling it in every crevice of my retired being. Today as I strode I envisioned people looking at me differently, like I’m a Marvel hero, Captain Jack, saving the Medicare unfit. But then I thought, “Is this a fib?” Is being fit a fib? When Socrates tells us to know ourselves, I don’t think he means to count our daily steps. To be fit is to be fit for what? Walking 10,000 steps a day is walking to where? To be or not to be fit is not the question. Fitbit is not the answer. The ultimate question of how to live a good and meaningful life still confronts us.

Drat that philosophy, I thought as I reached my 10,000th step. ☹



## New Acquisition(s)



Jadine Gonzalez is our newest student worker. She was a cheerleader at Wasco High School from which she graduated in 2013. Jadine is a sophomore in Business Administration working toward a position as an Office Assistant. She is getting good practice at those skills in the Archives. Welcome Jadine!

The 8 foot working slide rule is a recent acquisition. Mike Daniels of the Physical Science department donated it. The slide rule spent many years hanging in the front of a BC chemistry lab so the teacher could demonstrate the use of a slide rule to the students, each of whom had a small version of this. We would like to find a bare wall on campus where this could be hung and students could actually manipulate this pre-calculator marvel. ☺



## From Our Readers

Connie Cook Shaw sent a copy of an oral history report written by her 11 year old granddaughter Kayla Shaw after an interview. Here are some excerpts:

*“Connie loved the time she spent at Bakersfield Junior College . . . Her wedding was a time of her life she’ll never forget . . . Bob Shaw and Connie dated for four and a half years before they finally married on September 30th, 1967, when Connie was nineteen years old! Bob and Connie were married in Las Vegas at Chapel of the Bells. The next day, Connie was leading the cheerleaders in the Bakersfield College football game and there was an announcement informing the students of their marriage, and students congratulated them on their marriage, screaming and yelling in the stands. Their marriage is extraordinary.”* ☺

## Story by Bob Covey



# Big Man on Campus

Bill Finch, San Joaquin Valley born in Coalinga on September 16, 1925, moved with his family to Bakersfield in 1926. He grew up playing all sports and loved to swim and dive. He attended local schools, including Kern County Union High School, from 1939 to 1943, playing football and basketball. He was also on the school's first water polo team in 1941. In those years the high school water polo players were bused to Jefferson Park pool for practices. About those cold water practices, Bill said, "We froze our butts off."

At "Old K.C." Finch was named "Big Man on Campus" and graduated in June of 1943 as World War II was raging. On September 8, 1943, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and volunteered for Submarine Service, serving on four different "boats" in the South Pacific. In 1944 Finch had only one opportunity to compete in a swimming and diving meet: the "U.S. Navy's Far West Championships." He won the diving competition.

With the war over, Bill was

released from the Navy on April 5, 1946, and he returned to Bakersfield. In the fall he enrolled in the Junior College, still on the high school campus, and he waited for the start of the 1947 swimming and diving team coached by former Olympian Wallace Burtrand. For practices the Renegades were bused to the South Union Avenue Plunge that everyone just called the "Plunge." The pool was larger than the Jefferson Park pool and was originally a concreted-over reservoir made into a swimming pool. A twenty-five foot diving platform and a three-meter diving board had been added which suited Bill Finch just fine.

With Richard "Dick" Harkins coaching the 1948 B.J.C. swimming team, Bill Finch joined as a freshman, and his presence was important in helping the Renegades to a second place team finish at the 1948 Metropolitan Conference Swimming and Diving Championships. Led by the high placing Finch, the Renegades also placed fifth at the 1948

National J.C. Swimming and Diving Championships. (1947 and 1948 Raconteurs)

The swimming team of 1949 was coached by Cliff Chisholm, and the Renegades trained again at the "Plunge" on South Union. Diver Bill Finch and swimmer Hollis Shannon led the team during that season. Both men placed second in their events at the 1st California Swimming and Diving Meet held at Fullerton College, Finch in diving and Shannon in the 220 and 440-Freestyle races.

For the 1949-1950 and 1950-1951 school years, Bill Finch used his G.I. Bill at Bakersfield College to complete his Associate of Arts Degree and take every academic course he could to be better prepared for San Jose State. In the fall of 1951, he transferred to San Jose State College and immediately became a leader on the swimming and water polo squads. At the 1952 N.C.A.A. Swimming and Diving Championships he placed 9th in diving and returned to San Jose as the team's only N.C.A.A. All-American in the sport. In water polo Finch led the Spartans as the elected Team Captain in all of his three years on the team (1952, 1953, and 1954). In 1954 he was twenty-nine years old, a World War II veteran, and had earned, with his hard work, all the respect he received. In 1953, Bill Finch was inducted into the San Jose State College Spartans Athletics Hall of Fame along with another former Bakersfield College athlete, 1952 National Collegiate pole vault champion, Bill Priddy.

After graduating from San Jose State in 1954 with both B.A. and master's degrees, he taught and coached at James Lick High School in San Jose

for four years. In 1957 he was hired by the Kern Joint Union High School and Junior College District to teach physical education and coach at North Bakersfield High School. In the spring of 1960 the Bakersfield College Athletic Director Gil Bishop offered him a job to teach and coach gymnastics while Herb Loken was getting his master's degree. While teaching P.E. classes one day in 1961, Bill walked out to the swimming pool and offered his diving expertise to swimming coach Jim Turner. It was the start of a twenty-nine year coaching relationship with Turner that produced the best B.C. swimmers and divers in the school's history. It was also the first time that two former All-American athletes--Turner a University of California football player and Finch a San Jose State diver-- coached the same B.C. teams.

Yet the energetic Bill Finch wanted to do more. When Gil Bishop in 1963 asked him to be the announcer for Renegade home basketball games, he announced the games for the next seventeen years. Once when the game clock operator failed to appear, Finch also did that as well. If the score keeper failed to show, Finch did that too. When someone asked Bill why he did all that, his answer was, "I needed the money, and I enjoyed the work".

The BC teams never won a Metropolitan Conference team championship, but many of the individuals did. After all, this was the conference dominated by Long Beach, Santa Monica, and L.A. Valley, with swimmers and divers prepping to be Olympians as Trojans or Bruins.

Some of these young men became "J.C. All-Americans," and two of their best were Bob Boyer

and Jeff Smith. Of the women, diver Barbara Door (1976 to 1979) was particularly good. She twice earned "J.C. All-American" honors at two State Meets and she once said of her coach, Bill Finch, "He at first bothered me by being gruff, but he was a really good coach."

In the spring semester of 2011, Bill Finch was honored at the B.C. Track & Field and Cross Country Hall of Fame Dinner with the Bakersfield College Foundation's "Life-Time of Service to B.C. Athletics" award. The honor was most appropriate and greatly appreciated by the retired Renegade coach.

Bill Finch passed away on June 5, 2014. ☹

## READERS REPLY

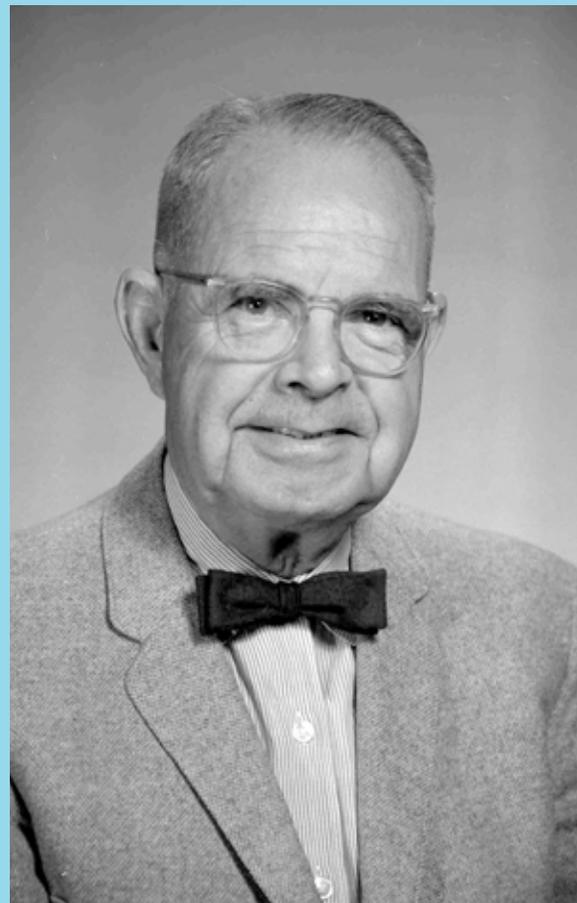
When I received the Fall BC Archives Newsletter it brought back such fond memories that I felt compelled to write a few words about my favorite instructor ever, Wylie Jones. There are often interesting articles but this one struck my heart.

Wylie Jones was in a class by himself. He was intimidating, challenging and (at least to me) cute and cuddly. He expected much from his students – in fact he didn't *expect*, he demanded! I always told people that you did not miss his class unless you could bring in a death certificate to explain why you were not there. He said that he was preparing us for working in the corporate world and you did not miss work or arrive late if you wanted to succeed.

I went on to major in Accounting and I was able to "float" through those classes at the top of the class with little effort because of what I learned from that little round Bulldog. One of the things about him that I will always remember was his knowledge of history and dates. He was teaching us how to calculate interest and would have us pick any date. He could tell us something interesting that happened on that month and day no matter what we chose.

I won the Bank of America award for BC and the presentation was at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles. Wylie and May Louise drove me to the presentation in their big Cadillac. This is just one indication of how dedicated and truly kind he was. This man was the true picture of what a teacher should be and I credit him with every success I have had in life. ☹

~Judy Robinson Cooke,  
Class of 1961



December 25, 2014

Hello Jerry Ludeke,

The BC Fall 2014 "Archives Newsletter" caught our interest naming individuals important to our personal/professional history (and our marriage) -- Ralph Prator, Ed Simonsen, Gil Bishop, John Collins, Paul Gordon, Wylie Jones, and Burns Finlinson. It is Dr. Jack's article titled "fortune" that motivated me to write. I'll borrow my title from his comments -- "That Chance Encounter." He wrote of incidents of happenstance, and that truly fit my encounter with BC ---two chance encounters that have guided my life since 1957 and cause me to believe in coincidences or acts of God.

### The Chance Encounter

In 1957, I was teaching English and journalism at La Habra High School and creative writing part time at Fullerton Junior College. For Christmas, I went to Bakersfield to visit my widowed mother. After the holiday, she told me about the beautiful new campus at Bakersfield College and suggested I tour it. It was 2 p.m., December 27-- Between Christmas and New Year's Day. No classes, the college was empty of people, residence halls were closed. I walked about marveling at the new campus and the courage it took to choose the bright colors on the library when I noticed a man walking from the Student Center. The chance encounter: We greeted one another and began talking. I asked questions about the college and he asked questions about me. After a few moments, he suggested we go to his office. That man turned out to be the BC President, Dr. Ralph Prator. He next asked me to complete an application for a possible English and journalism faculty position for the coming 1958-1959 academic year. The rest is history.

Dr. Prator left BC soon after that day to become the founding president of what is now Cal State Northridge.

Two months later, I received a letter from Dr. Edward Simonsen, the newly appointed president, asking me to meet him in Los Angeles for an interview. Dr. Prator had recommended me for a faculty position. And then came Si...A contract offer followed.

The next chance encounter occurred the day I arrived for the opening faculty meetings. Walking across the staff parking lot, I saw an attractive red-headed, young woman exiting her car and spilling a load of clothing and a wet bathing suit. I rushed to assist and introduce myself. She was Mary Lou Miller, director of the new BC residence halls and part time English instructor. That chance encounter led to a campus romance and our marriage in June, 1959. Subsequently, we have led full lives and careers. So far, we have four adult children, eight grandchildren, and four great grandkids. Additionally, we now enjoy an active retirement.

Thank you BC!

Dick Jones

P.S. Mary Lou sends her best greetings!



Dick Jones and Mary Lou Miller faculty photo from 1959 Raconteur

# The Bakersfield College Senior Adult Program

by Charles R Carlson, PhD.



Here's a little history about BC that many really do not know. When I came to BC in 1971 as Assistant Dean for Evening Division (we had a day Division and a night Division at that time), I was working on a Ph.D. at USC in Higher Education and Gerontology. I received the degree in 1972 including a dissertation that caused much comment and interest. The dissertation was on the topic of whether senior adults could really "learn" or not. Most people believed that "you can't teach an old dog new tricks." It was the first such dissertation study in the United States.

My studies and research were coordinated with the CCC Continuing Education Association and the AARP. The results indicated that seniors could indeed learn and that they would benefit from educational programs at colleges and universities. This caused much

interest at the CA Commission on Aging and the CCC Board of Governors. If this was true, then much thought was required about what to do about it. What did it mean if seniors could still learn and be kept engaged in society through learning?

The Commission on Aging (CA Dept of Aging) then asked me and BC to accept a grant to validate the findings of my research. We did that (thank you Dr. Collins) and by 1975 we had a significant Senior Adult educational program in operation and offered classes throughout greater Bakersfield. We presented a number of workshops for other community colleges throughout the state so they could establish their own programs. The Department of Aging also then asked us to accept a grant to establish the Senior Adult Information and Referral Program for Kern County. We did that too

and developed that outreach program and finally turned it over to the Kern County Department of Aging in the mid 80's.

The AARP, CA Department of Aging, CCC Board of Governors and the American Society on Aging (ASA) all got excited about colleges providing classes for seniors. The AARP and the ASA promoted workshops throughout the United States to interest colleges and universities in providing educational programs for seniors. (I was fortunate to be able to travel to many areas throughout the US.) The Board of Governors also then authorized the offering of senior classes throughout California with state funding.

Today, with some limitations because of the financial crisis, senior programs are offered at community colleges and universities throughout the United States. ☺

## From Our Readers



(left front) Georgene Bihlman  
and (right front) Pete McKay.

Dear Jerry,

Thanks for the card. I do have something in response to your suggestion about the Ski Club.

My old buddy Bob Covey did have something to say about Georgene Bihlman and how she could never get anyone to go up to the cornice at Mammoth with her. I swear that I did ONCE go up with her.

This was before there were any lifts going to the 11,000-ft summit. We carried our skis trudging up using steps kicked in the snow by skiers. At the top we tossed our skis over the cornice and scrambled up the remaining couple of feet. We put on our skis. Georgene went first, launching herself off the cornice in the direction of Carson City and disappearing from view. I took time for contemplation which prompted a yell from below: "What's the matter, McKay, you scared?"

I side-stepped over the edge and joined Georgene for a nice, long run back down to Main Lodge. That night we had steak and lobster at The Tavern.

Pete McKay

# BAKERSFIELD COLLEGE

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## *People We Will Miss*

**ELAINE BIERLEIN** served on the Levan Institute for Lifelong Learning committee at Bakersfield College.

**BRETT HENRY** spent many years as a theater technician at BC.

**SYBIL HILTON** started teaching at East Bakersfield High School and became a long time coach and professor at Bakersfield College. She was the petite coach with a big smile reflecting her zest for life.

**HAZEL JOHNSON**, wife of Athletic Director and coach Walt Johnson, was active in Faculty Wives Club and worked as a clerk in the Counseling Department .

**PAT LEE** retired in 1993, having taught Chemistry 2A creatively and rigorously for many years. Fondly nicknamed the Dragon Lady by students (she had a dragon on her office door), they remember practical chemistry experiments, such as making jerky and pickling olives.

**JAMES MOORE** was hired as the BC Library Learning Center Manager in 1968 and retired from BC in 1989.

**ROSS THORNTON** at 102 was the oldest living BC athlete. He was named a Junior College All Valley Center in 1933. Ross was also a recipient of one of the 100 BC Centennial Stars.

**ELIZABET (Caroline Davis) WEBBER** retired in 2005 having taught Anthropology for 39 years. She had the honor of introducing Dr. Leakey when he spoke at BC.

Readers Please Note: Send information about former BC people to [bcarchives@bakersfieldcollege.edu](mailto:bcarchives@bakersfieldcollege.edu)



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