

Twenty-Seven IFs in Life on My Path to Becoming a Teacher Senior Year – The Best Year and More IFs Coming

Andy's Effect on Me

The Welfare Commissioner at Menlo Atherton High School was the equivalent of a Student Body President. Each class had its own set of officers elected by the members of that class. The one elected position the whole school voted on was that of Welfare Commissioner. That Commissioner presided over a fifty-nine-person Student-Senate that governed our school lives.

Andy Schwarz was our school's Welfare Commissioner during my Junior year. For whatever reason, despite his busy schedule running M-A's student government, participating in both water polo and swimming and keeping his grades up for Stanford admission, Andy had taken me under his wing. Andy and I only knew each other because we were both on our swim team's undefeated medley relay team. We had no classes together, and we certainly did not travel in the same circles. Even so, Andy kept finding the time to do things with just the two of us.

As an example, we would go out mugger-busting on a Friday night. "Mugger-busting" meant finding cars parked late in the evening on Lover's Lane and shining Andy's car's flood light on the lovers inside, disrupting whatever might or might not be taking place. Yes, we had Lover's Lanes back then. Ours was on Sand Hill Road in Menlo Park. That long, two-lane winding road to nowhere in particular is now a four-lane road, built when I was in college, to connect Highway 280 to the Stanford Shopping Center. Addison-Wesley, Mary's and my book publisher was soon to build its west coast branch on the new Sand Hill Road right next to Highway 280.

Bonnie Jane

Andy was now at Stanford, but his effect on my school life remained. Andy's girlfriend Bonnie Jane was now a Junior. The two of us had often been the three of us, as well. Andy was at Stanford, but Stanford was only five miles away, and Andy and Bonnie Jane were still a couple.

Throughout my Freshman, Sophomore, and Junior years, I was basically a social isolate. I walked to school, attended classes, walked home for lunch, walked back after, and then walked home again either at the end of classes or at the end of practice for whatever team I might be on. No school dances, no dates, no female friends. Just school and sports.

Andy began the process of drawing me into the school world outside of classes and sports. He left it up to Bonnie Jane to finish what he had started.

American Bandstand

As an example, American Bandstand, which first aired in 1952, was an extremely popular TV show during my high school years. Its main feature was its cast of local high school boys and girls whose role was to dance to the hit tunes played by Dick Clark, the show's host.

To capitalize on American Bandstand's success, TV stations all over the county introduced local versions of the show. One San Francisco TV station's idea for a copycat show was to feature local high schools, one high school at a time, in an American Bandstand format of teens dancing to hit songs.

Just like Andy, Bonnie Jane was active in school government. When it became M-A's turn to send a selection of its students to the show, thirty-five students were chosen, out of a student body of more than sixteen hundred, to represent the school. Bonnie Jane made sure that I was on the list of chosen ones. Once there, the producers even picked me for a speaking part.

Everyone in school watched M-A's TV debut. My Senior classmates and I all knew each other because this was a time before advanced placement classes began separating students by ability. Just about all of us had classes with one another at some point during our four years together. The students who came to swimming meets and stayed to the end to watch the relay events also knew who I was. Now, thanks to a local TV show, everybody else knew who I was, as well.

One Free Period

When I met with Mrs. Henry, my Guidance Counselor, at the start of my Freshman year, we had created a four-year list of classes I was to take. I took every class on that list but one. Rather than take Physiology my Senior year, I opted to have my last class period of the school day be a free period.

On my own, I would have simply walked home at the beginning of my end-of-day free period. Bonnie Jane sent me to the school's library instead. I say "sent me" like she had the power to order me to go somewhere. No, it's "sent me" like this is what you need to do to stop being a social isolate. So, sent, I went. Our library was more a place for hanging out than for quiet reading.

Prior to Bonnie Jane, all my school friends had been guys like me. Now that I actually had a female friend, I developed the nerve to occasionally ask girls out. I was definitely not boyfriend material, but it was a start.

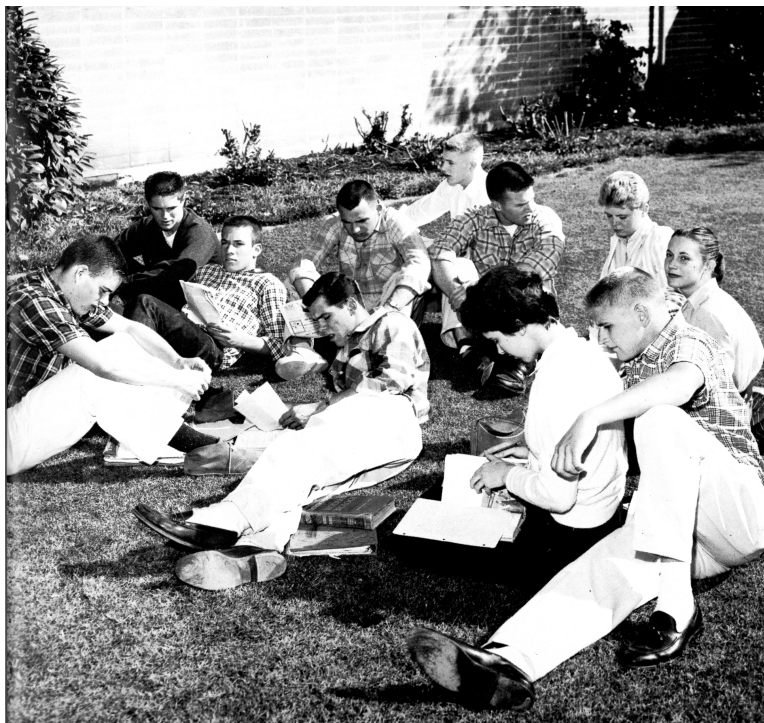
Yearbook Layout Editor

Among her other responsibilities, Bonnie Jane was our Yearbook's Layout Editor. The picture below is the single action shot that Bonnie Jane selected for the Water Polo page in that year's Yearbook.



The Varsity Water Polo team had a very successful season, stacking up a record of 13 wins to 2 losses. Bob Lorton (35) goes for a goal in the Paly game.

That's me identified in the caption as taking a shot at the Palo Alto goalie during our home game with Paly. How often is a second-string player on a team with several all-league players in its starting lineup selected for the only picture to be featured in the Yearbook for the sport?



The Yearbook picture above is a gathering of Seniors lounging on a patch of grass. Bonnie Jane hand-picked that group of Seniors. I am the guy with papers in his left hand, facing slightly toward the camera. The gentleman in the loafers on the far right is Charlie Dahl, the other End with me when we were Juniors on that third-string line. He was selected as PAL First-Team All-League as a Senior and was an All-North Coast selection, as well.

The last twenty-one pages of that year's Yearbook were filled with advertisements placed by local merchants. Four ads on each page, with each ad including a photo of a student or students in that store making use of its products or services.

The four ads on each page were true for twenty of the twenty-one pages. The first page of the advertising section had just one ad on it. For this full-page ad, Bonnie Jane placed me in the driver's seat. She is pictured preparing to come along for the ride.



I had gone from just one picture in the school's Yearbook as a Freshman to seven pictures as a Senior. The other four pictures were my Senior year class photo, the swimming and water polo team photos, and the photo of all the school's athletes who had earned their athletic letters.

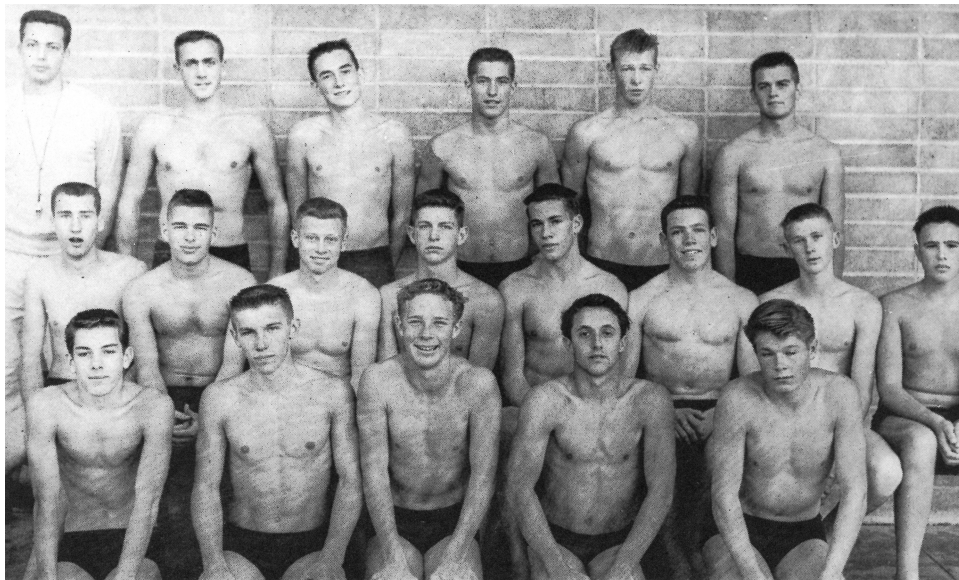
What My History Teacher Told Us

In my Junior year, my U.S. History teacher told all of us in his class that our Junior year would be our best year in high school. He gave us many examples of why our Junior would be our best year. As one example, Freshmen and Sophomores were too young to drive. Being old enough to drive as Juniors opened all kinds of great opportunities. Our Senior year would not be as good because a Senior year brought with it the pressure of applying to colleges. In my case, he was quite wrong. Bonnie Jane had made my Senior year by far my best year ever.

Water Polo – First Year

The Varsity team had won every game the previous year, which was the first year M-A could play any of its games at home. Six of last year's players had been named to either the first or second PAL All-League team. An impressive accomplishment, considering there are only seven starters on a team. Three of that six were back again this year.

I was on the second string, which I considered to be good enough for a first-time player like me. Fortunately for me, second string came with a lot of playing time. Best of all, playing water polo was more fun for me than playing football.



That's me in the middle row, fourth from the right. That's my brother Jack in the bottom row, the first person on the left.

The Olympic Club

Established in 1860, the San Francisco Olympic Club is the oldest athletic club in the United States. From its original 23 founding members, it has grown to a current membership of 11,000 men and

women. When I was in high school, the Club was still men-only. The Club has two clubhouses. The first is located in Downtown San Francisco and includes an indoor pool. The Lakeside Clubhouse is the second. It is adjacent to the Pacific Ocean and Lake Merced. It also features two 18-hole golf courses.

Water polo was one of many sports that the Olympic Club supports in competitions. The team is composed primarily of players who are either still competing for their colleges or have completed their college eligibility.

Why Me?

At the end of my Senior year water polo season, the Olympic Club invited four members from our team to the Club for try-outs and potential membership. The three players from our team who had earned first-team all-league honors were invited. The fourth player they invited was me. Why me? I had no idea. Even so, all four of us accepted our invitations.

The other three invitees went off to colleges that were too far from San Francisco to make their memberships practical. I was Stanford-bound in the Fall. Stanford had recently discontinued competing in water polo, so initially, I had no practical use for my membership either.

Stanford's reintroducing water polo to its collegiate sports program in my Junior year there had a major effect on my life. It would turn out to be a great producer of future IFs for me. The reintroduction of water polo also meant I could now put my Olympic Club membership to good use. And the Olympic Club itself would be another IF contributor.

Names of Note

The names of note that I first met as an Olympic Club member were Jim Gaughran, Art Lambert, and Boyd Mickley. Each of these men's major roles in my water polo life will be described in later chapters.

Goal Accomplished

One Saturday morning in the Spring of my Senior year, my father, mother, and two younger brothers (Paul was away at college) came trooping into my bedroom with a Stanford envelope in their hands. I opened it. It was my acceptance letter for admission as a Freshman. I asked my parents why they had brought the letter to my room for a public opening. When my brother Paul had applied to Stanford, his letter was a notice of rejection. My letter could just as well have been a rejection. Their answer was that our neighbor Chuck Taylor had told my parents a month ago that I was in. I was pleased that I had been accepted by my first-choice college, especially since I had no second choice in mind.