



Carlsbad Unified School District

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...a world class district

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FORMER CUSD BOARD MEMBER RON PACKARD REMINISCES ON THE 40TH ANNIVERSARY OF DISTRICT UNIFICATION

Carlsbad, CA ... Recently, the Honorable Ron Packard, who began his 36-year career as an elected politician as a member of the Carlsbad Union School District, reminisced about the process that resulted in Carlsbad Union School District becoming Carlsbad Unified School District. District voters approved unification on June 2, 1970; effective July 1, 1971. Packard, a Carlsbad resident since 1959, spoke from his and his wife Jean's home in Olde Carlsbad.

Packard served on the Carlsbad Union and Unified District school boards from 1962-74, then on the Carlsbad Planning Commission and Carlsbad City Council (including presiding as Mayor), followed by 18 years as a U.S. Congressman (initially winning as a write-in candidate) representing what was then the 43rd Congressional District. At age 80, he continues to work, serving as Senior Partner in the consulting firm of Packard Government Affairs.

At the juncture of unification, what had been a collection of four elementary schools – Buena Vista, Jefferson, Magnolia, Pine – and Valley Junior High, serving a total of 4,141 students, took a huge leap forward. It became poised to grow into what it is today: an acclaimed K-12 district serving nearly 11,000 students via nine elementary schools, three middle schools, one high school (with another – Sage Creek – opening in Fall 2013), and the Carlsbad Seaside and Village Academy programs. Prior to unification, once students completed Valley, they attended Carlsbad High School, which was part of the Oceanside-Carlsbad Union High School District.

Packard recounted, "With seven children, all of whom graduated from Carlsbad High, I wanted to promote good schools for my own kids and the entire community. Education has always been important to me and my family. Unification was the best way to deal with a situation in which a rivalry existed between the cities of Carlsbad and Oceanside and also within those factions on

Oceanside-Carlsbad Union High School District. Unification was strongly supported by our entire board.” In addition to Packard, 1970 board members were W. Allan Kelly, John Corbett, Paul Swirsky and Ida (Ede) Westree.

Packard said, “As board president from July 1969-70, I envisioned the Carlsbad District and community 25 and more years down the road. My colleagues shared this long-term vision. We felt proud that we could do this for our community and our kids – our future.”

The board campaigned enthusiastically for unification, conducting intensive research and presenting sound analyses of the multifaceted aspects of operations, including staffing, administration, facilities, functions and finances. Although the District’s geographical size and population were larger than that of the City of Carlsbad at that time, the board presciently predicted (before the City annexed the La Costa area in 1972) that the population would grow substantially. A report stated, “Total enrollment approximately has doubled over the past twelve-year period ... it is anticipated that regular enrollment growth will be experienced for many years. By 1985, it is estimated that total district population will at least be twice the present figure.” The report concluded, “Although the school district has a relatively small enrollment at this time, its growth potential is great. Eventually, it will become quite a large school district.”

Having demonstrated that a unified school district would eventually serve the State Board of Education’s requirement for a student population of at least 10,000, that board set an election date of June 2, 1970. In keeping with Carlsbad citizens’ strong sense of community ownership and pride, voters approved Proposition T six to one, establishing Carlsbad Unified School District.

According to John A. Roach, Ed.D., “The result of unification has been powerful. It gave Carlsbad Unified control of its destiny, prevented the creation of a combined Oceanside-Carlsbad megadistrict that would have become unwieldy and potentially contentious, engendered a strong sense of community identity, ensured that we could meet the needs of a growing population and made it possible to deliver a world-class education to each of our students.”

Some information for this release was sourced from *Seekers of the Spring: A History of Carlsbad*, by Marje Howard-Jones and *Windows on the Past: An Illustrated History of Carlsbad* by Susan Schnebelen Gutierrez. A great deal of information and images regarding Carlsbad schools also is lodged in the Carlsbad Local History Room at the Georgina Cole Library, 1250 Carlsbad Village Drive. For more about CUSD, please visit www.carlsbadusd.k12.ca.us.