

Twenty-Seven IFs in Life on My Path to Becoming a Teacher

A New Town - Same Two Goals

A New Two-Acres

My mother was disappointed that we were leaving Fresno. She and my father had spent hours and hours with the architect designing our new home and even more hours planting every tree and bush on that vacant lot. Now, all of their work was to be left behind.

To make the move less painful for my mother, my father devoted his off-hours during his weeks in Burlingame to searching for a vacant two-acre lot within commuting distance from San Francisco, where our Fresno home could be built again.

Two of my father's three brothers still lived near their family home. One brother lived in San Mateo, a short distance from his parent's house. The other brother married into wealth, and his only job was managing his wife's money. The moneyed brother and his wife's primary residence was in San Francisco. They also had a summer residence in Atherton, a 30-mile drive from San Francisco. My uncle informed my father that there was a vacant two-acre lot on the corner just one street away from their home in Atherton. Our Fresno lot had also been a corner lot.

With my mother's approval, my father purchased the lot, and the blueprints for our Fresno home, including the swimming pool, found their way to Atherton. This time, though, the tripling of my father's salary meant he and my mother could hire a professional landscaper to do all that vacant lot planting for us.

Even Nearer

Our first Fresno home had been near everything. Our second Fresno home had been near nothing. Our Atherton home was even nearer to some things than our first Fresno home.

Our new home was practically next to Menlo Atherton High School, the school my brother Paul and I would be attending. The high school had roads on three of its four sides. Fire trucks or other emergency vehicles could access the front and sides of the school from these three roads. The back of the school was surrounded by houses, with no roads between any of these houses that would permit emergency access. Along the back edge of our lot was a narrow fire road. This road provided fire trucks and emergency vehicles access to the back of the high school.

Emergency vehicles could turn onto the fire road, pass by our house on the corner and the house next to us, and be at the school's football field with a straight path to the school's back buildings. The school's football

field was just one house away from us. To get to school, all I had to do was walk out our back gate, past our neighbor's backyard, and walk on the fire road for the length of the football field to get to the school's main buildings.

I took advantage of my home's close proximity to the school by asking my counselor each year to schedule my P.E. class just before lunch so that when the P.E. period was over, I could simply walk across the football field and be home for lunch. The difference between walking home for lunch from P.E. as opposed to a regular class was that once we had showered, we had to stand around and wait for the bell to ring before we could walk towards the school's main buildings. Since I was going home for lunch and not returning to the school buildings, I could leave once I had showered without waiting for the bell to ring.

Two Goals Still Intact and a New Neighbor

My goals of playing football and attending Stanford remained unchanged. Coincidentally, our neighbors on the other side of the fire road were Chuck Taylor, his wife, and three children. Chuck Taylor was, at that point, Stanford's Varsity Football Coach.

Chuck and his family were great neighbors. Chuck would occasionally join my father, my brothers, and me for our football games, which we would now play on the M-A football field. I would also occasionally babysit his and his wife Margaret's children. And, since our home had a pool and theirs did not, coming over for an occasional swim was an easy thing for them to do.