

## **Twenty-Seven IFs in Life on My Path to Becoming a Teacher Junior Year – One Big IF and One Goal Gone**

### **Finally, an End**



Football was a two-way sport back then. There were only one or two substitutions allowed each play, including when the ball changed hands. Every player on offense played defense as well. Centers' numbers were all 50's, Guards were 60's, Tackles were 70's, and Ends were 80's. In the second row from the top are the numbers 89, 71, 73, and then me at 84. As I expected, the advantage my Sophomore teammates had in picking their positions last year had disappeared now that we were on the Varsity. Now I had the chance to prove that I was meant to be an End.

Before our first game of the season, our coaches announced who had made the first, second, and third-string teams. These three strings would be our traveling squad for that first game. The Ends announced for the first and second strings were all Seniors. The two Ends named to the third string were both Juniors, Charley Dahl and me. I was now not just an End, I was one of the top two Junior Ends on the team.

### **An Unnecessary Injury**

The day before our first game, the traveling squad had a no-pads, no-contact scrimmage to go over our plays. One play we were practicing was called an "Automatic." If our quarterback saw the other team's defense lined up in a formation that left them particularly vulnerable, he would call out a code word, which meant we would not be running the play called in the huddle. We would run the Automatic play instead.

For this drill, my third-string squad played offense, while the first-string played defense. Our quarterback called the code word for the Automatic, which meant that when the ball was snapped, I was to run diagonally through the secondary, and the quarterback would pass me the ball.

The ball was off target, so I had to stretch low and forward to catch it. Just as I caught the ball, the first-string fullback, now playing his

defensive safety position, kneed my outstretched body in the ribs with as much force as he would have used if we were in the midst of a full-contact scrimmage. This unexpected and unnecessary knee to my ribs knocked the wind out of me. It also gave me what the doctor's x-ray revealed later that day was a rib cartilage fracture.

What does a rib cartilage fracture feel like? Pain when doing anything more than slow walking. Pain when breathing that gets worse while breathing deeply. Pain while coughing or sneezing. Pain when you press or lie on the injured area. What does a rib cartilage fracture mean? No playing football for at least six weeks.

### **Adding Insult to Injury**

On the very first day that I returned to practice, the head coach announced to the whole team that anyone who had not yet suited up for a game was to go over to where the Frosh-Soph team was working out and join them for their practice. I don't know how many other Varsity players were sent over to workout with the Frosh-Soph team. I really didn't care. I found it insulting that I was not even given a single day to re-earn my End position.

### **An Almost Second Chance**

Before the next-to-the-last game of the season, twelve Seniors were abruptly kicked off the Varsity team because they had all been active participants in a major drinking party. As a result, my time with the Frosh-Soph team came to an end. Unfortunately for me, none of the Senior Ends who were above me at my position were among the kicked-off twelve. Even so, at least I was practicing with the varsity team.

My practicing time with the Varsity was once again cut short. The team did so poorly without the missing twelve that the coaches decided to forfeit the last game and end Varsity practices a week early.

### **Stanford Shopping Center**

Stanford University is often referred to locally as "The Farm." That is because Leland and Jane Stanford established it on their Palo Alto stock farm. The Farm's size was about 8,200 acres. The Stanfords stipulated at the University's founding that none of the Stanford land they conveyed to the University could ever be sold.

In the early 1950s, legal minds at the University decided that leasing land was not the same as selling it. Through the use of ninety-nine-year leases, Stanford land could be made available for commercial development, with an option for an extension when the lease was up. The Stanford Shopping Center was an early result of the creation of these ninety-nine-year leases.

In 1954, excavators broke ground on what was once Leland Stanford's vineyards, and construction began on nine buildings that were to be the homes of forty-five commercial businesses. The Roos Brothers Clothing Store was one of the Shopping Center's first retail outlets. It opened its doors in September 1955.

### **A Part-Time Job I Kept Doing**

My previous summer's job had not worked out. However, Christmas season was coming up, and I still had car-buying ambitions. Once again, I used my father's assistance in seeking employment. My father's contact this time was the Roos Brothers Store management. Roos Brothers had four clothing departments: Mens, Womens, Girls and, of course, Boys. With my father's introduction, I applied to work in the Boy's Department of the newly opened Roos Brothers Store.

I worked at Roos Brothers the Christmas seasons of 1955, 1956 and 1957. I also worked for Roos Brothers in the Summers of 1956 and 1957. In 1957, the store's name changed to Roos-Atkins. Everything but the name remained the same.

[Chapter 4 - Working With Children - 1955 through 1962](#) outlines my history of working with children. With only one exception, every job I held between 1955 and 1964 involved my interacting with children. When I was a Junior in high school, I had not the slightest idea what I wanted to do with my life. Without my knowing it, though, I was inadvertently surrounding myself with experiences with the young people around which my eventual career would be built.

### **Backstroke-Breaststroke-Butterfly-Freestyle**

The swimming season added a new stroke to the medley relay. The relay now used the new butterfly stroke that I had learned to swim quite well the previous Summer. Our four-man team consisted of Howie Anawalt at backstroke, Keith Holleuffer at breaststroke, me at butterfly and Andy Schwarz anchoring at freestyle.

The old butterfly stroke had been split in two. There was the butterfly with its dolphin kick and the breaststroke with its frog-kick. The breaststroke rule was that you could not raise your arms above the water's surface. In this first year, the rule was interpreted to mean that the breaststroke swimmers could simply swim underwater for the whole race. Not just the arms, no part of the swimmer's body would be above water, not even the swimmer's head.

This interpretation made the medley relay team races odd to watch. Backstroke first, then the breaststroke swimmers would dive in and

swim their 50 yards completely underwater. People watching from the stands often couldn't even see the swimmers. Then, the butterfly and freestyle swimmers would appear quite visibly on the surface and make the race watchable again.

The next year, a rule for breaststroke was added that said the swimmer's head had to continually break the water's surface. With that rule added, people could now actually see the breaststroke leg of the race.

### **Swimming – Still Second Best in the League**



Pictured above are my teammates and me. Where are my sweatpants? In M-A's second year of swimming competition, the Varsity team was still the second-best team in the league. Palo Alto High School was still number one.

Our relay team was undefeated. Howie was really good at backstroke. Keith was only fair at breaststroke, but he was still the best breaststroke swimmer on our team. Keith was all-league in Varsity Water Polo his Sophomore, Junior, and Senior years. However, his guard position on the team did not require swimming speed. Keith rarely finished ahead of any other team's breaststroke swimmer, which meant I would frequently start my butterfly leg behind the competition's butterfly swimmer. Every time but one, I gave Andy a lead he never lost.

Race after race, I repeatedly asked my coach for my relay time split. However, at the end of each race, he had a new excuse for why he hadn't timed me. At the end-of-season league championship meet, I made him absolutely promise to tell me my split for this final race. And he absolutely promised that he would.

This last race was the only race all season that Howie was not doing the backstroke leg. Since our team had won every other race all season by comfortable margins, our coach decided to use Howie in another event to pick up some extra points. For this final race, the swimmer substituting for Howie came in dead last. He apologized to Andy and me when he got out of the pool, saying he got a cramp in his leg when he pushed off the wall at his 25-yard turn. Keith was doing his best to make up ground, but the butterflyer for our archrival Palo Alto was nearly halfway down the pool before Keith touched the wall.

As I was waiting for Keith to touch, I once again said to my coach, “Get my split!” By the time I finished my 50 fly, I was just an arm’s length behind the Palo Alto swimmer and ahead of everybody else. This was the only time all season I had not given Andy a lead when he left the starting block. It didn’t matter. Andy was the fastest freestyler in the pool right then, and we ended up as PAL Champs.

I asked my coach for my promised split. He said he forgot to take it because the race was too exciting. After that season, my coach retired and was replaced by someone who never took anybody’s splits. In two years without a loss in the 50 fly, I was never once told how fast I had been swimming.

### **What I Learned About Myself**

I was always a good student in school. Always good grades. Always good behavior. My fifth-grade teacher at Heaton Elementary School told my parents at parent conference time that she wished I would get into trouble at least once in a while.

What I learned about myself during my time in high school was that behaving like I was supposed to was not my only way of reacting. I was behaving the way I was supposed to because I never had a reason not to. What I learned about me that I didn’t know was that I don’t care who you are, if you don’t treat me right, I won’t behave the way you want me to. You can’t make me. And the “you can’t make me” part of who I am will show its biggest effect on my life in [Chapter 9 - The Yearly History of a Change in Plans](#).

### **Sophomore Spanish**

I had very much been looking forward to taking Spanish in high school. My brother Paul and I would occasionally caddie for my father and his friends at the Sunnyside Country Club in Fresno to pick up a little extra cash. We would just caddie the first nine holes and then take off for a swim. Regular caddies then took our places.

For our nine-hole tours of duty, the regular caddies working alongside us always treated us well. All of them spoke both Spanish and English. We often asked them for Spanish lessons, and they taught us many phrases we could use. They even went so far as to teach us how to swear in Spanish. I could confirm the accuracy of the traditional phrases I was learning. However, there was not anyone I could ask to confirm the swear words I was learning.

My Cousin Jean had been taking Spanish in San Bernardino since she was in eighth-grade. I was really looking forward to having conversations in Spanish with her. Taking a subject in school I really had a use for was going to be great.

### **Giving Me Something to Work Up To?**

We received report cards every six weeks. The three six-week grades were then combined to become our grade for that semester. During my first six weeks in Spanish, I earned a B. In each of the next two six-week periods, I earned A's. One B and two A's equals an A grade for the semester. Simple arithmetic.

At the end of the semester, Mr. Fellows, my Spanish teacher, stopped me in the hall outside our class and told me that even though I had earned an A for the semester, he was going to give me a B. He was a faculty advisor for the student publication Oak Leaves, and he didn't like my brother Paul's attitude there.

He, my Spanish teacher, did not want me ending up like my brother Paul, so he was going to give me something to work up to. He was going to give me a B now, so I could have my goal be working up to an A. If one wonders why I had such a low opinion of teachers before I decided to become one, Mr. Fellows would be one of my best examples.

Why did I need motivation to work up to an A grade? I had just earned one and Mr. Fellows had just taken it away from me. Now, if I earned an A, he could say it was because he had motivated me to do so. My response to this was to promise myself I would never earn an A in Mr. Fellows class.

When I was assigned to Mr. Fellows class again for Spanish II my Junior year, I asked my counselor to please put me in the other Spanish teacher's class instead. My counselor said it was not permissible for students to pick the teachers they wanted. So, I kept on earning B's in that second year and did not take the Spanish III class for Seniors.

### **Mr. Dolmatz and His Senior Physics Class**

Mr. Dolmatz, the teacher in my Physics class, was in his very first year of teaching at M-A. His lessons were boring, and all the classes he taught were famous among his students for being out of control.

At the end of the first semester Mr. Dolmatz stopped me as I was leaving class. He showed me the cumulative scores he was using to assign our semester grades. He pointed to one score he said was mine. He said this score is right between the B's and the C's. It could go either way. He said, "What should I do?" My answer was: If you give me a B, I'll stop everyone around me from messing up in class and get them to start paying attention to your lectures. When I received my report card, I could see that he had chosen to give me a C.

He could have just given me the C without meeting with me first. I would not have thought anything of it. A single C in my entire high school career was hardly the end of the world. I wondered what motivated him to meet with me to let me know the C he gave me was deliberate. I figured it was a little power trip that gave him pleasure. That was the choice he made.

My choice was to put my Physics textbook in my locker and never take it out again for the rest of the year. My desk was in the front row. For the entire second semester, I turned my back to Mr. Dolmatz and played "Battleships" with the boy sitting right behind me. For homework, Mr. Dolmatz always gave us the answers to half the problems. I would turn the answers in and write: "Work done on separate paper." I would just make things up for the problems for which no answers were provided. The same was true for tests he gave in class. I would just make things up for answers.

There was a policy in school that anyone on an athletic team who was failing in two or more subjects would be declared ineligible to compete until he brought his grades up. The same policy stated that a poor citizenship mark in a single class would make the athlete ineligible. Mr. Dolmatz then, of course, gave me a poor citizenship score to make me ineligible for swimming. I met with the Dean of Boys and pointed out that the policy was unfair. It took two low academic failures to make a person ineligible but only one poor citizenship mark. In fairness, the requirement should be for two low marks in citizenship, as well. Requiring only one low mark gave individual teachers too much vindictive power. The rule was changed. Bad citizenship scores in two classes were now required to make a person ineligible. So, I kept on swimming, and I kept on playing Battleships.

I am sure I had the lowest F in all of Mr. Dolmatz's classes. I ended up with a D minus instead. It turned out that teachers had to notify the office by a certain date if they were going to give a failing semester grade to a graduating Senior. Apparently, Mr. Dolmatz didn't think a Stanford-bound Senior like me would really let himself fail.

### **Sophomore-Senior-Junior and One Less Goal**

In my Sophomore year, Mr. Fellows gave me a B to motivate me to earn an A. I was already motivated to earn A grades. Deciding not to earn an A in Spanish was not consistent with my goal of attending Stanford. But Mr. Fellows did not treat me right, so I would not behave the way he wanted me to, even if that way would have benefited me.

In my Senior year, Mr. Dolmatz chose to let me know he could give me either a B or a C. He could have simply given me the C without briefing me on the decision he was making. He chose instead to let me know how deliberate his choice was. I don't know what reaction Mr. Dolmatz expected from me, but I know he didn't anticipate my decision to flat-out flunk his class while sitting in the front row playing Battleships nearly every day. Failing his class was not in my best interest, but I didn't care. I would act the way I wanted, not the way he might have wanted me to.

One example Sophomore year. One example Senior year. One example Junior year, as well. Mr. Costello was the Varsity coach who had picked me as one of the top two Junior Ends. He was also the same person who, on the first day of my return to practice after recovering from my rib injury, sent me off to workout with the Frosh-Soph team. He chose not to let me show him again why he had picked me as a top End before my injury. I know he expected me to join the Varsity Football team again for my Senior year. I say I know this is what he expected because he expressed his disappointment when he learned I had gone out for Varsity Water Polo instead.

What I learned about myself in those three was if you don't treat me right, I won't behave the way you want me to, and you can't make me. In this case, not behaving the way Mr. Costello wanted me to meant I now had one less goal. How I was treated was more important to me than playing football for a Coach who had opted to treat me badly, so I gave up on my goal of playing End on any football team.

### **Andy, Howie, and Keith's Entries in My 1956 Yearbook**

Andy and Howie were graduating Seniors. Keith was a Junior like me.

Mr. Lorton - It has been fun knowing you all these years. Although by now you should realize that you should quit football and play that wonderful he-man sport of water polo. It was fun swimming on the same



relay team as you. I hope that you and your boys again capture the PAL with the relay. Keep up those grades. I'll see you at Stanford in a couple of years.

Andy Schwarz

Bob - To the greatest of the butterflyers. We had a good time together in P.E. and Swimming. It's been a blast. See you at Stanford. Good Luck!  
Howie Anawalt

Bob - You're really a rarity, but a good rarity and I hope that I can benefit from your vast store of knowledge next year as seniors even more.

Keith Holleuffer

Why are these entries here? To show that we were all friends in high school. Andy and Howie were Seniors heading off to Stanford. Keith and I were Juniors who would be heading off next year. We would all end up at the same college as fraternity brothers, as well. These three friends were each destined to play big roles in my life in the years to come.

### **One Big IF and One Goal Gone**

The one big IF of my Junior year was my being kneed in the ribs.

The five IFs of my Sophomore year had turned me into a much different swimmer than I would have been without them. However, swimming then was my springtime sport. My Fall was reserved for football.

The knee injury and its aftereffects caused me to abandon playing football and to consider myself a full-time swimmer. Nearly all my swimming friends also played water polo. As a full-time swimmer, I would join my swimming friend in my Senior year in playing water polo.

Without the kneed-in-the-ribs injury, I would have continued to play football in the Fall and been on the swim team in the Spring, as I had done in my Sophomore and Junior years. The switch from football to water polo would, in the future, end up causing me to drop out of law school on the first day of classes to become a teacher, inspire Mary to write her first book, and lead both Mary and me to become creators of the mathematics curriculum we then shared with other teachers. Future chapters will reveal this progression.